

Interview with

Bill Arballo

November 4, 2004

by Lloyd O'Connell

for the

Highway 101 Association

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Interview with Bill Arballo on November 4, 2004 at his home in Encinitas, California. Interviewer: Lloyd O'Connell of the Encinitas Historical Society. Transcribed by Kristi Hawthorne

Lloyd: I'm with Bill Arballo and it's November 4, 2004. We're talking about the old 101 and experiences that Bill has had in regards to that particular place. First of all, please state your full name and current address.

Bill: It's William but everybody calls me Bill. Currently I'm living at up in Encinitas, at the Country Club Villas, to be more specific. We've been here for a couple of years, but I'm a long time resident of the area. We came to the north county in the early 1930's, 1927, or thereabouts and moved to Del Mar. My father moved us to Del Mar in 1933 and we've been there ever since, until we moved to Encinitas and this is now our permanent residence. I have a sister living in Carlsbad and a brother that lives in East San Diego. We've been in and out, of course I was in the Army, and so was my brother. We were students of San Dieguito High School first and when we left we went into the Army and my sister went off to college and came back to San Dieguito to teach. She taught there for a few years. On Coast 101 probably my first memories I have of that were when the 101 used to be called "Slaughter Alley". In Leucadia there were big trees to separate the north and southbound traffic, but there were no guardrails. So there were a lot of fatalities until the highway commission decided to do something. At first they took out trees but people were still running into the trees and that's when they installed the guardrails and they've been there ever since, but there's considerably less trees that were there then, they just took them out. There was probably one gas station in Leucadia owned by the Richards family. As I recall, the post office where it is today was there on the same side. So there wasn't too much else. There was a motel in Leucadia. It was pretty void of homes and that sort of thing until you got to Encinitas. Then Miller Brothers had their store. Everybody shopped at Miller Brothers because it was the only grocery store there. It was Sam Miller, and I can't remember the other two brothers' names, but they were very, very kind people. Times were tough so they had a long list of creditors. I guess everybody paid their bill. I know my father used to run credit there and pay once a month. That was kind of the way business was done then. East of Encinitas was Olivenhain where there was bean growers, the Wiegands family. But you know, some people say, "Well, they sold all of the land and now they are rich." Well, I can remember many years, many years, when they went in the hole because one thing or another happened to their lima beans and they didn't get anything out of it. So I think anything they get now they well deserve. Like everyone else, they were very kind people. They looked out for everybody. I remember one of my best friends, when I was going to San Dieguito High School, still in the lean Depression years, Robert Paddock, his father was in the Navy so they had plenty to eat. They could always go to the commissary. So they used to feed the neighbors. I'm not kidding you! All the kids would congregate there at their house and get something to eat. For entertainment the Daily Double, you know the bar, that's been there along time. The Delay's they used to own that, that's when I remember. It was Morrie Delay, he was the bookmaker in Encinitas. You know, then it was okay. The sheriff knew they were there but they never bothered him. Some of these sheriffs lived in Encinitas so they were well aware of what was going on, but what I remember about it was that on Saturday nights Morrie would put up a boxing ring right in the patio, where the current patio is, and they'd have either boxing or wrestling. That used to draw a lot of people. It was a lot of fun. One of the big characters was

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Louie Marquez and he was a wrestler and he lived in Del Mar, a big, well known family in Del Mar. But Louie used to come in there and wrestling was no different then that it is today. Where you know, everybody gets hurt and that sort of thing. He used to try and cuss out the referee, but it was all in fun really, but we didn't know that. We thought it was serious business. There was another young fellow, Genero Vallez, who became a flyweight and was a flyweight champion. He used to fight there all the time and was very, very popular. Whenever he was on the card, everybody from Eden Gardens would show up. But as I recall, there wasn't a lot of beer drinking or anything of that kind, it was mostly entertainment. It was more for the entertainment of people than anything else. When you went further south, George's was there, George's Restaurant. I believe it's now Charlie's. That was built there about 1920 by George Beach. Next door, you had the Beacon Inn—well, before you got to George's, and it's long gone, was the Breakers Café. It used to be about where the beach is now where the lifeguard station is, just on the other side of the bridge, as you're going south. That used to be a restaurant and it was called the Breakers. Then you had the Beacon Inn, more hanky-panky went on at the Beacon Inn.

Lloyd: Was it a little bit of girls, and that type of thing?

Bill: Well, that type of thing, you know. But again, nobody got in trouble because they didn't bother the community. Nobody was greatly offended by it. It was just like here recently, I wasn't in favor of it, but they had Show Girls.

Lloyd: That was really a problem.

Bill: Oh yeah. But they catered to a certain clientele. But that thing was put on, the Show Girls, that's in a shopping center. That's where people go to and do other things.

Lloyd: This was out of town.

Bill: Right. That's true, it was out of town. One thing I remember, we used to have an old Model T Ford. When I say "we" there were a bunch of kids. And on Highway 101, if you can believe it, the traffic was very, very sparse and we used to tip the Model T over when we saw a car coming from a far off, with the lights shining, we'd tip the thing over and then one us would lay on the highway and wait for the car to show up. They'd stop and want to know what happened; well "we had an accident" and "would you go and call an ambulance at the nearest telephone?" Well, the nearest telephone was probably at the Beacon Inn so we knew we had plenty of time to set the car up right and get away! And sit up there just east of the tracks, where they are now and watch them come with the Sheriff Department and all that. We thought it was fun. Well, we didn't hurt anybody. That's what we used to do for fun.

Lloyd: That was in the 1930's?

Bill: It was the late 1930's. Probably in the mid 30's. Fun wasn't hurting anybody. We were having fun, just like Halloween, trick or treat. We didn't just go up and knock on the door and ask for a treat, we used to toilet paper the house if they didn't give us treats or we always had soap with us and we'd soap the windows and this sort of thing and then the next day we'd go back and get paid for washing the soap off the windows, this was particularly the stores in Encinitas. But anyway, when you went south and got to Solana Beach, there was the Teddy Bear

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it was an all night restaurant. I think that was the name of it. But it was a truck stop and we were fascinated by the big trucks that used to stop there and we used to go there late at night as kids and be enthralled by the truckers and their big trucks. They'd be there and they'd have their breakfast. But to us it was amazing.

Lloyd: Were they pretty friendly to you kids?

Bill: Oh yeah. We had a cheeseburger or a hamburger or something. We wouldn't just go there and sit. We'd have something to eat, like French fries, hamburger or cheeseburger and a Coke or something, so we weren't just sitting there being entertained by the trucks. When I was a kid I always thought, "Boy, I want to be a trucker when I grow up." And that's where everybody stopped. There was very little from that point from Solana Beach to Torrey Pines up to what used to be Five Corners, it was just south of the golf course, where the road goes to La Jolla. There used to be a restaurant there and that was all night. Del Mar went to sleep at six o'clock or sooner if you needed anything, or if you were hungry, you'd have to go to Torrey Pines.

Lloyd: So it was that bad? Everybody closed down?

Bill: Everybody closed, oh yeah. There were accidents in Cardiff where the Beacon Inn was located, where George's was, there where Charlie's and the Chart House is, that's where that area was. Drivers would leave there kind of tipsy and get out on the road and get into an accident. Judge McLaughlin was the Justice of the Peace and he had have to adjudicate those when they came to his courthouse, it was where the Solana Beach Hotel is.

Lloyd: It was a courthouse at that time?

Bill: Yes. One of those rooms was a courthouse. So he used to adjudicate all the offenders; they used to come there. Unfortunately for the judge, his son was an bibber too. This made a precarious situation for the judge, although his son never came before him. He never got caught out on the highway. I do remember when we lived in Del Mar as kids; one of our neighbors came over on a Sunday and said, "Would you take me up to Oceanside because my son is in jail up there." So we go up to Oceanside and picked him up there at the jail. The courthouse was in the same building. It cost \$50 to get him out of jail.

Lloyd: That was a lot of money in those days.

Bill: It was a lot of money. When this neighbor rolled out a bankroll, I was really amazed he had that kind of money. But he was a hard worker and saved his money. Those are the sort of the things that occurred. Del Mar, of course, the Del Mar Hotel, it was a beautiful hotel. It's been there since the mid-1900s. That was a stopping off point for everyone going to Caliente. At that time everything was wide open in Tijuana. They had all kinds of gambling and everything else. So Hollywood used to come down and they'd go as far as Del Mar and stay at the Hotel Del Mar and go to Tijuana the next day. That was a lively place and also it was where everybody got together when the racetrack was put into place. That was in 1937. But prior to that the fairgrounds was owned by Ed Fletcher.

Lloyd: He was a good guy.

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Bill: He was. He was a good man. He built Lake Hodges, you know and that's so he could provide water to all his holdings. My father worked for Ed Fletcher. They used to dry farm different types of crops from Carlsbad to Torrey Pines, where the golf course is now. They used to farm all of that. They used to have peas there, string beans and squash and that sort of the thing. During that time, because of the Depression, my father used to bring home all of those vegetables. I got so that I hated vegetables because that's all we ate. That's all there was to eat in those days. I remember he used to bring grapefruit home and it was bitter. We used to eat that, not because we wanted to but because we were hungry. But Fletcher was a good man. The family still owns a lot holdings in Del Mar on the beach. I don't believe the son is there but some of the offspring are living in Del Mar. In World War II they built housing for the military there in rapid fashion, I mean, they really put them up. There was an artillery range. We used to be air raid wardens. In Del Mar we used to have blackouts on the coast. You couldn't drive at night unless you had black out lights on your car and they were just little things.

Lloyd: Slits.

Bill: Yes, that's what they were. If there were other people driving on Highway 101, there were just a lot of slits driving along. The Air Raid Wardens would go around and if anybody that had any lights that showed, we'd knock on the doors and tell them to turn the lights off or cover their windows. In Leucadia there are still some concrete barriers where anti-aircraft guns were located when they used to protect the coast.

Lloyd: Do you remember where that was located?

Bill: Well, there were several. I really don't know, but they were all along there.

Lloyd: Along the coast?

Bill: Yes. As a matter of fact, in Del Mar, there was a German there, real nice guy and he used to work with the Del Mar school as a landscaper and then when the war came along, naturally everybody was always suspicious of any one who was Japanese and German. He was accused of operating a shortwave station out of his house and that's because he could see over the ocean from his home. I would doubt very much, but you never know, but I would doubt very much if he would do a thing like that, but they claimed he did. One incident that is very vivid in my mind, we used to go down to the beach all the time. We lived on Tenth Street and we used to go down 11th Street down to the beach almost everyday, when we weren't in school. One morning there was a Japanese fellow on the beach, just wearing a loincloth. We were kids so we took him home and we got him some clothes, our old clothes, and we fed him. He was there about a week and all of sudden he was gone, he disappeared we don't know where. There was a possibility he had been dropped off. There were submarines out there, that has been documented; we know they were there. My sister said that he was probably a mapmaker and he making a map of the coastline, possibly, I don't know. But anyway, that's one thing I remember. But to get back to the Highway 101, in my recollection, there was rather a poignant experience for us on the 101. We had a Model T Ford. It was brand new. It was quite a sensation when he bought it and brought it home. He paid cash for it. He paid \$800 cash. To get up Torrey Pines we went up the old road. Have you ever been up that road? About half way up you'd have to put it in reverse

and back up to get up to the top.

Lloyd: Because of the gravity flow of the gas.

Bill: Well, that plus then you'd wear out whatever the gear that was used for moving the car. He would have worn those out so he backed up. So what amazes me now is how the big Greyhound Buses, they weren't like today's buses but they were like a Mack bus. They used to travel along Highway 101. That was the only means of transportation from one community to the other. If you went from this community to San Diego or Los Angeles, you took the Greyhound bus. As a kid, I worked at the Encinitas Pharmacy, which was owned by J.M. Lutrell. It was on the corner of E Street and 101. We used to, when someone was going to ride the bus, go out there and we'd put up an arm signal so the bus would stop, otherwise they would just go through Encinitas and not stop at all. We got so we knew all the bus drivers because they were the same ones, they had the same schedules. They knew us and we knew them pretty well. That was the same situation in Solana Beach, you'd have to put out your arm. Sometimes you'd forget to put the arm up when you sold the ticket and the people would come in and they'd be a little bit upset because the bus went and they wouldn't stop, they'd just keep right on rolling unless that arm was up. Transportation was rather inexpensive. It cost ten cents to ride from Del Mar to Encinitas.

Lloyd: This is the 1930's?

Bill: Yes, in the 30's. We used to ride the bus or take a bicycle and ride the bicycle from Del Mar to Encinitas to the La Paloma Theater. We used to go to the movies there and then catch the late bus back because they went through Del Mar.

Lloyd: What was the cost of the movie?

Bill: Twenty-five cents. They had good movies in there but they never had any first-rate movies because being an independent at that time, they could not get the studios to release those movies to the independents, like "Gone With the Wind" or some of those that were very popular. Now you can see first-rate movies everywhere now, but then you couldn't. We used to always see the Tom Mix and Hop-along Cassidy, which were C rated or B rated.

Lloyd: Did you ever see any movies stars around at that time?

Bill: Yes. When they were going through here to go to Caliente. They would stop here locally and would stay at the hotel in Del Mar. You were not star struck when you saw them because they were just ordinary people. And they liked that. Like for example, Douglas Fairbanks used to come to Fairbanks ranch and he used to live up there with Mary Pickford. They were around but we never chased after them.

Lloyd: When your family came, where did they come from?

Bill: I was born in Nestor which is between Chula Vista and National City. If you blink, you've gone through it. It's a very small town. Then we went from Nestor to El Cajon and from El Cajon we went to Oceanside and lived in Oceanside. Then when my mother died we moved to Carlsbad with an aunt who took care of us until we moved to Del Mar. My brother Bobby was

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born in Encinitas and I was born in Nestor and my sister was born in Nestor. I have recollections of living in Oceanside and moving to Del Mar. I have recollection of living in El Cajon. We used to have four acres there and my father used to farm it. My father was a farmer. He had a regular job and then he would come home after work and farm the land. We had orange trees, fig trees, plum trees, peach trees. Things were tough in those days.

Lloyd: Can you tell us anything else about certain meaningful things that happened on the 101?

Bill: Well, my father was hurt on 101. He was going to work one morning. At that time he was working for the Ed Fletcher Company and they were doing some farming in Ponto, which is just north of Leucadia. He was on his way to work and a truck driver hit him head on. Right there, right where we used to turn the Model T over, there's about a ten-foot drop there. The truck driver fell asleep. My father saw the truck coming at him but he had no idea the fellow was asleep. He hurt my father pretty badly and the truck driver died when he went over the embankment, towards the railroad tracks. There again, there were no guardrails or anything. A guardrail might have awakened the trucker.

Lloyd: Or kept him on the road.

Bill: I remember that quite vividly when that accident occurred. Most accidents were occurring in Leucadia along that "slaughter alley" they used to call it where those trees were.

Lloyd: Either asleep or under the influence.

Bill: Yes.

Lloyd: Do you remember the first time you rode on the 101 and where you were going?

Bill: We were going from El Cajon to Oceanside. We moved to Oceanside from El Cajon because my mother had been ill and the doctor thought that El Cajon being a warmer community, that if we lived nearer the ocean it would be beneficial to her. But we were looking for property anywhere. That's when we first rode on the 101. It was just, as I recall, a two-lane highway, one lane each way. I don't remember what the top speed was, maybe 40 to 45 miles an hour, but nobody went too fast. There weren't that many, that's the reason I said I marveled at the Greyhound buses that used to ride on Highway 101 because they were the big buses. I can recall the big, Mack buses that they used to haul kids to school, big wide things they looked like boxes. They made a lot of noise, naturally, particularly when they were shifting gears. They had to be careful, the drivers, to get those things in gear because once they started rolling, getting them to stop was a real problem. That's about what I remember about my first trip on Highway 101.

Lloyd: How about driving yourself, when you first drove?

Bill: I mentioned when my father being in that accident, when he got out of the hospital, for a while, about six or seven months he could not drive because of his back and his legs. Bill Thompson, he was a highway patrolman who lived in Del Mar, I went to him and told him that I would have to be the driver for my father and for the family.

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Lloyd: How old were you?

Bill: Probably 15 or 16. He made it possible for me to get a driver's license.

Lloyd: A wonderful deal.

Bill: Yes. Being on the highway patrol, he was a legend on the 101. He used to ride a Harley motorcycle and used to park it on the corner in Del Mar and sit there and smoke a cigar. They called him Red Thompson, he was redheaded. He'd watch the traffic go by and be sitting there, smoking a cigar. You had to be going real fast for him to crank up his motorcycle and take off. He used to let us climb all over the motorcycle. They said he was tough, and he may have been tough but not with the kids. But they said he gave his wife a ticket because she made an illegal left hand turn to go up the hill. What she was doing was going to fix his lunch for him! Now you can believe that or not but they say he was that kind of tough guy! That's just a story they tell. It's just like Tom Willis was with the county sheriff. He retired here. His name doesn't come to mind right off the bat but he was very, very good to everybody. It wasn't to arrest people or give them tickets or anything, he mostly lectured them and never really nailed them. Whether they have quotas nowadays, I don't know. But then, they didn't. They didn't have to account for their time. They were more friends of the community.

Lloyd: Community minded.

Bill: Community minded, yes. Not that they aren't now, there are, but they were more inclined then.

Lloyd: We talked about the La Paloma of course. You talked about some of the restaurants down in Cardiff. Any other that were interesting in Encinitas?

Bill: The Daily Double.

Lloyd: How about across the street?

Bill: Yes, there was a barbershop there and the kids were not supposed to go in there because they had pool table in there. It was a barbershop in front and a pool room in back and that wasn't where kids were supposed to be, particularly if you were an athlete or on the football team. Leo Swaim, who was quite a star at San Dieguito, used to be in there all the time. He liked to play pool. The Swaim's are still here in this area, Betty Jo and Leslie Swaim, Leo's twin brother. Leo is living in Hawaii now. They moved there this summer. That was one of the places and Lutrell's Pharmacy, of course, the drug store was there, and the Miller Brothers was right across the street. There wasn't too much else along that stretch that I can remember. On top of the La Paloma there was supposed to be a hotel or apartments or upstairs. Ida Cooley would know that.

Lloyd: Was there a particular person associated with the stretch of the road? Of course, we talked about Ed Fletcher. Ed Fletcher should have been the one for everybody to praise for all of his work around here. He was a wonderful guy.

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Bill: Well, that's true but now we don't hold people that do a lot in high esteem for some reason. The big developers and that sort of thing. That's true, they were big developers but they also gave a lot to the community. I mentioned the Ecke's. Paul Sr., he never turned anybody away that I'm aware of and yet few people realize that. I think it was different thinking and a different era where people really helped each other, probably because we were all hungry and if you didn't you'd go hungry. I tell you, as far as I was concerned, as our family was concerned, there was no racial distinction or anything like that. Some of my best friends were Japanese. We didn't have any black folks in the area that I can recall, but there were Japanese and they were best friends. We had no problems. There was segregation at some of the theaters, but not the La Paloma, we didn't have that. I just know for example, there were Jewish people, I didn't know until I went into the Army. I happened to be in the medical corps and there were a lot of Jewish people in the medical corps, doctors and nurses and that type of thing, and that was my first exposure. As far as Japanese were concerned, when I was in the service with 34th Division, we had two battalions, two Japanese battalions, the 100th and 442nd and they sent them to Europe because naturally they couldn't have them in the Pacific theater. They were known as Niesis, second and third generation Japanese-American citizens. They were tremendous military people, I tell you.

Lloyd: Do you remember anything about speed limits on the 101?

Bill: I was just going to comment. It must have been 45 but very few could drive that fast, you know. Dr. Brass, whom I'm sure you've heard that name. He was one of the few doctors in the area. He used to exceed the speed limit when he was driving to La Jolla, that was the closest hospital. It was Scripps but it was the old Scripps. But he used to drive that fast anyway around town, but he never got in trouble because he was a doctor, of course. His mother, who was a school teacher in San Dieguito, she used to drive as fast as her son did. She used to have a '36 Chevrolet and if we were standing there on the corner in Encinitas. I would ride the bus from Del Mar to Encinitas to be with my buddies and then we'd go up to the school and somebody would pick us—we'd see Mrs. Brass coming and we'd run and hide because we were afraid. She'd spin around the corner and papers and books would be flying in the backseat. She was a great lady. A good teacher. She used to teach Biology or something like that.

Lloyd: Did you ever get a ticket?

Bill: No. Not as a kid, never got a ticket. I deserved a few but never got one.

Lloyd: Do you remember any celebrations, like a parade or anything like that?

Bill: Yes. They had the flower show. They had one last month in downtown Encinitas. It used to be a big event in the 1930s. A big flower show because all kinds of flowers were growing here and it used to draw a lot of people. As I recall it went for more than a day. That's what Encinitas is famous for, the flower show. And there were not only poinsettias but all kinds of flowers grown then.

Lloyd: That must have been beautiful, to see that from the road, all of those flowers.

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Bill: It attracted people from everywhere, like the flower fields in Carlsbad do.

Lloyd: Was it also down in Solana Beach and Del Mar?

Bill: In Solana Beach to a smaller degree, but not Del Mar, but Encinitas was the flower capital. Then they decided to put the freeway in, I-5, through Leucadia and Del Mar. It took ten years of hard work, hard politicking and local people fighting it and they finally got the highway department to agree to put the freeway inland where it is today. It was the first time. They envisioned it to go along the beach like in Santa Barbara where you go along the ocean. The problem here is during high tides the water splashes all over the highway, just like it does in Cardiff. It would have been very little of Del Mar.

Lloyd: It would've ruined the whole town. There's no question about it.

Bill: Don Briggs used to grow bird of Paradise here in Encinitas was on the highway selection committee. Ray Badger was very important in Del Mar and Waldron Cheney, who was a colonel, retired and Hershel Larrick. He used to own a lumberyard just off Highway 101 and he spent a lot of time and money of his own in Sacramento fighting the inland route. It started with an engineer, E.E. Wallace. He was the one who decided where the freeway was going to go. It took ten years to change their minds and in the meanwhile he retired. So a younger man was saddled with the idea, his name was Jacob Dekema. A portion of 805 is named the Dekema overpass, to this day. He was a real nice guy. He was instrumental in getting them to decide that it was not practical on the coast. When the freeway was decided that it would go inland, they had a big dinner at George's Café to celebrate and all of these people that were involved were at the dinner. Jacob Dekema was there and they asked him to say a few words and he said, "It's a real pleasure to be here with a bunch of you sons of bitches." And they gave him a standing ovation! They all agreed. It wasn't his fault, he inherited it. I saw him not too long ago, I saw him at the memorial service for Dr. Brass and I asked him if he remembered that and he said, "I don't remember but I probably said it."

Lloyd: How about traffic lights? Do you remember the first traffic light?

Bill: The first traffic light in this area went in at Del Mar on 15th Street and they objected for the same, "there's not enough traffic fatalities to require it". But there were three or four deaths that occurred right there with people trying to get across the street on 15th and Highway 101 in Del Mar and they finally decided. It was a major thing when they decided to put in a traffic light there. That was the first one that was installed. Now it's a city, the city can dictate where they go but at that time it was Department of Transportation. When they were going to put the freeway through this area, they didn't announce it or anything, they just put up signs and they said there was going to be a dedicated freeway. I remembering seeing one, I was coming into Leucadia, it was posted, a small sign, 14x22. It was easy to miss, but it was new and I thought, "what was that?" I went and asked about the dedicated freeway and that's when they started to look into and sure enough that's when they made the announcement to tell the people what they intended to do.

Lloyd: They were going to buy up all that land and push it through.

Bill: Yes.

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Lloyd: Service stations, do you remember any particular service station?

Bill: I mentioned Richard's Service station in Leucadia.

Lloyd: Is that the one that's still there?

Bill: It's not a service station anymore but the building is still standing there. It's closed.

Lloyd: Is that the one that had the automobile repair shop?

Bill: No, no that's just south of where the post office is. You used to watch gas come down in the big glass tubes. Back then it was only 14 cents a gallon and when they were having a price war it would be nine to fourteen cents. Down in Del Mar where there were nine stations, they used to have price wars all the time. They used to give away dishes and different things so you would buy your gas there.

Lloyd: Yes, I can remember that. I think we've done a great job! Thank you, Bill.

Bill: I don't know if I've helped any, but that's the way I remember.