

GROWING UP IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

MILDRED SHORE

Interviewed by Dick Nelson

One of a series of oral histories covering the growth and development of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power as seen by the participants - and their families.

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Biographical Notes

Mildred Shore

Born in San Fernando, California on November 23, 1926.

Parents: Robert Jacob Eckert and Martha Anna (Brocksieper) Eckert.

Married: John Robert Shore April 5, 1947 at First Methodist Church of Hollywood by Rev. Claude Smith who had also married her parents (1923).

Children: Robert Wayne Shore, born April 3, 1950 in Taft, California.
John Andrew Shore, born April 20, 1952 in Taft, California.
Jeffrey David Shore, born March 6, 1959 in San Rafael, California.

I lived in Van Nuys, California all my childhood and adolescence, graduating from Van Nuys High School with the Class of Summer 1944, many of whom had been my kindergarten classmates at Van Nuys Elementary (Oleatha Stearns was the principal). In July, I left for the University of California at Berkeley and returned only briefly to Van Nuys, never again living full-time there. After my marriage to John Robert Shore, I moved to Coalinga, California as a bride. After 2 1/2 years, we moved to Taft, California. In 1958 we were transferred to the Bay Area, living in Corte Madera, California (Marin County) while John worked in San Francisco. Back to Taft in 1960, where we remained until 1968 when John was transferred to the Southern Division of Chevron, located in LaHabra, California. He retired in 1985 and we are still in the house purchased in 1968.

My family no longer owns any property in the San Fernando Valley, and my only relative there now is a first cousin in Granada Hills, California.

This is to certify that I have reviewed this transcript and attest that it is true and accurate. Also, by my witnessed signature below, I grant the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, or its designee(s), sole right to use this material in any way, and for any purpose, it deems appropriate.

Mildred B. Shore 5/25/91
Mildred Shore date

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witness date

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witness address

TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE ONE

MILDRED SHORE

GIVEN WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1990

AT

HER HOME IN FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA

THE INTERVIEWER IS DICK NELSON

NELSON: Mrs. Shore is going to fill us in a little bit on her father, Robert Eckert, who worked for the Department, or for a subcontractor to the Department, in the early part of this century, and who was a spectator at the aqueduct ceremony that

ushered in the Owens River water to San Fernando Valley in 1913. Mrs. Shore maybe you can fill us in on your father as much as you know, what he did, marry, kids, whatever.

SHORE: Well, there is a lot to tell. He was a wonderful, wonderful man and was just adored by his family. He was born in Dayton, Ohio, on December 16, 1900. His mother had been a typesetter for the Dayton Herald Newspaper working in the days when you don't think of women working outside their home. She had not married and had to support herself and part of her family. She met William Eckert, I don't know how or where, married him when she was in her late 30's and my father was born when she was almost 40. He was the only child she ever had.

NELSON: What was his full name?

SHORE: His name was Robert Jacob Eckert. His grandfather had been one of the inventors of the National Cash Register Company and had given away the patents to a man named "Patterson" who is credited with being the founder of the company, but it was actually his grandfather, Jake, who was the founder of the National Cash Register Company. That's just a little sideline.

Anyway, in 1904 the family decided to move to California. My father's earliest memory was crossing the Mississippi River on the train coming to California. They settled in San Fernando where his father apparently had a variety of jobs. He worked as

a house painter, I know, at one time and after the aqueduct was completed, he even lived in that little house that's just to the west of the open gate there and worked as the gate master for I don't know how long, but the family did live there.

My father often talked about those early days overlooking the San Fernando Valley from their location in San Fernando. He said it was just a sea of sagebrush and, of course, the air was perfectly clear and you could look from one side of the valley to the other and it was apparently a very beautiful place. My father's family, however, was very poor. He learned to be a crack shot with his single-shot .22 rifle. They could only afford to buy one shell at a time. He would go out in the afternoon with that one shell in the chamber of his .22 rifle, if he could get a rabbit, they had meat for supper. If he didn't get a rabbit, they had no meat. There were some orange groves, apparently within walking distance, so they ate lots of oranges. His mother rented a room in her house to an old German man who had something to do with those orchards and he used to go out in the evenings and come back with a sack of oranges for the family. He left San Fernando at the beginning of World War I because he went back to fight for the German Army. His name was Schmidt and papa talked about that.

My father's boyhood friend was Russell Hunter, who became a fire captain with the Santa Barbara Fire Department. Papa and Russell apparently had lots of adventures roaming the sagebrush or "old" San Fernando. San Fernando at that time was a very

racially divided little town. There was a Mexican side of town and there was a white side of town and the white boys did not associate with the Mexican side of town if they could help it. It was a terrible disgrace to even consider dating a Mexican girl.

NELSON: Do you know geographically how the town was divided?

SHORE: No I don't. The hills apparently were where the "white people" congregated or settled and had their homes because my father's home was up there in the hills. He took us there once. I am sure that closer to the mission had to be more of the Mexican side. My father's mother had a twin brother and sister. The sister, apparently, was crippled somehow. Her name was Maime and she came to California to live with them, poor as they were, they made a home for her.

While my father was attending the San Fernando Elementary School, one of his classmates was, I believe, Harry Chandler. He was, of course, the Los Angeles Times family of Chandlers and my father knew him quite well. They were apparently the same age and they had a competition between the two of them one time to win a spelling contest. My father's teacher had rigged it in favor of Harry Chandler because she was trying to curry favor with the Chandler family, but anyway at the age of about 13, when he had finished the seventh grade, my father had to leave school. His father was afflicted with Bright's disease which

was a kidney failure and my father had to go to work to support the family. At this time they were working on the Van Norman Lake or Reservoir and the dam that held back those waters at, what he considered the terminus, of the Owens Valley Aqueduct.

So that was the job that he was able to get--walking from his home which was some miles, early, early, every morning before it was light even, to get down there to the site of that lake and hook up the mules to the Fresno plows and the scrapers and whatever wagons, whatever they were using to dredge out the site of that lake. I don't believe that he was actually employed by the Department of Water and Power. I think he was probably employed by a subcontractor. He earned \$.50 a day for this work. Had to carry his lunch with him, of course, and I am sure he was subject to all kinds of abuse being just a 12 or 13 year old kid. He was probably actually 12 at this time. He particularly talked about the island that is in the middle of that lake. He called it "Dead Man's Island" because when they were working there, they did unearth a skeleton that they considered to be an Indian skeleton and they found a number of artifacts. For many years we had a beautiful grinding rock in our garage that my father had hauled from that Dead Man's Island in the middle of that lake, I wish I'd knew whatever had happened to that because it was a beauty. Very, very heavy, of course.

That was the extent of his involvement with the aqueduct, however, he was absolutely thrilled when the first water came

through and here he was, just a little 12, 13 year old boy, but he apparently wedged his way into the front of the line that was lining the banks of that aqueduct and had his little souvenir glass bottle and dipped it down in there and filled it with water and put the cork in it and treasured it all the rest of his life.

I can remember one time when I was a little girl, the family was living at 14133 Victory, which was the first house my father bought. (He was 19 years old at the time and the house was about two years old). He always kept this little bottle in a built-in bookcase. It was built out of both sides of the living room wall and it sort of separated the dining area from the living area as they did in those days. So he took this little bottle out of the corner where he had always kept it and decided he would taste that water. My mother had a fit, but I can see so clearly, my father holding that teaspoon and carefully pouring out that little bit of water and my mother shouting at him that it had probably turned poisoned by this time, that he was going to kill himself and he had a family to support, but he tasted it and smacked his lips over that water like it was just the greatest treat in the world.

That's the only time that this little bottle has ever been opened that I know of. I was surprised when I got it out last month and saw that there is only an inch of water in it. At one point I had dripped candle wax on it to try to seal that cork and preserve it. I don't know how it could have escaped, but

after all we are talking many, many years ago, so it's no wonder if some of it is gone.

NELSON: Did you indicate what year it was that he sampled the water, more or less?

SHORE: It would have been about 1939 or around in there. My father bought that house at 14133 in 1919 as I said. His mother sort of had a boarding house there. She rented rooms and when my father and mother were married, they moved up to Gridley where my father ran a concrete pipe yard. Those big 12" and larger pipes that we used in irrigation. He had worked for the Van Nuys Concrete Pipe Company as a young man and ran all the Mexican crews and so forth. Concrete pipe was terribly important in the development of agriculture in the San Fernando Valley.

His mother lived in that 14133 Victory house and they couldn't manage it. He couldn't support her in Van Nuys and himself and my mother in Gridley, so after a year they came back and he owned a little house over towards the high school, which is where they were living when I was born. I don't know even what street it was...Haynes or Kittridge, one of those streets over there, but very shortly he bought the vacant lot at 14129 Victory and built a little one-bedroom house for his little family. My sister was born in March of 1929, my brother was born after the big "crash" in 1930. So here he had these three

little children to support. Well anyway eight years later, in 1939, my second sister was born.

It was after she was born that he built a big addition on to the 14133 Victory house and moved his family over there. So if she was born in 1938 and we moved there about that time, it had to be sometime shortly after that that he opened the bottle and tasted the water, over my mother's great objection. Boy I sure wandered far afield with that little story. You never should have asked.

NELSON: How did you come into possession of the bottle?

SHORE: He gave it to me. I don't remember exactly when. My parents left the San Fernando Valley, all these things that happened after I was married, you know, it's hard for me to put a....I can tell you what happened in John's and my family, but it is hard to put a date onto when they left, but my father, in 1938, had begun purchasing land in the Tehachapi Mountains. He felt that San Fernando Valley was getting crowded and he wanted to get his children out of there in the summertimes if he could. So he began purchasing land in the Tehachapi Mountains. Eventually, he leased some of that land for logging and felt that he needed to live there and keep track of the whole thing, so he and my mother moved to Tehachapi and in that move, I think that that is when he gave me the bottle, rather than move it up to Tehachapi. He gave it to me because I am the oldest child

and, you know, I was always interested in historic things and this business about the aqueduct was always very interesting to me. He told lots of stories about that aqueduct particularly the difficulties in Owens Valley. He had one story.

My father was a Mason and was very proud of his Masonic affiliation and he said that the inhabitants of the Owens Valley, at one time, more or less kidnapped a Department of Water and Power employee. They were so incensed by what had been going on in their particular part of the valley that they were ready to string him up. He gave some kind of secret Masonic symbol and the Masons who were in the Owens Valley crowd recognized the symbol and saved the man's life. Now that could be entirely apocryphol, who knows. That was one of the stories that he told.

He felt that the Department of Water and Power had raped the Owens Valley, but what were you going to do? Los Angeles had the people. Los Angeles needed water and this was the way to get it. It was all perfectly legal. They bought the water rights. They bought the ranches. They bought whatever needed to be done and paid money for it so it was just one of those dilemmas that people in Southern California have had to live with as long as there has been inhabitants here I expect. Even the Indians had some problems.

NELSON: You said he had other stories. Do you recall any of the other stories about the...?

SHORE: I know one time he was at the aqueduct in the hills above the San Fernando Valley. He had always kept a daily diary of his life and one of his granddaughters has all of those now that he is gone, but the only diary that is missing from his entire life is one that fell out of his shirt pocket when he bent over the open part of the aqueduct to get a drink of water. He always regretted that he lost that one diary, because wanted to know that his entire life was written down, but yet there's one there that's missing. He was just quite a young man at that time, I think.

NELSON: Did he maintain that diary when he was 13? When he was working?

SHORE: I don't know. I don't know when he started it. It would be interesting to find out wouldn't it? I should ask my niece how far back those go.

NELSON: It would be nice to be able to look at that or make copies?

SHORE: Yes, it would. I'll have to try to...let me borrow you pen and let me write that down. I'll call Susan and see how far back those go. I really don't know. Call Susan regarding diary.

NELSON: That might not cover only the aqueduct period, but later on with the St. Francis dam time.

SHORE: I'm sure that would be in it, because that's after I was born and he was very diligent in keeping that.

NELSON: Some are and I admire them greatly who take the time to scribble.

SHORE: Yes, he was very faithful and I can see him yet, sitting down. It was always just little pocket diaries. Just little things. But he would just make a word or two.

NELSON: How long did he work on the aqueduct? Just a year or so or was it three years?

SHORE: I expect it must have been about a year, hitching up those mules and earning his \$.50 a day which was very important to his family. Now I don't know what he did to earn a living after that. I know that he learned the carpenter's trade somehow along the line and did work. At the time I was born, he was working as a carpenter, but by the time the Depression was over, he had become a general contractor and he did a great deal of construction in the Van Nuys area. He particularly built custom-made homes. There was a beautiful home that he built out on Van Owen Avenue for a family named Honig. The man was a

Union Ice Company executive. He got in with the Union Ice Company doing many of their facilities where they manufacture the ice. He went all up and down the old Pacific Coast Highway building field processing facilities where Union Ice railroad cars would pull up to these things and the ice would be loaded in. There is one that still stands along the freeway in Oceanside as you are heading into Oceanside before you get to Camp Pendleton. There are some old corrugated, iron sheds there. My father built those. He would take his trusted crewmen who worked for him always and they would camp at the sites, National City, Escondido, Oceanside. He'd be gone all week. He'd come home Friday night and then he would leave again Monday morning and do these Union Ice jobs. They were, apparently, pretty well paying.

NELSON: Was this to refrigerate produce?

SHORE: Right. Celery, particularly. At the time of the 1932 Olympics, he was building a house up in the Homby Hills area and I can remember him taking us to visit that house that was under construction. But on the way we looked up in the hills, we went over Sepulveda Pass and looked up in those hills somewhere and we could see the row of little cottages that had been built for the olympic athletes to live in. Then later when the olympics were over and they dismantled those things and sold the furnishings, my folks bought two little 30" beds that had been

used in those houses for the Olympic athletes and we had those olympic beds in the family for years and years. I know he built a house on Victory Boulevard.

One of his first, maybe his very first house that he was the contractor for, but we continued living in those Victory Boulevard houses one or the other of them, until he and my mother purchased a house on Haynes Street that my father had built for my mother's sister who was a school teacher. A maiden lady schoolteacher and she moved her parents into that house and then finally late in life, my Aunt married and she and her husband moved to Delano and took her parents with her. The house was empty. It was one of the most beautiful houses in Van Nuys. It had cedar-lined closets. Oh, it was a beautiful home. So my parents bought it from her and then they moved out of Victory up to Haynes Street, just a few blocks away and turned the 14133 Victory into two apartments. It was like a duplex. My father had built it that way on purpose. One bedroom had the plumbing in the wall to turn it into a kitchen, this kind of forward planning. Then that was rented and the family...eventually Victory Boulevard became a busy, busy thoroughfare and my father was approached to knock down that home that we had lived in and give a ground lease to a developer who wanted to put up an apartment building.

So he did. He owned the lot next door, too, which was an empty lot and probably was one of the last empty lots on Victory Boulevard. He never developed it. Now there is an apartment

building there called "14133 Victory." That's the name of the apartment building. The family still owned that ground lease at the time my mother died and it became part of the inheritance of my brother and two sisters. I don't know if they still own it, I have nothing to do with it so I don't know a thing about it.

The family there in Van Nuys was really involved with the life of the city. They knew everybody. And I remember very well when our City Hall was built. Oh my, that was a big tall building. My uncle worked in an auto parts store right down there near it and we would visit him sometimes and watch the construction of that city hall. That was a real landmark. That was a great piece of construction. Now if you drive through the San Fernando Valley, you have to be an old timer to even pick it out because there are so many tall buildings down there. Of course, I remember the Los Angeles City Hall. I don't remember it's construction, but my father took me with him one time to downtown Los Angeles when he had business there and he took me up to the top of it. The elevator went only so high and then we had to walk up to the very top and I just thought I was on the top of the world. Oh that was a thrill! My father and mother knew the Mollet family and in fact, we are distantly related to them have a shirttail relative that is married to them. The Browns, the Sturdivants, the Morris family -- he was a rose breeder, his daughter was in high school with me.

My mother graduated from Van Nuys High School in 1921 and then went to attend the old Los Angeles Normal School on

Vermont. She rode the street cars because you got from Van Nuys to downtown on the street car. She attended two years, graduated from there with her certificate to teach school. Then shortly after that, the school moved up to Westwood and became UCLA.

She never did teach school because she married my father and they moved to Gridley and back as I already mentioned. My mother's father's family had been enticed to California by a big railroad promotion that ran all over the east. "Take the train to California and homestead in the beautiful Antelope Valley." And they fell for this and got a free train trip and bought the forty acres in the Antelope Valley. Well, of course, the Antelope Valley was Lancaster, Palmdale, Rosemond, Mojave and these poor people from Connecticut, of course, had no idea what they were getting into. They stuck it out for several years on their forty acres in Lancaster, trying to make a go of it and, of course, couldn't. You can't dry farm in Lancaster any better now than you could then. So they loaded everything they had into a wagon to come to the big city, to Los Angeles. It took them about five days to travel along the Santa Clara River and then cutting across through a pass that still exists if you go the old 99, not the freeway, but take the old 99, you can still see that cut through the mountains which was dug by hand and must have taken an awful long time to do it. A wheelbarrow, a pick and a shovel. It's very narrow, but they got their wagon through that thing and that's how they got to the San Fernando

Valley. My grandfather must have been around 20 and he got a job as a streetcar conductor for the old horse-drawn streetcars in Los Angeles. My grandmother, whose name was Martha Brown, had come from Kansas. She was born in a covered wagon somewhere probably in Iowa, they don't even know for sure what day she was born, but her parents were moving from Montana down to the Kansas/Oklahoma area because there was free land down there. They had adult children that they left in Montana and this baby that was born certainly came very late in life to them and she was more or less raised by an older sister who had children about her age. She went to work for a family in Winfield named Ordway and when they decided to move to Los Angeles, she moved with them. She got a job as a nighttime long distance telephone operator for one of the very early telephone exchanges in Los Angeles and traveling from her job to her home she always went on the streetcar that this young man from Connecticut was the conductor. It was a big family joke, but grandpa "picked up" grandma on the streetcar and they were married on the fourth of July in 1903. We have pictures of the letter she wrote to her sister in Kansas about her wedding -- they are real family treasures.

Anyway, my mother then was born the following year so my mother was a native of Los Angeles, born in 1904. Grandpa quit the streetcar conducting business and went to work for the post office department. He worked for 42 years for the U.S. Postal service. He was in his seventies before he finally retired, but

the reason he worked so long was World War II came about the time he should have retired and, of course, they needed every one of the older employees, because the young ones went off to war.

He moved his family to the San Fernando Valley about 1920. He bought, I think, 18 acres or so on Valario Street and the back property line was the Southern Pacific Railroad. Then on the other side of the Southern Pacific Railroad was the Panorama Ranch. So as a little girl, of course, I spent a lot of time there with my grandparents on that Valario Street property. It was kind of stunning in the early 50's when General Motors bought the Panorama Ranch and built the Van Nuys assembly plant right there. Of course it was an ideal location, they had the railroad that could get them in and out. Grandpa lost that property, however, in the depression. The tax bill was \$50 and nobody in the family could come up with \$50 to save the property so they just lived in rental places all the rest of their lives and, of course, in the home that their daughter built for them.

The family suffered. The depression was very, very hard. My father had to join a union to get a job. He worked in the Canoga Park Elementary School, had to have a union card to get the job. It was the only job he could find where he could support this little family of his, though he was very opposed to labor unions. I don't know that he ever admitted they ever did any good and it was a terrible blow to him to have to join one himself, but he had to feed his family. But then when the

depression eased and people began building houses again, he became a general contractor. He did not do very well after the 40's because the huge developers came into the San Fernando Valley. You didn't have custom homes any more and he was finally driven out. He continued to work for the Union Ice Company and I know in the earthquake of 1952, Union Ice facility in Bakersfield was badly damaged. It was a big old brick building and they called on my father to go up there and see if he could save the building, which he did. He had very great expertise on these industrial-type buildings. He was excellent at handling problems there or constructing them from the ground up.

The Union Ice Company kept him going for quite a while, but then finally when he was in his 60's, I guess, he began doing building inspections. Well anyway, he ended up inspecting schools and that sort of thing at the time he died.

NELSON: When was that?

SHORE: He died in January 7, 1974 on his way home from work. He was still working, 73 years old, he suffered a ruptured aneurism in his aorta, apparently died very quickly. He was alone in his truck coming home. He called my mother and said he was coming and didn't show up and it was in the middle of a snow storm so they had to finally call out the search-and-rescue and he was located.

NELSON: In the middle of a snow storm where?

SHORE: In the Tehachapi mountains. They were living in the mountains then and he was the Community Services Inspector for the Bear Valley Springs Development in Tehachapi. It's west of the Tehachapi Valley and he was coming home from work. He knew he couldn't work very much longer, but he was so proud that he was able to work that long.

NELSON: What about the St. Francis Dam failure? I understand he knew one of the employees or knew some stories?

SHORE: That's right, he sure did. Having lived in San Fernando for so long, for all of his youth, he still apparently went to San Fernando upon occasion. I know he visited his friend, Russell Hunter, there, but actually was living in Van Nuys. I had been born in November of 1926 so this March of 1928 he was in San Fernando and he saw his friend, the gatekeeper or the dam master, whatever he was called, of the St. Francis Dam and the man was shopping in one of the San Fernando City stores for supplies for his family. The man lived in the house that was just immediately below the dam so that he could conduct his business. His whole family lived there. He had children, I don't know how many, but my father and the dam keeper had a conversation and renewed their friendship and then the dam keeper went home with his supplies to his family and within a

day or two the dam went and the whole entire family and the house, the home, everything, was swept away. I think it happened at night, I am not sure, but they were swept away and I don't believe they were ever even found. Apparently there were many people whose remains were never found.

In talking about this years later with a friend of mine in Taft, she said that her grandfather owned extensive citrus orchards where the Santa Clara River flowed into the sea in the Camarillo/Oxnard area and I believe she grew up there too. She was older than I was and she remember so well when they heard that the dam had broken. The water is coming, so on the day that it was predicted that the water from the dam would come flowing down the Santa Clara River, they all went out to watch and her grandfather said it's perfectly safe, we'll all watch. Her mother was very nervous about having people standing there any place near, but they did want to see the water come down. And she said it was the biggest disappointment of her young life, because it just wasn't anything all that great to see. Water came, but she expected a wall of water to come swooping down the river. Well this was several days after the dam had given way and by now, of course, a lot of that energy had been expended on its way down the river bed, and it was just kind of an increased flow and she said that was such a disappointment to her.

People who were born in the early 20's in California, I expect almost everybody has a story about that dam because that

was a horrendous happening and it made a terrific impression. I know I bought my father a book about it. It was published by a Clark Publishers in Glendale. They specialized in historic books.

NELSON: Arthur C. Clark.

SHORE: Yes, Arthur Clark. I don't know if he ever could even bring himself to read that book, but I thought he ought to have it. I don't know what happened to it either.

NELSON: It was probably the Outland book, "Man-made Disaster," is the title I believe.

SHORE: Well, it was entirely devoted to the St. Francis Dam.

NELSON: Written by a gentleman who had grown up in that area too. He was a story on the incident, spent many years of his life doing this and I guess it's probably considered the most authoritative, most accurate, of all of them.

SHORE: Well that publishing company does wonderful things. I've bought several books from them.

NELSON: Yes, they really do.

SHORE: My father had a friend in Van Nuys who was a Department of Water and Power employee. His name was Howell McDaniels and he lived on the corner of Calhoun and Gilmore Streets in Van Nuys and I know that he had something to do with construction of the aqueduct, but I just can't pull it out of my brain as to what it was, but he was a long time valley resident and I know my father was quite proud that he was an acquaintance of Mr. McDaniels.

I can't think of other DWP people that my father knew. Of course as I have already told you, my girlhood friend, Ellen Fallon-Ferris' father was an employee (Earl Fallon). I don't know how long he worked for them or what he did for them, but the DWP certainly was important to people in Van Nuys. That water is what made the desert bloom out there in the San Fernando Valley. Those years that my father worked for the Concrete Pipe Company, of course, it was aqueduct water that was irrigating all those fields for the San Fernando Valley. He saw so many changes and he was brilliant and had a wonderful brain and he knew that he should buy every corner lot in Van Nuys that ever came up for sale. He said he knew the Valley would grow. It had to grow because of its proximity and easy access to Los Angeles. But, of course, he didn't have the money.

He did make some good investments. He owned one corner in Van Nuys on the corner of Hazeltine and, it wasn't Oxnard, but one of those streets down there (Friar). You know you could

have the brilliant ideas, but you had to have the money to carry through on it.

NELSON: It still works today.

SHORE: I guess so. Of course, he had his mother to support all her life, his three children (his older children) and then he and my mother had sort of a "second family." My sister was born in 1938 when I was 12 years old and then my brother was born in 1942, just after Pearl Harbor.

When the war began, papa went out to be an air raid warden. Well he tried to enlist in the CB's (Navy construction battalions) because of his construction skills and they wouldn't take him because he had these five children at home which was certainly a good thing because the unit that he would have been in, went off to the South Pacific and suffered terrible, terrible casualties. But he felt he had to do something, so he signed up as an air raid warden and that night in February, was it 1942? the great L.A. raid. I remember that really well. I was scared to death. The addition that my father had built on to that house at 14133 had a second story on it and so we could all go up there and look out the windows and we saw those searchlights up in those hills on the south side of the San Fernando Valley and we could see the tracer bullets or whatever they were, getting fired up into the air. And, of course, my father grabbed his hard hat and his flashlight and whatever else

and he went off! And when he left, it really gave me quite a sense of security because I just knew that my father was out there and that everything would be alright. Papa would take care of it and old as I was I had to be what, 13 years old or so, I just felt that my father would see that no harm came to any of us.

He kind of laughed about it. There's no denying that there was a lot of action going on and people still say that they found fragments of planes in Inglewood and whatever, but I have to kind of believe it was an over-reaction of fear. I didn't personally know any Japanese farmers who were relocated from the San Fernando Valley. There was a girl in our high school class named Doris Lee and very shortly after Pearl Harbor, she showed up wearing a great big button on her coat that said, "I am Korean." But we didn't really see anything wrong with relocating those people.

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MILDRED SHORE

SHORE: Mrs. Shore is wandering in her recollections here. Let's see, you were talking about the Japanese.

NELSON: And you were talking about the fact that you didn't see a problem with them being relocated or most of the population didn't see a problem.

SHORE: I don't think that people who were not living in those times could really understand the feelings that we had. We were scared and we truly felt that the Japanese could be landing on our coast anytime they wanted to, and apparently history has proven that out that they could have. Their supply line would have been too lengthy to maintain it, but they could have mounted any kind of invasion they wanted to, we were so unprepared. The Japanese, of course, after Pearl Harbor, became the focus of terrible resentment. Now as I said, I did not have any Japanese friends. I did have this Korean girl, Doris Lee that was in my class, but I don't remember any Japanese people in our high school class. I know there were lots of truck farmers in the San Fernando Valley. My grandpa delivered mail

out there in the west end of the valley out at the Van Nuys Post Office and he had a number of Japanese farmers on his mail route. But we just really didn't see anything, at the time, that was wrong with gathering these people up and get them out of here so they couldn't help their countrymen who were coming. I know that sounds terrible and now, I think it was a terrible miscarriage of justice to pick up American citizens and take them off their land.

I have some dear friends, in fact, we have neighbors right here, who as children had to be relocated, had to see their parents lose their property, lose their businesses and I can see it was a terrible injustice, but I very vividly remember the feelings at the time. I guess I was 14 when Pearl Harbor happened. I know I was at Van Nuys High School and the army moved into the Van Nuys High School campus immediately. It happened on a Sunday and by Tuesday, there were army tents set up in the agriculture farm part of Van Nuys High School. And I have pictures in my book here of army trucks sitting there. We weren't supposed to take pictures, but I did. I certainly have very vivid remembrances of the World War II time - which has nothing to do with the Department of Water and Power!

NELSON: Were you too young to become Rosie the Riveter then during World War II?

SHORE: Oh yes, I was too young. My only contribution was the senior girls, or older girls, at Van Nuys High School were invited by the USO to be sort of hostesses at the homes of celebrities who would open their homes to sort of rest and recreation for the ambulatory patients at Birmingham hospital. Birmingham hospital was built on a large tract of land to the west of the city of Van Nuys. It is now Birmingham High School. They took that over after the hospital was no longer needed.

Those buildings were tossed up in a terrible hurry and convoys of ambulances would come down Victory Boulevard, right in front of our house. There'd be dozens of those trucks coming by taking the wounded. They must have gotten them off of trains from someplace or maybe they just met the hospital ships in San Pedro. But anyway we would see these ambulances just by the dozens and military convoys heading out to Birmingham hospital.

Well anyway, especially the movie stars who had swimming pools, which were not common in back yards in those days, would open their grounds of their house to ambulatory veterans. So one day, in fact a couple of times, several groups of us from Van Nuys High School went to Don Ameche's home up in the hills. You visited with the guys and talked with them about their experiences and that sort of thing. I was always kind of scared to do that, but I did do that a couple of times. I guess I felt it was my duty.

I was the editor of the high school newspaper, the Mirror, and I promoted mailing that school paper to the fellows whose

addresses I could garner and we sent it all over the Pacific particularly and Europe, to the fellows who had graduated recently enough that they would be interested in still seeing what went on at Van Nuys High School.

NELSON: These were Van Nuys High School graduates?

SHORE: Van Nuys High School, yes. And we sent out lots of those. I hauled those off to the post office every single week when the paper was printed. We got lots of letters. I kept a scrapbook for a long time of the letters that the fellows would write back to about how much it meant to them. I guess any piece of mail meant something to them.

(ADD ON SECTION)

SHORE: This could be incorporated somewhere when we edit the transcript. During World War II one of the immediate concerns in the Los Angeles area was for the Owens Valley Aqueduct because there was this feeling that the Japanese could send their airplanes over and could bomb that aqueduct anytime they wanted to and what would we do for water? We didn't have the Colorado River and it was a great concern so there was a big push to camouflage the aqueduct everywhere it flowed through the Antelope Valley and the Mojave area.

It's just sage brush out there, but as I recall there were plants either dug up or artificial plants or something was

spotted along the top of that aqueduct because you can see the aqueduct. It's above ground where the freeway crosses there just north of Mojave and we always look at that every time we go to our cabin in the mountains. North of the Valley, Mulholland designed syphons where the water goes down and then it goes back up all by itself; as I recall, those were guarded because there was such a fear that sabotage could take place in that pipeline. It was as though it was our lifeline was being threatened. I don't think it ever really was a threat. I can't imagine the Japanese high command was aiming anything at the Owen's Valley aqueduct in Southern California, but who knows? So it was very prominent in planning for the war.

My father worked for Lockheed Corporation for a little while during the war camouflaging their Burbank operation. They built a whole town on top of the flat roof shelters up there and they had a lot of camouflage nets with leaves and things stuck into them. That was the job that he had during the war to camouflage the Burbank Lockheed plant. So anyway that's probably as much as I can tell you about that, but that is something that should be remembered during the war that there was a great fear about the aqueduct being sabotaged.

NELSON: Well, Mrs. Shore, I appreciate you taking the time to talk to us.

SHORE: Well, it's been my pleasure, believe me and I hope that people will enjoy looking at that little bottle of water, because it has been a family treasure for many, many years obviously.

Interviewer's note: The bottle Mrs. Shore referred to was returned to her in December 1990, since another bottle was donated to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power archives.