

Livermore Heritage Guild Oral History

Interviewee: Frances May Baer Santucci

Interviewer: Unknown

Date: 1982

Length: 1:03 (MP3)

Description

Long-time resident and widow of Louis Santucci tells of her family history and experiences in early Livermore. Frances is the sister of World Heavyweight Champion boxer Max Baer. Frances and her husband built a home on a ranch near the current St. Charles Borromeo Church.

Biographical Information

Frances Santucci was born 23 Oct 1905 in Omaha, Nebraska. She was the eldest child of Jacob Baer (1875–1938) and Dora Bales (1877–1938). Frances was the sister of heavyweight boxing champion Maximilian Adelbert Baer (Max Baer) who was born in 1909 and died in 1959. She also had a younger sister, Bernice Jeanette Baer (1911–1987), and a younger brother Jacob Henry Baer, better known as Buddy Baer (1915–1986). Buddy Baer was also a boxer turned actor. In May of 1922, the Baer family moved to California and resided in several towns, including Hayward, before moving to Livermore. Frances's father leased Twin Oaks Ranch, where he raised hogs. It was there that Frances met her future husband, Louis Santucci (1895-1974), who had immigrated from Italy. They were married in Oakland on 24 Dec 1925. Louis Santucci and Jacob Baer were in business together raising hogs. Frances was the mother of three children and lived in several locations in Livermore. She was preceded in death by her husband, Louis Santucci, who passed away in 1974. Frances died of pneumonia on 27 Aug 1991 at age 85 and was buried in St. Michael's Cemetery with her husband.

Interview started at 00:00

I: I am speaking to Mrs. Frances May Baer Santucci, widow of Louis Santucci. She resides at 873 South G Street, Livermore. Frances is the mother of three children: Louis Santucci married to Dorothy Ralph, and twin girls, Dorothy and Dora. Dorothy is married to Robert Tarte, and Dora is married to Harold Brown. Frances has eleven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, and one grandchild due to be born any minute.

I: Frances, were you ever told how your father [sound cuts off here].

FS: The Swift and Company. My father worked for Swift and Company—a meat packing company in Denver, Colorado. And they sent him to Nebraska; they had a plant there at that time. And my mother was working; she was a head of a— Did all the— See that the people that go there and eat— My mother was the overseer of cook there. That's how he met my mother, and that was— I couldn't tell you the year that that was, but I know that's how my mother and dad met for the first time. They fell in love. [Laughter] And then they stayed in Colorado, and then he married my mother in Omaha and she went to live in Denver, Colorado.

I: He traveled?

FS: No, she didn't go right at that time. They lived in Omaha. And I was born in Omaha, Nebraska. In fact, my brother Max and I were born in Omaha. I'm the oldest, and then Max, and then my folks moved to Denver then, and then my other sister and my other brother, Buddy, were born in Denver, Colorado. There were two of us in Omaha and two in Colorado.

I: What did he do in Colorado?

FS: He was in the meat-packing business. A butcher for Swift and Company. You know, head man. He was the head man.

I: Did your mother continue working?

FS: No. After she was married, he said, no, no more work. She was a homebody.

Time=02:52

I: And then the whole family moved— They were all born— The children were born in the Midwest, and then you all moved to California. Was there a particular reason for moving?

FS: Yes. I developed rheumatic fever. And the high altitude in Durango— Well, you see, we did move from Denver to Durango, Colorado, for a while. We went to Durango. And

it's such a high altitude there. We were living there. And I developed rheumatic fever there. And my dad— The high altitude— The doctor said if we didn't get down to sea level, he didn't know what would happen to both of us. So that's why my dad gave up working for Swift and the packing company. We moved to here, to California, when I was sixteen. And I don't know what year that would be, but I was sixteen at that time. And we moved here because my mother's folks lived here.

I: We were talking about when you were sixteen. You must have gone to grade school in Colorado. Do you remember anything about your schooling?

FS: Well, when I'd come out here, I went— I started to school in Elmhurst, California. You know where Elmhurst is. There was a high school there. I went to high school there. And then from there we moved to Hayward. My dad was in— He went to work for Batteate Slaughterhouse there. He did all the killing of cattle and sheep and hogs for the meat markets. He was overseer, too. And we lived on— They call it the old state game farm. It was on the highway going from San Lorenzo to San Jose. Right on the highway there. At that one time, they called it the old state game farm. And my dad went into business for himself, and at that time, [that's] how I met my husband. That was a time when they had that hoof-and-mouth disease, and they had to kill all the hogs and stuff off. And he— It happened that my— At that time, they had to kill all their hogs because they found that they had the hoof-and-mouth disease. And he came over to see my dad at the state game where we lived because they had a lot of places where they could start another place for— and there was a slaughter house there. And my dad rented it to him, and that's how I met my husband. And I was working for the telephone company when we was living in Hayward. I worked for [unclear]. And that's how I met Louie. And when I got married, my husband and my dad were in the business together. They went into business together for themselves. And then we moved to Livermore.

Time=06:22

I: When you first met your husband, did you meet him there at the slaughter house or did your father bring him home?

FS: No. He came to see my dad. And I happened to be working for the telephone company, and I had come home and he was there with his uncle, talking about— Seeing if they could start a hog ranch up there. They'd rent out a piece of the land that had a lot of the buildings on it and places that they could keep hog ranch. At that time, they could. And that's how I met him. And then we went together for a year before we got married.

I: Did he start a hog ranch there?

FS: Yeah. And then he [unclear]. And from there my dad and him was in business together for— At that time, when the lease was up. We didn't own that ranch, that pig farm. But we had leased it for five years, and when that lease— My husband and my dad

wanted to— They found this place— Twin Oaks Ranch out here. That's where they moved.

Time=07:35

I: Oh, in Livermore? Is it on—

FS: It's on the other road that goes to— You got to go— Oh, gosh, you got me—

I: I'm trying to think of— It's out there close to Alden Lane? In that area.

FS: You go out Olivina. You go down Olivina, you can go that way. One road goes that way. And then there's the road from where we turn off to go down Olivina, that goes off toward the Veterans Hospital. But the other road you can go in from the other way, too, and come in. They used to call it C Street, but I don't remember what it is now. At that time, they used to call it C Street. And now St. Charles church is on that way, and they named that road. That's where it is.

I: I'm not sure if that's Concannon. Concannon Blvd. is in there, in that area.

FS: Well, Concannon's over across— Isn't it by Lucky's? A new Lucky's.

I: So, it's about a block or two past that. And they bought a ranch there?

FS: No, we leased it for five years, the Twin Oaks Ranch, and in the meantime, Max started his fight career. My brother Max started his fight career. There used to be a big house there: twelve rooms, six rooms upstairs and six down. It was a great big house at that time. And we lived upstairs, and my husband and I, and I had my first child. [A little?] he was born in Hayward, and he was a month old before we moved here to Livermore. And that was in 1928 when he was born, and we moved here to Livermore. That's the year we moved to Livermore. 1928. And so—

I: So, both families lived together, then, for five years?

FS: Yes. Not five years. Just for two and a half years 'cause when Max started his prizefighting, he started going places in the fight world, prizefighting. And he bought his mother and father a home in Piedmont. And my dad and mother moved to Piedmont, and my sister—she wasn't married at that time. And Louie and I still stayed at the ranch out there until the lease was up, and then my husband bought a piece of land out there where St. Charles is. That's where we—

Time=10:26

I: Well, that was close to the ranch you leased?

FS: Yeah, and we built a house and my son helped my dad at that time. Not my dad but my husband.

I: Oh. How old was he, then? Your son.

FS: Oh, he was twenty, twenty-one. He'd grown up— He was— Well, I'm getting ahead of myself. As I say, we moved up there. Well, my husband run the ranch and Louie (he's named after his dad), he went to San Jose State for one year and then he quit. He didn't go only one year to San Jose State. And him and Dotty got married, and they moved on the ranch. My husband built a house for them, and they moved on the ranch there, and he run the ranch from there, and my husband would go out every day from here. We were living in this house. So that's where he did, and he worked for that until my son went into the police—Alameda County—becoming a deputy in Alameda County. And he worked out of Santa Rita.

I: Now what type of work did you do on the ranch?

FS: He had over two, three-thousand head of hogs. And he fed pigs. And they had to take— And they gathered the garbage from— They had two trucks going to Berkeley and Oakland to these restaurants, and they gathered the garbage. That was the feed they fed— They mixed it with other food, you know. For the pigs. And they— That's where— And my son didn't drive the truck all the time, only when someone got sick or something [on the truck?]. But there was two men working all the time, and they was feeding the pigs. And my husband would buy the pigs small and then raise them, fatten them up, and then to sell them to like to different meat-packing companies. That they'd kill them and for all the shops.

Time=13:15

I: Do I remember something about at one time you had to cook all the food before you put—?

FS: Well, that came later. Then they passed a law that they had to cook all the food. Then my husband installed a cooker. Every time they brought the food, they had to cook all that food before they could feed it to the pigs. And so that was the law at that time.

I: What was the reason for that law, do you know?

FS: Well, they were afraid they'd contact [contract] something that— Like they had that breakout of the— (I: Oh, the hoof and mouth¹?) Yeah, something in the food, they were afraid that it wasn't healthy for the pigs and for people to eat the meat. And that's why they cooked all the food that the pigs eat.

I: And so you moved into this house in—?

FS: 1934.

¹ Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). Frances probably meant trichinosis, not FMD.

I: That would have been right after it was built.

FS: No, this house is older than that. Ida Murray and her sister Clara and Mr.— She married. They had a double wedding. Two. And their husbands built the houses. Like this house and the house next to me is the same. Built the same. They're built exactly alike. And so they both lived next door to one another until Clara wanted to move back to Ferndale. That's where she was from. Ida's parents lived in Ferndale, California. So, her and her husband—[?] Berry? was his name—and they moved back up to Ferndale, and they rented this house out for a long time but we didn't— We were living— Still, I was living up— [You know?] where the Dania Hall was. We moved in from the ranch. And—

Recording stopped at 15:20 and restarted at 15:36

FS: It was for sale. So, my husband came over and talked to Ida, because she was in charge because Clara wasn't here. She left her sister in charge, taking care of everything. And we decided to buy this place. We moved up here just one month before Max won the championship of the world. And I'm telling you, it was something that you've never seen in your life. The night he won that champion— The day he won that championship, you couldn't get for a mile around this place here. The cars, the people, they come— The Livermore Band and [unclear]. He led them— And they came up— Well, the Eagles— I think the Eagles had at that time, they marched up and they had a parade up here. And I've never seen so many— I didn't know— If you asked me today who was all here, I couldn't have told you. [Laughter]

Time=16:49

I: The town turned out.

FS: They turned out. I'm telling you; you've never seen anything like it. They just went wild. And so, Lackland, he owned a place downtown, he sent up kegs of beer and they sent pretzels. They put a table out here in my driveway, and they set everything up out there. I didn't have anything to do with it. And the people I've never seen and they were celebrating and just went crazy. I'd never seen—[unclear]. Wonderful and everything. But I— I put my little ones to sleep in the bedroom, and I came out and— At that time I had carpets. Separate carpets. And they rolled up my carpet and here was a man performing in the middle of the floor, and I said, "Where did he come—?" He said, "I come from the big theater in San Francisco," and he was putting on the program that he had danced on the stage. He was out here doing it. And there was the people from the paper, from San Francisco. I tell you, I never seen anything like it. And I enjoyed having them but, you know, we had put in a new lawn in the front there. They trampled it. And they came in on my hardwood floors. Oh, I could have cried. But I was happy that my brother, who won the title but— And they celebrated in there, and my neighbor said, "Oh, Frances, I pity you. I'll come over tomorrow and try to help you clean up that floor." And we did have it— Then we heard they were coming back the next night to celebrate again. Well, I had to just lock the doors and get away. I couldn't take it, and my two little twins— At that

time they were little. They were just a little over a year and a half old. [Laughter] (I: They didn't know what was happening.) [Laughter] [unclear]. So, we had a wonderful— (I: [Part?] of the family?) Yeah. And Max, you know he won the title in New York City, and my mother and dad were back there at that time. And in the meantime, back there, my dad, he had a bad heart, my dad. That's another reason why from Colorado, the high altitude, the doctor was afraid that he'd have a heart attack. I guess. He was a man that— He'd lift heavy things in his life, and he'd go in and out these— You know, if you ever see— Like a butcher shop— You go in those ice things and have to put meat in and freeze it. And that wasn't good for him, either. And then, in late life, he contact [contracted?] this—oh, around the heart, muscles around the heart—they'd contact. And he'd had quite a few spells. Not bad ones. But then when he got— When Max won the title in all that excitement— Max had a doctor set right at his ringside when he won the fight because he was scared. But it happened— He didn't at the ringside— And the fella from the newspaper from San Francisco, he did. He had a heart— And Max was fighting, and he seen the commotion, and he glanced down, and he seen it wasn't his dad, but the doctor took care of this other [man]— I think it was— It wasn't the *Enquirer*. There were two papers. (I: *The Chronicle*?) *The Chronicle*, I think. Smith. His name was Smith. Anyway, he was back there at the ringside. He was sent from here back there for the fight. And he's the one who had a heart attack. And Max— It was a good thing he had the doctor there. He wouldn't have lived. The doctor— They took him to the hospital— Smith to the hospital. And my dad got an attack about three or four days later. And they had him home in one of those— They can't fly him. They wouldn't fly him. They came in a train. And it was a part where it was air conditioned, and they kept it there. And they brought him home in that. [I: That Pullman?] I guess they had a place all to themselves. And my dad and mother, and they had a doctor came all the way from New York with him.

Time=22:02

I: When I was walking down the street, I noticed most of these sidewalks around here say WPA on them. When you moved here—?

FS: No, not in the front. No, down there. They just start from here to the other part where you walk along, that was the WPA put the sidewalks in at that time. I think that's what they used to call them, the WPA. (I: The Works Progress Administration.) Yeah, they put them in. We paid so much to have them put in, everybody, everyone in front of their property.

I: Did they do a lot of WPA projects? Was Livermore hurt a lot by the Depression?

FS: It was, in a way, as far as I can remember now. And then they put them all in. They give a lot of people work. Put them in. Putting all the sidewalks— There were no sidewalks on either side of the street. (I: One day I just happened to catch sight of them.) And they put them all— I think they're all— The whole thing had been— I think the WPA put the [unclear] all around here. And then we paid to have the street— The streets

weren't paved, either. They were dirt streets. (I: Oh, they were?) Yes. Some company—I don't know what—from out of town, they came in here and put in— And we had to pay for to have our streets paved in front of where our property was. We paid so much. I think the state paid so much and we paid so much.

Time=23:40

I: You had a car when you moved into this house.

FS: Oh yes. We had an automobile.

I: So then, all of your children must have went to St. Michael. To school.

FS: No. They couldn't get in at St. Michael. Well see, my girls— I am a convert. My husband was Catholic, and I didn't join the St. Michael's until 1972, myself. And I was married again in St. Michael's, and I received communion there. And I was married the same night.

I: Oh, you were baptized?

FS: Father Adams married me. 1972. Louie and I. And all my children and some of my grandchildren was there, too. (I: Oh, that was happy!) They baptized me. That was it. And then I went there. And my girls, though, were Catholic before I was. The twins. They joined— They were just in high school when they joined. Through Ida. My mother never had us kids baptized. She left it up to us when we grew up that whatever church we wanted to go and join, we could. That's how I could join. I was never baptized before. And so that way I joined and was married in the Catholic— My mother seen that we were in church every—that went to Sunday school—every—even if we didn't— My mother was a Methodist, and she used to play in church and sing. She has a beautiful voice. And then we went to the different churches. Most the time we were here before the girls became Catholic, they went to the Presbyterian Church. But they started to go over to the church with Iris—that's Ida's daughter—and they loved it. And they said, "Mama, we would love to become a Catholic." And I said, "Well, honey, that's up to you. If you want to, that's okay with me." And their dad was so happy that they were. And they joined the Catholics. And I did. In 1972. That's why they never went to St. Michael's school.

Time=26:55

I: Which school did they go to in Livermore?

FS: They went to Fifth Street School. (I: Oh, they did.) They went to Fifth Street School. They were there Sunday. [Laughter] They were there, and my brother Buddy went there, too. He went for a while. He didn't go very long before he moved away from Livermore. And Mrs. Dutcher was one of his teachers. She taught my brother Buddy, and her son was in the same class. Norris Dutcher. (I: You mean with Buddy?) Yeah, and they were going to school together. She taught both of them. And she taught the Prince?, too.

I: And Fifth Street School went from first grade to eighth grade? (FS: First grade to eighth.) I'm sorry I missed that reunion Sunday.

FS: It was really nice. They had quite a few there. And some of them I hadn't seen for a long time. Two of them, I'd look at them and then they'd say, "Remember me?" [Laughter] I says, "You look familiar." Then they said—tell me who they were. And they put stickers with their names—name tags on. And they'd say, "Oh, Mrs. Santucci. It's so good to see you. I haven't seen you in years." [Laughter] Some of them came just special for it, you know, from out of town.

Time=28:28

I: I'd like to back up on a couple of things. Maybe if you can remember your work at the telephone company? What you did?

FS: Well, I worked on the switchboard, and I was working at the time I lived there, I was working to become a— Not the chief operator, but so I could go in and— What do they call those? (I: Supervise—) Like a supervisor. Go in and help the girls out. But I worked a couple of years at the— At that time, they didn't have like they have today. They was all girls. And they used to take telegrams from people who phone in and want telegrams. It was a little tougher for us girls at that time. We had— [unclear]. A lot of times I got knocked off of my chair. I couldn't wear wigs or anything valuable. I wore my ring, but I wouldn't wear a bracelet—or anything if you touch one of those things, you could get— knock you out. (I: Oh, an electrical shock.) Yeah, knocked me right off— out of my chair. We worked different shifts, you know. We worked so many days during the day, and sometimes I'd work night shift, all night long. And there would only be two of us on the switchboard at nighttime—one up taking long-distance calls and one down below. The girls nowadays, they don't have to do that according to—I understand. My granddaughter's working there. The woman showed up there. Ina? She says it's nerve wracking, but it's— It's all comp— You go in. "What city, please, you're calling." That's the only time she goes in or something like that or operator.

I: And what did you have to do? Get a name and a number for long-distance?

FS: Yeah. That's one thing why to this day I can remember phone numbers so well is because we worked with numbers all the time. Not names, so much. And go in on these calls and say— And they get disconnected or something, and we'd light flashes, and we had to go in there. We worked like a switchboard. They plugged in different things. You've seen like in the olden days— In the movies. Yeah. That's all the telephone girls in 1924 and 1925 I worked in the telephone company.

Time=31:22

I: Do you remember what you were paid for a week's work?

FS: No. Not anymore. No, I don't remember. And then we'd take out stock in the telephone—and then they'd take it out of our wages every— When we.

Recording stopped at 31:39 and started again at 31:42

I: At this point in our conversation, we decided that we'd like to continue our discussion in a couple of days.

I: We didn't know the name of the street the ranch was on; it's over there where St. Charles was. And it's on Lomitas Avenue.

FS: And at that time when we had the ranch, we called it C Street. And it's changed since my husband sold—after he sold the ranch, and then it had a different name.

I: But that was in the county at the time? Or was that in the city?

FS: No, that's in the county.

I: And it was C Street.

FS: Now it's in the city isn't it out there now? (I: I believe so.) I don't know for sure. But that's where it was.

I: And the name of the ranch? What did you call the ranch?

FS: You mean the ranch where my husband and father had the—? Oh, that was the Twin Oaks. (I: Twin Oaks Ranch.) Twin Oaks Ranch. But where he has the ranch— He bought that land where he had the hog ranch was up on C Street after the lease was up on the other. The people that owned it, they wanted to move out there themselves. From Fruitvale or Elmhurst. And they used to have a laundry—curtain laundry—and they did up all kinds of curtain and drapery work. You know, for people. So, that's the only thing I know. I can't even remember the name of the people that really owned it. Twin Oaks Ranch. But it was a nice place there on that—I don't know if you've ever been around there. They tore down the big house. There was a big house there. Twelve rooms. Six down and six up. And that's where we lived upstairs—my husband and I and my son. And we moved there— I moved out here on the ranch. And my folks moved about a month before I did because I had my oldest child, boy, he was born just about the time they was going to move out here. And the doctor— In fact, the little fella caught a cold and it turned into like pneumonia, and he said no moving taking the boy away from here to move him out to Livermore until he's over this affair. So, I stayed on for a whole month there in Hayward's after he was born. Then we moved back— I moved out here on the ranch with my folks. And they lived downstairs and I lived upstairs. It was a nice big house. But we lived there the five years we had the lease on the ranch. And after that, Louie and my dad and [unclear] moved before the five years. He moved to Piedmont. That was when Max won the championship, he bought his mother and father a home up on St. James Drive in Piedmont. So, then we stayed on it until the lease was completely

up, and then my husband— A piece of land was for sale, and it had a tank house on it. So, he bought the place, and then Charlie Bovard built the house out there on that street. [I: Oh, he did!] The house is still there. It was a stucco house.

Time=35:33

I: He built most of the houses in this area. Put the roofs on.

FS: Yeah. Well, he even built that house for us around the corner, in the middle, not this first duplex here, but the big house in the middle there. Charlie Bovard built that house for my husband and I. It used to be— We bought that land and we thought that now when we sell the ranch and he retires and he sells, then we want to have that as income property, and that's why we built these on there. And then my husband bought the house on the corner down on the other corner there's another pretty good size piece of land and so he built another duplex on there. He had to fight with the city for a long time before he got that one, but he— They thought it should have been deeper, but they finally gave him permission. It wasn't— Charlie Bovard didn't build these duplexes, though. It was [Glasup?] A man by the name of [Glasup?]. He was a contractor. But then he moved away from here about a year or two after he built that second duplex. The city finally gave him an okay, but we had to attach them to the other houses to make them duplexes, all the way down. From the big house, we had to attach the duplex on the other side. That big house. And then these houses were separated. They were all right. That was okay. But the other houses, to get that—

I: That's on the corner of— Must be H and Palm. (FS: H and Palm.) Yeah. They're good-looking houses. Was Charlie Bovard still working with his father when he built those houses? At one time he worked with his father.

Time=37:32

FS: Yes, and then his father passed away. And then, poor Charlie, he's living with one of his children.

I: I think so. Out on Mines Road. He put the last roof on our house, too.

FS: He put these on for us and another one. You know, we had to have new ones on this house. This house, let's see, I was trying to figure, see. It's been— Louie is fifty-four, and Ida— See, Ida's daughter was born on January the first, and she's the same age my son, and she's fifty-four. And I know it was about two— About fifty-six years— This is fifty-six or fifty-seven years old, this house. (I: Must have been one of the first ones.) Yeah. And what's the name. Was it Fletcher? Or who's the guy who built all these houses around here? His father. (I: Oh, who built them? The one who built them?) These houses. His son is a contractor, and his father was the contractor. He was the one who built these houses at that time. And they're built. They say these houses are built.

I: They weren't Tubbs? It wasn't Tubbs?

FS: Oh, no, no, no, no. I want to say Fletcher. Or could it be— Fletcher had a father who was a contractor. (I: I'm not sure. I don't know.) Who built those houses over on— Over there by— On East Avenue. Those homes?

I: Oh, Jensen. Is it Jensen? (FS: Maybe.) Maybe this is a Jensen house?

FS: But anyway, he's an old time— His father died, well he went on and built homes himself, the son. So that's why I just wondered. I can't remember the name. It just left me. Just like that.

Time=39:34

I: Yeah. And I was told that the wood in these houses came from Port Chicago. Or is that the houses up on the other side of the street?

FS: It must be, because these are built [unclear] a long time. My husband [unclear] went over that morning. You know they had that blast—that explosion. And they were getting the garbage from Port Chicago. And my son and my husband, each one drove a truck, and they [unclear] got over there, and they could see all this along the side, the road and everything. And big pieces of the ship. We got a piece out there— I got a piece. [Laughter, unclear.] It sits out back. It's a piece from the ship. One of the ships that blew up. (I: Oh, no.)

I: Mrs. Santucci is going out in the backyard to get me a piece of this ship so I can see it. [Bells chiming in background.]

FS: They said there were bodies and everything. They're picking up people, you know, when they got there. Cause they had to go in. They won't allow only those who had to go on the grounds. They wouldn't allow them in there. But they could go in. Louie and Lou—the two Louies—and—to gather the garbage and stuff. He said it was a terrible mess. Well, we seen— Like a combustion, you know. [unclear] I don't know. Were you here at that time? [I: No, I wasn't.] And then over you could see a light up the whole sky. It's like a light. And we said there was an explosion some place, but we didn't know where at that time. And here it was at Port Chicago.

Time=41:25

I: Oh, my gosh. What year was that?

FS: It might have been—1944. [I: Was that?] It was in the years. (I: Oh, for heaven sakes.) Cause my son was ten and some years old, and he was born in 1928.

I: Yeah. That must have been a terrible thing. Just one ship, was it?

FS: I can't remember just how many ships was involved, but there was a mess.

I: And to think you felt it in Livermore.

FS: Yeah. It felt like it, you know, just like your combustion, you know like that. And we says, “Oh, my God.” But we couldn’t figure out what it was. Then we went out and looked up at the sky all around, and we could see this is all lit up like a— you know, over that way, from where the explosion was, Port Chicago.

I: Oh, my. Well, I think they had an explosion once earlier, too. In the early thirties.

FS: Yeah, yeah. It was a dangerous situ[ation], you know, over there. They had the explosions—explosive stuff, you know. And that went up in the ship.

Time=42:42

I: Oh, dear. What an experience. Wow. Did you give your ranch that you bought a name?

FS: No, not a new name. It was the Livermore Hog Ranch; it was at that time. Then another hog ranch started up here on—out there, years afterward Louie had it. They had it called the Livermore Hog Ranch, too. But we just called it the Livermore Hog Ranch. Oh, Santucci’s Hog Ranch.

I: Then your husband retired and you moved into town and you—

FS: We moved into town before he retired. He was living in this house when he retired. And he retired in 1958. He sold the ranch in 1958 to a fella by the name of Livermore. And he was no relation to anybody here, the town of Livermore, and that’s a coincidence now I’m telling you. And even Robert Livermore lived just a block over from us, you know. And he was from San Ramon, and he worked for the Bishop Ranch, and has a— It’s in the Senate. You know there’s a fella by the name of Livermore in— His brother, he’s in something to do with the government, and not here but in Washington, D.C. His name was Livermore. (I: Oh, what a coincidence.) [Laughter] Town of Livermore, and sold the ranch to a man by the name of Livermore. His name was Robert. By the way, they called him Bob instead of Robert. Bob Livermore. And he was from San Ramon. And he was head of the Bishop Ranch over there. He ran the Bishop Ranch for Mr. Bishop. And he bought our ranch, and the livestock, and the ranch, and he took over. And he hired somebody to run the ranch here because he had other things to do. But he went and invested his money in that, and that’s what he wanted to do. And he wanted to invest money in the town with his name. [Laughter] It was funny. And then when I look at him, I said, “Well, it’s the truth.” [Laughter] His name’s Livermore. [Laughter] Then we went and took a trip back to see my daughter; she was living in—what do you call it?—in Pennsylvania. There was another town. This fella, he started them. And they lived there. And Harry would—

[Recording stopped at 45:33 and restarted at 45:47]

FS: Levittown— Levittown, Pennsylvania. That's— I thought— Mr. Levitt built a place. There's a Levittown in New York, and there's a Levittown in Pennsylvania. There's two. He built these—started these places out, and built like a village there. And my daughter and son-in-law bought the house there where they lived. And so, we went back. We flew back. And we drove a car back. We bought a car, and we drove back so we could see the country. Well, up there, you could only see sky. And we went back to [be?] and see my first my first little great-grand— Well, it would be my first little great-granddaughter. No, granddaughter. It wasn't my great-grand. It was granddaughter. These are my great— And she—Jenny—she works out here at the Sandia. She's working for Sandia now. And we stayed there from August 'til November. The day after her birthday, we started home. And then the following year we went back. We promised we'd be back to be for her second birthday, and we did. We drove back then, and we stayed the same length of time, 'cause it was no use to go back there and just spend a week, a few weeks. They said, "Mom, when you come, plan to stay at least a couple a three months with us back here." They had plenty of room. They had a big home. So, we did. We drove back there a second time and drove back again here. We had a good time. And we were scared to death. You know my husband wasn't feeling up to par, but the kids and I thought, well we were talking—

[Recording stopped at 47:41 and started again at 47:44]

I: Let's see. What were we— Oh, so you were trying to get him to retire and then—.

FS: To retire, because we thought, well, he was up there in years, and he had worked hard all his life. He came to this country from Italy when he was seventeen, my husband. He came over on a ship with a friend of his, and the friend's living up on the other side of Manteca. He's still there, too. And they came over on the boat, and they said, "Oh, what a rough ride." And they were down in the lower part of the ship, you know, when they came. And every time they'd rock, everything would go off the shelves, and they thought, "Oh, boy, this is our last— Any time now we're going to go down." [Laughter] But they did. They got here. And my husband went to work in the artichoke fields when he first came to this country, over in San Francisco, 'cause he had an uncle that was living in— had two uncles that was living there in San Francisco. But he went and worked in the artichoke fields, and from sun up to sundown for a long time before he went into the hog business. And then he finally went in with his uncle, and started with his uncle at that time.

Time=49:09

I: Did he speak any English when he came to this country?

FS: Not too much. But he understood. He didn't do much. Because when they were coming across from New York, after they landed in New York, they come cross country on the train, and they stopped at his—. This fella that came with him, he didn't think he was going to live. He got so sick, you know, on the boat, and coming— And he went into a store and ordered— And he'd point to stuff that he thought that would be good this fella

would like, and he would— And he got a steak, and he brought it back on to the train, and the guy cooked it, you know, coming across the county for them. And the poor fella couldn't even down that. Louie had to end up eating— Louie didn't get as sick as his friend did coming. They had a rough time with the coming. And he didn't get back to see— That's why when— He didn't go back until after the Second World War. And he went back to see how his family survived from the war situation. And none of us met. The children and I, we stayed cause my son and I took care of the business out there at the ranch. And 'cause they had truck drivers going to get the food for the—feed the pigs— from Oakland, and Berkeley, and all around. And, but he said promise—Someday, he'd take me back there, and I never did meet all of my husband's folks back there. They all write now. There's only two sisters and one brother living out of ten children. There was five boys and five girls. And my husband was the oldest of all of the children. And he says some day he would take me back there to meet them all. And they keep writing. Some of them— One or two of them that write English, they write now and ask when Francesca— they call me Francesca—says, "When are you coming back to see us all. We would love to see you." And, but I don't know. The girls and I are talking something—maybe we'll take a trip, which we hope. With the war situation over in the European countries, you don't want to go anyplace.

Time=51:35

I: Yeah. It does frighten you off. It would be nice to go.

FS: Yeah, and Louie, well, my girls and my children, they have so many cousins—first and second cousins—and as I say, there's two aunts and an uncle living there in Italy. And we would love someday— I would love, if God's willing. But I'm getting old, so I better make [unclear]. [Laughter] (I: Oh, you've got time! You have some time.) I hope. And to go back and see them all and visit with them. But if I went, I would just not just love go to Italy, I'd love to see the other places close by. I can go to Germany and Switzerland and all those places. But I'd love to go back and visit and see all— Well his brothers—now Louie's brother and two sisters don't speak a word of English, but their children do. See, now, the younger generation there. In fact, one of his nieces, she taught up here at Davis. She came from Italy. She went to England and she learnt the English language there. But it's a little different than our talking here. Speech. So, she taught one year up at Davis. And then she went and took a course for herself [instead of? or studying?] teaching, and now she's back in Italy, at a school near her hometown teaching the American language, English. And she writes to me. [I: She could help all of you out.] Yeah. That's right. I have her picture here. [Louie and I were]? going to go to Italy, but he died just a few days— Well, a month before our forty-ninth wedding anniversary. [I: Ah, that's too bad.] So, that ended that. So, I never got back there. But one more year, and we'd have made it. Well, that's it. A lot of people do that. You know, they say we'll do it, but they put things off, and 'till it's too late. And we would have loved to went— If he'd have lived. We would have been there and back a long time ago. [I: It would have been a good experience for you.] Yeah.

Time=54:14

I: I was a little curious, if we get back to Livermore, you said you moved into town, and I don't know if I understood if you said you moved into Dania Hall or next to it.

FS: Right across the street. Toscalini. Toscalini had two homes there alike. And right there where St. Vincent de Paul is now is where we lived. There was two houses there. And we lived in the first one there, and right on the corner. And we could hear every time they had on Saturday nights, the Danish people used to have their— play music. And they sometimes would have their dances and everything. But that's where we moved from the ranch, in there, but my husband, he went back— He had the ranch there, but he would go every morning. But we was in— Cause my son was getting ready, pretty near ready for going to kindergarten at that time. And we figured, well— And we were figuring to buy a house here in town, which we were looking for, and we just happened to run into Ida's sister and advertise and we come up and looked at and we bought the house. Here in this house. And we've been here ever since, I have.

I: When you moved in was— It's called the senior center, now. Was that building—?

Time=55:44

FS: No, there was nothing there. There was just a— See, there had a been a school there— Wasn't there something there at one time? Something that burnt down. And there was just a two little—uh—seaman things, for like a wading pool that kids—water— My little tykes, when they were small, I'd have to— My son and I, run down and get them. They'd strip their clothes off and jump in that water there. [Laughter] So, anyway, there was nothing there. Then they built that in later years, here, that senior center.

I: They use it for a ballpark for a while?

FS: Well, I think they did play some ball, but they didn't have a fence or nothing around there. Nothing was there, not even any grandstands or anything. They had people sit in their cars and watch kids play ball. But then they built there a nice place for the guys to play ball out there. And as I say, when we moved here, there was no pavement, no sidewalks. You know. We had the see— from my step, clear out just to where the sidewalk was and the main street. That was there, but they contracted to— What was it? (I: The WPA.) Yeah, The WPA, yeah. They put in all these sidewalks, and then they— The city had come in here and paved the streets. Each one had to pay for their own paving around. You know they give them a price, and we had to pave it all the way down 'cause we owned all that, we had to pay. (I: You had a long and happy family life in this house.) That's right.

Time=57:47

I: It sounds like it. Did any of your children ever take music lessons? I think you talked once of your brother, Buddy, singing.

FS: Oh, my brother Buddy, he has a wonderful voice. He took— Well, he could sing, but then when he went down south, and he was in Hollywood, he took lessons from— But, breathing lessons. He had the voice, but he didn't have the breathing. And he still sings, but him and his wife now, the one he's married to now, Vicky, they sing and play, and she belongs to the— Oh, it's a branch of— What's this church right around the corner here? This little church around here, right on the—

I: The Reformed Church of Latter-Day Saints?

FS: Yeah. She belongs to— It's a branch of the Mormon Church, and she belongs to that branch up in Sacramento, and she plays the piano for them down at that church. And sometimes he gets in and sings with her. He's got a beautiful voice. And my son has, too. That comes down through the— My son has, and then my daughter's, Doris, little girl, she's going to go to Japan. She's leaving the end of the first week in July. She's going to Japan for six weeks. It's a rodeo thing there and she sings, and she's got a beautiful voice. She just sang last Sunday. They had a recital. This lady that gives her lessons lives in Pleasanton, I think, and she takes lessons, one a week. And she said there's no holding her back. She's going places. And she sang a couple of songs down there this last Sunday. They just clapped her down the house. They held it— I'll tell you where they held it. It was in the American Legion Hall on Main Street in Pleasanton. They had to have a big place to hold it, and that's where they had the recital. And she had a lot of— group— quite a few— a group of children. Well, some of them are old— quite— you know, up there. And some are younger. By my granddaughter, she's eighteen, and that's what she wants to do.

I: Which one? What was her name?

FS: Nina, Nina Brown. This is her picture.

Recording stopped at 1:00:48 and begins again at 1:00:54

I: I would like to, at this point— I am now through interviewing Mrs. Santucci — make a couple of little notes. Near the end of the front side of this tape, we talked about an explosion at Port Chicago, and Mrs. Santucci has in her backyard, a piece of iron from that ship that blew up. She went out and got it, if you remember our discussion, and it is about a foot by a foot and a half in size. And it was dated June 14, 1944. As I was leaving, we stood in the front yard and talked a little more. Frances told me the tree in her front yard was a present from one of the gardeners at the Veterans Hospital. It was to commemorate her brother Max Baer's winning of the World Heavyweight Boxing Championship. Frances and her family planted the then tiny, one-foot-tall evergreen in their front yard. Today it is a city landmark, rising far above the other houses and other trees in the neighborhood.

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Recording ends at 1:02:52.

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