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Agricultural History

Title

Mary Ann Borina Radovich: Croatian Apple Farmer, Watsonville, California, 1918-1977

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Introduction

In 1977 the Regional History Project received special funding to conduct a series of oral history interviews documenting the agricultural history of Santa Cruz County. This oral history conducted with Mary Ann Borina Radovich on June 7 and June 22, 1977 focuses on Radovich's extensive experience as an apple farmer in Watsonville, California from the 1930s to the 1970s. It is also a significant contribution to the ethnic history of the Croatian community in the Pajaro Valley of California.

Croatians first arrived in Santa Cruz County during the Gold Rush era. But a largest wave of emigration stimulated by high taxes, political turmoil and compulsory military service in Croatia began in 1870 and peaked during the years 1884 to 1914. Ten percent of Croatia's population emigrated to the United States, and most of them (including the community in Watsonville) came from the islands of the Dalmatian coast. Watsonville's Mediterranean climate and coastal mountains presented a familiar landscape in which to establish new lives. As families settled in the Pajaro Valley they sent for relatives and helped them gain a fresh start as well.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Pajaro Valley was bursting with apple orchards run largely by Croatians. According to Ross Eric Gibson: "An apple boom numbered a million trees on 14,000 acres, turning the valley into the most productive apple region in the world, celebrated for a while with an Apple festival. The 40 packing sheds bore mostly Slavic names."¹

Mary Ann Borina Radovich was born in Watsonville, California in 1918. Her grandparents (on her mother's side) had emigrated to Watsonville from the Konavle Valley of Dalmatia with her mother, who was thirteen when the family arrived in 1901. Her grandfather, Martin Secondo, first moved to the Jackson area of the Sierra Nevada, where he briefly worked as a miner. In search of a different way to make a living, he was told by friends that there was a strong Croatian community in Watsonville, California. In Watsonville he began working as a laborer in the apple orchards and eventually rented an apple orchard himself (from the Wyckoff family of Watsonville), where he raised his family, including Radovich's mother.

Radovich's father left Yugoslavia in 1898. He came from a village near Dubrovnik without his family when he was only ten years old. There were seven or eight children in his family. It was the custom that the oldest son would remain at home and the others would migrate; her father was in line to leave according to this plan. He came to San Francisco, where his uncle owned a restaurant, and worked there washing dishes while he attended night school. At age seventeen he worked as a carpenter helping rebuild San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. After an adventurous stint gold mining in Alaska, he came to Watsonville and worked in the apple packing houses. He met Mary Ann's mother in Watsonville in 1917. After a while he leased

1. "Agricultural Legacy of Serbo-Croatian Community," *San Jose Mercury News*, August 1, 1995, p. 1B.

an orchard and then eventually was able to buy his own apple farm, the farm where Mary Ann and her sister June grew up. Mary Ann attended Moreland Academy in Watsonville. Mary Ann worked with her father in the office after school and on Saturdays from the time she was thirteen years old. Even while she attended Stanford University (where she studied psychology) she took fall quarters off to help with the harvest. Her mother became ill while Mary Ann was in college; she died in 1941. After Mary Ann graduated from Stanford in 1940 she returned home to work with her father until his death in 1949. She then took over the business, Borina Orchards, located on San Juan Road near San Miguel Canyon Road. Her father had been a grower, packer, and shipper, but she phased out all but the growing aspect of the business because in the late 1950s trends began to shift away from exporting. One reason was that the Winter Permain apples her father had grown were in great demand by the Chinese. These apples were shipped to Singapore, Malaysia and China. Picked green, these apples would mature into a semi-tart fruit that even small were flavorful. But the closure of China to foreign trade in the 1950s eliminated this market.

In this oral history Radovich discusses her family's history and their emigration to the United States. She describes the early apple industry in Watsonville, and the changes that took place over the years in terms of labor, mechanization, irrigation, crop varieties, pest control, harvesting, and land use. Her detailed and reflective narration makes this oral history a singular contribution to the agricultural history of Central California.

Radovich owned Borina Orchards from the 1940s through the time of this interview in 1977, and beyond. For many of those years her husband, Rafael Radovich, was her business partner, and in fact beginning in 1957 he was primarily responsible for the apple business. They had no children. In 1977 the orchard was about one hundred acres, mostly planted in dwarf apple trees. They grew Pippin and Delicious apples.

In her notes, interviewer Meri Knaster described Radovich as “articulate and educated...modest, but confident, no longer awed by challenges in the businesses. It’s all old hat to her by now.” The interviews were held in Radovich’s home in the northern part of Watsonville, California. The interviews were transcribed in the 1980s but due to funding and staffing limitations it was unfortunately not possible to publish this volume until now. Mary Ann Radovich died on December 19, 1991, in Santa Cruz County, leaving her husband, Rafael Radovich, and her sister, June Borina Schnacke.

Copies of the manuscript are on deposit in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; in Special Collections at McHenry Library at the University of California, Santa Cruz; and at the Pajaro Valley Historical Association in Watsonville. The Project is supported administratively by Christine Bunting, head of Special Collections and Archives, and Acting University Librarian, Robert White.

—Irene Reti
Regional History Project
McHenry Library

University of California, Santa Cruz
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Family History in Yugoslavia

Knaster: Maybe we could talk a little about your grandparents, where they lived in Yugoslavia, and what you remember about them.

Radovich: Well, yes I can, if I can remember very much because that's quite a ways back.

Knaster: Well, whatever your parents told you about them—such as where they were born in Yugoslavia?

Radovich: My grandmother and grandfather were born in the Konavle Valley on the coast of Yugoslavia. I believe my grandmother came from a village by the name of Mihanici. My grandfather, I'm not sure, but it was a village close to that.

Knaster: Were there families involved in agriculture in that valley?

Radovich: Yes, that valley was predominantly agriculture, or viticulture.

Knaster: Were they involved in growing grapes?

Radovich: Some, because they had to grow them for their home use. Or, if they grew another crop, then they traded with a neighbor who did have grapes because wine is. . . well over there it's like Coca Cola over here.
(laughter)

Knaster: Yes, right.

Radovich: I really don't know too much about their backgrounds beyond that. When my husband and I were in Yugoslavia about five years ago, we went to the parish church there. The parish church is usually the parish for a group of villages, not for any one village, but there are usually a group of villages that come under the control of one church. So we went to the church that we thought was the parish church of the village that my mother's side of the family came from. We found a priest there who was very cooperative, and he brought out what records he had of the church. Of course they were very old, and he kept them under lock and key, and all that. But we told him we were coming and so he produced the records. We gave him the names we were looking for and he was able to trace my grandmother's and my grandfather's background to about 1807. Of course, it only gave the names of the children, the births, marriages and deaths. That was all the information we got about the family. As far as my father's side of the family is concerned, we just weren't able to get anything out of the church there. They told us the records were sent to the . . . I think they said to the main church in Dubrovnik that is . . . I forget what they call it . . . churches where the bishops . . .

Knaster: The diocese?

Radovich: Well, it would be the equivalent of a diocese. But so much happened in the 1800s in the aftermath of the Turkish invasion and all the

destruction that came with that. The priest in front out there told us that a lot of the records had been burned when the churches were burned. Some of the areas fared better than others. Where my father came from we weren't able to get anything.

Knaster: Do you know whether agriculture was their livelihood, or was it just something that everybody did in addition to another trade.

Radovich: No, where mother's family came from it was strictly agriculture. Of course, some of them bought and sold commodities; others were just farmers. In my father's area there was a little bit less farming because it was so rocky. In fact, it still is rocky. Everybody says that rocks just grow out of the ground. (laughter) It's extremely rocky. So in that area, of course, they had more sheep and goats.

Knaster: I believe you mentioned something about your father being a shepherd.

Radovich: Yes, yes. He was until he left the country. Of course, he left very young, so I don't imagine he did that very long. I think he was ten or eleven.

Knaster: Had he left by himself, or with his parents?

Radovich: No, his father and mother remained there. He left because he was not the oldest son. He was next to the oldest. Being next to the oldest means that you have to leave home. You leave the area there and go live with some

other family somewhere else to work . . . immigrate . . . or, whatever alternative was open you'd have to take it, because only the oldest son stayed at home.

Knaster: Was that because of primogeniture—when the first born son inherits the land?

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: Was this true for girl children as well? Did they have to leave?

Radovich: Well, it was understood that the girls would leave because they would marry and leave home. They'd go on to another home wherever they married. If the fellow was the first son, then it was very easy. But if the fellow were a second or third son, then she would probably wind up, more or less, a servant in the house. It was not very good to be the second or third son because your chances of marrying a girl who was . . . it would strictly have to be love so the girl would marry you. She just wouldn't even look at you if you were not the first son. She just wouldn't know what her fate would be. She would be subservient to, first the mother of the man, then the wife of the first son. So it would be a very difficult life for her. Of course, in those days the alternatives were not very great. If you were an old maid you were just as bad off because you were in your own home, the servant of your brother's, your oldest brother's wife. So it was difficult.

Knaster: Did your parents talk about this?

Radovich: Oh sure.

Knaster: That's very interesting.

Radovich: Yes, I found it interesting, more so when I was younger, because there were stories that you would hear spoken, talked about at home. You'd hear them talked about. When my mother would be visiting other friends that she knew here, of course, different names would crop out, and oh, it would just be interesting.

Knaster: If a family only had daughters, did the daughters inherit the land, or would it go to a brother's son?

Radovich: Well, in that particular case, and I'm glad you brought that up because my grandfather came to the home of my grandmother because it was the reverse . . . He had to take another name. He had to take the name of the family into whose home he was coming, because it was just not the order in which these things took place. Normally, my grandmother would have gone to my grandfather's home, but since he was not the oldest son in his family, he then moved into my grandmother's home, because my grandmother's home did not have a boy that would inherit the title of being the first son, so therefore, he took the name of my grandmother's family.

Knaster: Oh, he actually changed his name?

Radovich: Oh, in those days you had to. You have to take the name of the home.

Knaster: Now which name would that be?

Radovich: Well, that would be Sekondo.

Knaster: Sekondo. Oh, your grandfather's name was Martin Sekondo, wasn't it?

Radovich: He took the name of Sekondo, but his family's name was Kapetanic.

Knaster: Kapetanic. And was this a legal procedure that actually took place, or was it just adopted?

Radovich: I don't know whether it was legal or not. It was a custom. I think a custom is stronger than something legal. (laughter) Yes, it just had to be that way.

Knaster: In other words, it sounds like your grandmother probably was . . . was she the first daughter born? Because there was no boy born she had to bring in a husband to take that place?

Radovich: I guess so. I mean, as far as my memory is concerned. There's a lot of gray area there.

Knaster: Yes, I can understand that.

Radovich: I don't know that much about what the actual problems were on that side of the family, but I do know that when my grandfather came he had to change his name. Because he was born a Kapetanic. But this was about 125 years ago.

Knaster: Well, that's quite a while back.

Radovich: Yes, it is. It's a long time.

Knaster: He eventually made it to the United States?

Radovich: Well, he's the one who came first. It must have been in the early 1890s. He stayed here for a few years until he could accumulate enough money, and then brought the rest of us along.

Knaster: Do you know why he came? Were conditions bad in Yugoslavia? Was there some great interest for coming to the United States?

Radovich: Well, as nearly as I can remember, some of the things that were discussed, as far as reasons are concerned, was the fact that immigrants had been coming over here since the early 1800s, and even before that from that part of the country. Letters would come back telling people about life here. They would compare notes, naturally. When things were good over there, when there was no crop failure, no bad winters, no other problems, people would not think about immigrating. There was no way for those people to build up enough money as a reserve to live on. It was just a hand-to-mouth

business. You grew food this year for winter and maybe next spring. So often you would have to borrow money from the . . . they were all serfs.

Knaster: Was there a local moneylender?

Radovich: No, no. The man who owned the ground, a kind of lord . . . The people did not own the land. They'd have to borrow from him, because they always had to share whatever they grew. A certain percentage went to him, not in money, but in crops. So, they'd have to borrow from him. I know my mother used to tell me that her mother would have to go to him, that is to his representative. It would never actually be the lord because he'd have lived in Dubrovnik or in some big city in the interior. So she'd have to go to his representative and ask to be allowed to borrow food until the next crop would come in. So anyway, I guess my grandfather probably was building up all this information about what was happening over here, and then when either the first crop failed or something, he felt that he knew enough about what was going on over here to know that maybe that was the best thing to do.

Knaster: Do you know why California, rather than Minnesota or New Jersey?

Radovich: Well, when people gather information about immigrating they always consider climate, [and] whether or not there are other people in the area that come from their area. They consider reliability of information. If

you are from the northern part of Yugoslavia and you come into California, they would not accept your information as being reliable because the conditions that you lived under over there, would not be comparable. You'd have to build up your information from people who were out of your own area, and this particular area did have people who came much earlier than my grandfather. So, they would listen to them.

Knaster: Do you think that the climatic conditions are similar?

Radovich: They are exactly.

Knaster: They are? That's interesting.

Radovich: Well, geographically, we're in the same . . .

Knaster: . . . same latitude?

Radovich: Yes.

Immigration to California

Knaster: Did your grandfather come directly to Watsonville?

Radovich: Well, he came directly to California, but not to Watsonville. I know he spent time in the mines up around Jackson, you know up in that area where the mining country is. Because there anybody could get a job. Mining was much easier to go into. I'm not sure how much time he spent over there. I know it wasn't very long. Possibly a year or so.

Knaster: Did he come to California directly by ship, or did he land in New York first, and then come across the country by land?

Radovich: No, they all came through New York and then came by train.

Knaster: Quite a trip.

Radovich: Yes, it was. Just crossing the ocean was a long trip—at least thirty days. I don't remember them saying how long it took across the country, but I imagine, a week or ten days, depending on whether or not they had a through-ticket, but I'm sure they didn't. I do remember them saying that they got off at different stations and had to manage to get through. I remember my uncle, my mother's brother, telling me that when he'd landed (because he came before my mother; he was in the first group), he was told to get off the train at one station, someplace across the country. The conductor just told them to go at a certain place and to wait there. Of course, he didn't realize that it was going to be quite a long wait. I guess he had to wait for another train to take him in another direction. But he said he managed to tell somebody there that he was hungry. (laughter) He didn't know a word of English, but anyway he managed to tell this person that was there, I guess he was standing nearby. He said that he could tell that he was not a foreigner, he was a native. He didn't want to go to speak to another foreigner. He said that he was sure that no foreigner would be able to help him. So he went to this man that he felt was a native, and he said the man was very good to him.

Knaster: Oh, nice.

Radovich: Bought him a meal, and I think even gave him some money. He said that after that he felt secure because he didn't realize that was going to be off one train and on another before he got to his destination. All in all, it wasn't easy for them to come over here and make their way, particularly when they didn't know the language. And then of course, they were all rather shy because they were from villages.

Knaster: That's quite an undertaking, given all the circumstances.

Radovich: Oh, heavens yes!

Knaster: I thought you mentioned something about having to wear a tag so that they'd know where to go.

Radovich: Oh yes, he had a tag on. I imagine that's why the person, whoever helped him, was so helpful, because he knew what the situation was.

Knaster: You said that your mother's family came over in two groups. First her father and . . .

Radovich: First the father, and I believe nine of them all together. It was either one or two sons, I'm not sure.

Knaster: And then several years later your mother and her mother came.

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: Was there ever any thought given to the fact that women were traveling alone? Was it considered safe enough to do that?

Radovich: Well, actually my mother didn't travel alone. They traveled as a family.

Knaster: Well then, it would be your grandmother traveling with the children.

Radovich: My grandmother traveling with the children. It's not like now. If the children were traveling alone, they'd be in a group, with another family group. You know, somebody else out of the village might have been coming over here, so they would take the children that were on their way over here, and more or less, consigned to somebody else—they would have seen that they were looked after.

Watsonville, California

Knaster: Do you think your grandfather had any relatives in Watsonville? Is that possibly what brought him here?

Radovich: No, I'm sure he didn't have any relatives here. He may have had friends here. That I don't know, but I'm almost positive he had no relatives here.

Knaster: What do you think attracted him to Watsonville then? Possibly a story that someone was circulating about this place?

Radovich: Well, I do remember that my mother used to tell us that when her father came here things were very difficult. Jobs were hard to get. I don't know whether they called it a depression in those days, or whether he found it difficult just because he couldn't speak the language, or what the problems were. You just more or less have to assume that something wasn't what he thought it might be. And, I guess, when he went to the mines, he just felt that this was not the kind of work he wanted to do, so he looked around for a place where there were other people of his same nationality, where the language wouldn't be such a great barrier. There was a colony here, of Yugoslavs.

Knaster: Did he go immediately into apples?

Radovich: Well, that was the predominant industry here.

Knaster: Even then?

Radovich: Oh, yes. The orchards were owned mostly by Irish families then.

Knaster: Irish families? Now that's interesting. I hadn't heard about Irish people in the valley.

Radovich: Oh, yes. Yes, they were here before the Yugoslavians. Well, in fact, just in my lifetime I have seen migrations of different nationalities into this valley. Right now it's the Mexicans. I would say maybe the Mexicans are here in greater numbers than say, the Portuguese of one generation, the

Yugoslavians, the Irish. Of course, I can think in terms of Irish around here because I knew a lot of the families myself. I went to school with a lot of the children of the . . . I didn't know the grandparents of the children, but I knew the parents of the Irish families. Then that group kind of passed away, not the young ones that is, a lot of them moved away. After that came the Yugoslavians. And then, in fact, right now there are a lot of Portuguese coming in, not as many Mexicans, but many. The Mexicans, and who knows what other groups will be coming in after that. But, as people become assimilated, then you speak less and less of Yugoslavians, Italians, Portuguese, Mexicans, or whatever. It's only during that period when they're not assimilated that you kind of put them into certain categories.

Knaster: Do you remember waves of Asian migration as well?

Radovich: Oh yes. Japanese, I forgot that. There were many.

Knaster: And Filipinos?

Radovich: Filipinos, yes. That's another I forgot. Chinese. There were many Chinese here. In fact we had Chinatown, but we don't have it any more.

Knaster: Were there Hindus here too?

Radovich: No. It's too cold for them.

Knaster: It's too cold.

Radovich: They've been here from time to time. In fact, there are quite a few Arabs here now working in the orchards, but they like it better in the warmer climates, because the Arabs are not adjusted to this cool climate. My cousin, he farms over in Stockton, and there are a lot of them over there because the climate is much better. But the Japanese like it here because we're on the same latitude as Japan.

Knaster: Do you know what kind of work your grandfather did when he came into Watsonville? You said it was difficult for him to find anything. How did he start to make a living?

Radovich: Well, of course they all gravitated to farming because that's what they were doing at home, in the old country.

Knaster: Do you think he worked for an orchardist?

Radovich: Oh yes. I don't know who he started with, but during his lifetime he worked for many families.

Knaster: Did he eventually own his own orchard?

Radovich: Well, in those days they mostly rented orchards. His sons did own orchards, but he himself rented orchards. Because the Irish families... I shouldn't say that all the orchards were owned by the Irish, because there were some Italians and, you know, a sprinkling of other nationalities that owned the orchards, but they didn't start selling out until later, let's say in

the early Twenties, from then on. Of course, this is all hearsay on my part, because I was pretty small in the Twenties.

Knaster: But your sons then went on to become orchardists as well.

Radovich: One of them did. Two of them owned a packing house and cold storage. One of them became a building contractor. The sons were really more mechanically minded than they were farm oriented. They didn't much care for the farming end of it.

Knaster: Did your mother talk about the old days when she first came here? How old was she?

Radovich: My mother, I think, was twelve or thirteen when she came. Oh yes, she spoke of life around here. She went to school, I believe, for about a year. It was less than a year. To the Sisters school, but, it just wasn't the thing to do for them because they were poor. They had to work and my mother said that it was decided as long as she could read and write that was adequate. So they went to work.

Knaster: Do you think that they felt that it was useless for a girl to get an education because she would get married anyway?

Radovich: Well, of course, that would depend on the particular family. Some families believed in that; some families did not. It's the same as today. Some people feel that if they have only a certain amount of money to put out for

that, then they decide the son needs more training than the daughter, or if a child has particular aptitudes for an education then they'll put that child into school and don't spend the time and money on the child that doesn't care for it.

Knaster: What about your father? You said he came here when he was about ten or eleven, and that he'd been a shepherd back in Yugoslavia when he was sent off to the United States because he was the second son . . .²

Radovich: Yes, he came here to his uncle in San Francisco, who had a restaurant. The job that was open to him there was washing dishes, and he said he saw enough dishes to last his whole life. He gave that up after a few years. He wasn't interested in that. He just didn't like any indoor job.

Knaster: I believe that you mentioned that he went to school in San Francisco for a while.

Radovich: Yes, he did. He went to night school until he was seventeen. His uncle wouldn't think of anything else. He said he had to go to school. My father was kind of an adventurous sort and he felt that by the time he was seventeen he had had all the nurturing that he needed. He wanted to go out

2. Radovich's father was Nick Borina. (See *Early Croatian Imigrants to the Pajaro Valley* published by the Pajaro Valley Historical Association, Watsonville, California, 1987.)

on his own. He started out as a carpenter, I think it was 1906, or when was the San Francisco earthquake?

Knaster: 1906. Had he arrived before the earthquake?

Radovich: Oh yes. He arrived in 1898. He was born in 1888. He quit school at seventeen. He said the first job he got [happened when] they were looking all over San Francisco for carpenters when the earthquake happened. He went up to some foreman on some job, and he was asking the carpenter, and he told the fellow, "I sure am [a carpenter]." So the fellow said, "Well fine, go to work." My father was left-handed and he said, "The foreman came to me and he could tell the way I was working that I wasn't a carpenter. So he gave me some other job." He didn't fire him, because they needed all kinds of people to help, to clean up and everything. So he got another job and was fired as a carpenter. (laughter) He said he worked there a year or so until the jobs kind of fizzled out.

Then after that is when he went to Alaska, because he saw in the headlines of the newspapers that you could find gold just anywhere up there. He went up there and worked a month. And all [the gold] you could get you really had to dig and dig and dig for. Some of it they could pan out of the rivers, but it was a lot of work connected with that, and it wasn't the kind of work that he wanted to do. It was much too cold for him, so he came back to San Francisco. Some of his friends up there were talking about Watsonville and that people that were of the same nationality were here already established.

Early Apple Farming

So he came down and got a job in one of the packing houses. Then after working for a while in the packing houses he went out and rented orchards. My mother had worked for him in the packing house. Later, when he got his own packing house.

Knaster: Was there any combining in all the families working with apples.

Radovich: What do you mean?

Knaster: For example, sometimes when there is an intermarriage, if both families are involved in the same business then it becomes a joint operation.

Radovich: Oh, no. My mother's family had their own packing house and others rented the orchards. No, my father was on his own. They never did merge. I don't know why.

Knaster: When they got married, did your mother begin to help him?

Radovich: Oh, of course. Yes, she did. She had also gotten some experience from working for her brothers.

Knaster: How many acres did your father start out with? That was leasing land first, is that right?

Radovich: Yes, he leased first. I don't know the exact acreage. I remember him saying he got flooded out the first year. There was a flood in the area. It

was alongside the Pajaro River, and the first year that he rented it he said he got flooded out and that it took him awhile to recover his losses because he couldn't work because it was a late spring flood. Other than that, I don't know.

Knaster: Do you remember around when that was? Did your father have to go into the army at all during World War I?

Radovich: No, he didn't go into the army, because he was an alien. He didn't become a citizen until I think in the early Thirties. He was considered an enemy alien in the First World War because Yugoslavia was under the Austro-Hungarian empire and they were considered an enemy at that time.

Knaster: Did he talk about being harassed and discriminated against because of that?

Radovich: No. No, he never spoke of that.

Knaster: Was he ever grouped along with Germans, or was it clear that he was of another group?

Radovich: No, he was never associated with Germans, because they spoke another language. They didn't speak German. Austria-Hungary never required them to learn German in school. They just learned their own language.

Knaster: Do you know what it took to get started in the apple business in those days, in terms of equipment and capital—what you needed to get a business going?

Radovich: Well, exactly the same as today, except that in those days it was a horse and a plow. Today it's a tractor and a disc. It's the equivalent thing, something to work the ground with.

Knaster: Was there a heavy capital investment to be made?

Radovich: Well, relatively speaking, yes. If you don't have money, buying a horse is a big investment. Today it's the same thing. You have to get financing somehow. And being a stranger in the area it would be more difficult to get financing than if he were here for a long time, although in those days they measured your worth by how you worked. If you worked from sunup to sundown and didn't drink and carouse around they considered you a pretty good risk, so it really wasn't that hard to get backing.

Knaster: They didn't check your Bank of America card then? (laughter)

Radovich: No, heavens no.

Knaster: How much labor was needed then, and how did one get labor? How was it recruited?

Radovich: Well, I would say in those days that they needed a lot more labor than is needed now for producing a crop, because everything was done by hand. There was very little mechanization then. You recruited labor among your friends, and when your neighboring farmers would finish with their harvesting, or pruning, or thinning, or whatever it might happen to be, then they would come over and help you. There was a lot of helping one another then, which, well, you have it now to a degree, but it's not quite as easy.

Knaster: Do you know whether people were paid by the hour, or by how much they picked?

Radovich: Well, some jobs paid by the hour; some jobs were paid by the piece. Harvesting was always done by piecework rate.

Knaster: Did your parents ever talk about what wages were like in those days?

Radovich: Yes—fifteen cents an hour or twenty cents an hour. In the Thirties when I started to work in my dad's office, wages were thirty-five cents an hour. They were low when you think in terms of what money is today, but you could go uptown and buy a mean [meal] for fifty cents. (laughter) Today fifty cents is the tip. You know, it's all very relative.

Knaster: When your father stopped leasing and started his own orchards did he buy the existing trees, or did he get into planting?

Radovich: He couldn't afford to plant. He'd have to buy existing trees because it would take too much capital to plant. In those days they planted trees that were on a standard, which meant you had to wait twenty years to get a crop.

Knaster: Twenty years?

Radovich: Yes, so he couldn't afford it.

Knaster: I wonder how all those trees got started? Who was able to start them?

Radovich: Well, all those old-time Irish families planted most of them in the old days. Of course, there are a lot of new orchards today and they were planted by the present generation. All the old orchards were planted by the old-timers. The old orchards, what I consider the old orchards are those that are eighty and ninety years old.

Knaster: Do you know what the major problems were in the apple business then? Were they different in those years than they are now?

Radovich: Well, I can't see where they are any different, or were any different. They had crop failures, just like we have crop failures today. They had crop surpluses, just like we have surpluses today. They had pest problems then like we have today. Well, until the pests became immune to certain chemicals. Then you'd get a build-up of that pest, and then they'd

have to come in with a new chemical. That's been going on ever since I can remember. They kill off certain predators, and then they have to change the chemicals so that the predators wouldn't get killed off, only the pests. Oh, it's a vicious circle. I've been exposed to that all my life.

Knaster: Would you say that it was mostly a family-run operation, rather than a lot of the business today where much outside labor is [hired]. But in those days perhaps, all the members of the family pitched in and...

Radovich: Well, there are certain parts of an orchard operation that a family cannot do all alone. You can't do all your own harvesting because time-wise you'd run out. Harvesting has to be done quickly because it comes in the fall and the weather changes. Some years the winter starts earlier than other years. The harvest season was longer in the old days than now, because they put apples in cold storage more now than they did in those days. To get good quality-control in cold storage you have to get them in at a certain maturity or else they wouldn't keep.

Knaster: What kind of things did your mother do in the business?

Radovich: Well, my mother, she watched a lot of the field operations. She also helped in the packing house. She also watched for different pest problems and growth problems. You have to watch your orchards, watch the conditions. If a tree looks yellow at the wrong time of the year you know

there's something wrong with it. It's something that has to be watched daily, and she was involved in that.

Knaster: Would you say that she was as knowledgeable as your father about running the orchard?

Radovich: I would say so.

Knaster: Was that how it was generally done in those days, that husband and wife would be kind of a team? Or do you think that was just particularly your family?

Radovich: No, I think it's always been a matter of teamwork, but some women were more interested in another phase of the business. I know a lot of the ladies here in town worked in the packing houses. They were more interested in the indoor work than they were in the outdoor.

Knaster: Was there a ground cover between the trees?

Radovich: Well, farming practices are different. It's all a matter of opinion, type of soil. There are a lot of things that influence whether you have a ground cover or not. Today they use it more in certain areas than they do in others. Up in the Northwest they use a lot of ground cover because they use so much water. We don't use too much ground cover here because we can't use that much water, we would drown the trees. See, our soil here is too heavy for a lot of water.

Knaster: It retains the moisture.

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: And that would cause root-rot.

Radovich: Oh yes. You have to have gravelly soil for a lot of water.

Knaster: Was there ever anything grown between the trees? What is the space between the trees?

Radovich: Well, in the orchards that my father started and developed he grew raspberries between the trees until they reached their fifteenth or twentieth year. Other people grew dried beans, bush berries, sugar beets. There are a lot of crops that they did raise, but it did not produce a good orchard because they had to use too much water. An orchard in this area cannot take too much water.

Knaster: What was done for fertilization?

Radovich: Mostly chemical fertilizer.

Knaster: Even in the early days?

Radovich: Well, they used a lot of manures, but you cannot control the fertilizer content of manure. You don't know what you're putting on. Some manures are higher in nitrogen than others, and if you over-fertilize with nitrogen you get a deformed apple. They get spots on them, and grow too

big. There are a lot of reasons why manure is not good. You introduce a lot of bad weeds. Chemical fertilizers are much better, much easier to control.

Knaster: You said the trees couldn't take much water. Was much irrigation done at all? Or is there enough moisture from the air and from the rain?

Radovich: Well, it would depend on the winter. If it were a wet winter, then they'd have less irrigation. If it were a dry year, then they'd do more irrigation.

Knaster: And how did they do that? Were there pipes running through the orchard, or did they come around with hoses?

Radovich: No, it was mostly flood irrigation for a long time. They would contour the orchards. You'd get a surveyor and he would take a group of four or five trees that would flood eventually. He would paint marks on your trees, and then when you make your ditches you just follow certain marks. You'd make your ditches in that pattern, and then you'd have your ditches bringing the water between so many rows. You'd just flood that area and then move onto another area. That was in the days before sprinklers. Now they use a sprinkler system.

Knaster: Do you know what kinds of apples were grown then?

Radovich: More or less the same as now, although the softer varieties have been eliminated—the Bellflowers, most of the varieties that don't keep well

in the stores or don't ship well, or don't have any popular appeal, they just get taken out of the . . .

Knaster: What were the markets that your father could sell to?

Radovich: Well, he went through different phases. In the early stages he sold to San Francisco, Los Angeles, and to some of the Eastern markets—Chicago, New York. Then he went into the export business. That was in the Thirties. He shipped to England, and to China, well, to the Orient in general. Then when the war came those markets were closed. Then he became ill and he passed away in 1949.

Knaster: Did he ever feel a lot of competition from apples growing in the Northwest? New York grows apples too.

Radovich: Yes. There was always competition, but he just had to make it somehow.

Knaster: Did growers in this area ever get together?

Radovich: They had several associations here, and they've tried to get together but it's certainly not been too successful.

Knaster: Why do you think that is?

Radovich: Well, everybody has got their theory. I imagine it was a combination of reasons. Any organization to succeed would have to have the

right combination of people in it. You'd have to have, more or less, the same quality of fruit in an organization to make everybody equally as successful in the group. You can't have somebody growing apples from good orchards, young orchards in one organization, alongside of somebody who had some very poor quality fruit and poorer orchards. It would be hard to equalize the results.

Knaster: I was just wondering whether by getting together the growers could have minimized some of the problems in the business, maybe minimize some of their risks?

Radovich: Well, I think the trends towards getting together are stronger today than they have been in the past. In the past, farmers particularly, were rugged individualists. They felt that they didn't need anyone to help them. It was their hard work, and they felt that it was the way to succeed. I think that today to succeed it takes a lot more than hard work, because business is more complicated today than it was in the past. Today you have to be much larger in any business to be able to compete. Just your purchasing-power alone of your materials is greater when you're a bigger organization. That wasn't necessarily the case in the old days.

Knaster: It was easier for a small farmer to make it.

Radovich: Oh, definitely.

Knaster: Do you think that it's also much harder for a small farmer to make it today because banks are unwilling to help them, in terms of investing or capital? Would they still consider a small farmer as good a risk?

Radovich: Well, I don't think that that's where the problem is. I think the problem today of being a small farmer is the fact that he could earn so much more on the outside than being a farmer. You can't grow enough on fifteen acres of ground to make a living today, because your tractor and your spray rig and whatever other killing equipment you need is worth more than your farm. Just a tractor and a spray costs over \$30,000. And your land. . . it depends on where your land is, but if you have a small farm, the ratio of cost of equipment versus your land is much too great. So to have that much money invested in . . .

Knaster: Did your father market most of the apples as fresh apples, or was he into processing them at all?

Radovich: No, he was only into fresh. Whatever processing apples he had was contracted with others.

Knaster: Were they processed into juice or vinegar, or were they dried?

Radovich: Well, the juice market is a relatively recent market. In the days when my father was operating it was mostly dried.

Knaster: Did they have special machines for that, or were they sun-dried?

Radovich: No. Special buildings, they were. Apples were put in these kilns. They would spread them out on the floors, and then the heat would come up through the floors. Then they'd turn them over until they got to a certain moisture content.

The Apple Farming Yearly Cycle

Knaster: Could you describe for me how an orchard is maintained? During the course of the year what are the things that you have to do?

Radovich: Your fruit is harvested from August to, say the end of October. That's the ideal time, depending on the variety of apple, because some are early apples, and some are mid-season, and some are late.

Knaster: Which are the early apples?

Radovich: Well, McIntosh. In this area it would probably be McIntosh first. Up in the Sebastopol area it would be the Gravenstein first. Then from McIntosh in this area, they go to Delicious. Then from Delicious they go into Newtown Pippins, and then after Newtown Pippins there are miscellaneous hard varieties. There are some of those, but not big plantings. After harvesting is over about the first part of November, then you have to clean up the orchards, get all the ground apples out of the way. They usually go to a juice company, either Martinelli or Ryder. You tell them to get the ground apples out of the way. You pick up your tree props, and some people will work the ground, others don't.

Knaster: You mean turning it over?

Radovich: Yes. That is an orchard practice that is optional, depending on your own . . . Everybody has their own reasons for doing it, or for not doing it.

Knaster: Did your father turn the soil over?

Radovich: In some places yes. If the grass got too high, they would turn the soil over. If the grass was not too high, they wouldn't. Because if your grass is too high then you can't do a good job of pruning. The men can't walk through the fields because the grass gets wet and they can't get on their ladders. Frosts usually come in October and November, so as soon as enough leaves are off the tree you start with the pruning.

Knaster: Oh, you start pruning right away?

Radovich: As soon as the leaves are off the trees. Usually be the first of December.

Knaster: And that is to spur on new growth rather than longer limbs?

Radovich: Well, you have to prune for several reasons. You can't let your trees get too big. You've got to keep the branches orderly. You've got to thin out old wood, because the best quality fruit is usually on the new, second-year growth, and any broken branches. Any branches that have grown too much have to be shaped back, and any suckers that are in the trees, wild

growth, has to come out. That takes about until the end of February or March. You usually work it so that you keep your permanent help busy during the winter. You never rush the pruning, unless, of course, it's a very wet winter and you haven't been able to prune. Then you do have to force it faster. Then after pruning, of course, or while you're pruning, there is a dormant spray that you have to put on them. Then after pruning you continue spraying.

Knaster: What is dormant spraying?

Radovich: Well, dormant spray is usually some type of an oil spray that you put on while the trees are dormant.

Knaster: And is that to prevent pest problems later on?

Radovich: It's usually to destroy all the egg population that you have, because most pests do lay eggs over the winter. So that is to get rid of the eggs. If you do get rid of the eggs, you usually have a head start on the pests in the spring. So after you've pruned and sprayed, then comes the blossom time, and in our present-day practice now we always use a kind of thinner. After peak bloom you get the chemical thinner which reduces the number of apples on the tree. After about a month you have to go in and do some hand thinning if you think it's necessary. Then after that you have to go in and irrigate if it's necessary. Of course, all the while you have to continue

spraying. Spraying is usually done every two or three weeks throughout the spring and summer.

Knaster: Are different ones used each two or three weeks?

Radovich: The chemicals? Depends on the problem.

Knaster: What kinds of pests, for instance, would invade an apple tree?

Radovich: One of the big problems are the spider nymphs. That's one of the big problems, because they can defoliate a tree in no time at all. There are worms; there are spider mites; there are aphids. If it's very damp and cold you get too many aphids. You can get scab, which is a fungus problem. There are just all kinds of problems, depending on the weather, depending on the infestation, depending on what you had last year. If you didn't do a good job cleaning up then you get a problem.

Knaster: What are the best weather conditions for growing apples? If you had your pick of how the year should go, what would you vote for?

Radovich: Lots of rain in the winter time, no rain in the spring time, sunny days but not hot days, cool nights . . . never too hot, sunny, but cool.

Knaster: It doesn't sound like you're asking for so much. (laughter)

Radovich: But we never get it. You have to have sun to produce size on apples. If they don't get enough sun in their growing cycle then they remain

small. If you get heat and sun... When I say heat I don't mean hot weather, I mean, say in the seventies. So right about that time then you get ready for harvesting.

Knaster: Is there ever any grafting done?

Radovich: Yes. It's done. For instance, if you plant an orchard, we planted an orchard four or five years ago, and we planted a certain variety... Well, rather than to go and buy more trees of that certain variety, we just plant any tree in the ground of a certain root that's planted there, and then just graft from another tree so you're sure that you retain the same variety in a certain orchard.

Knaster: I asked that question because I know they've done that with walnuts. They use an English base.

Radovich: You suit the root stock to your soil, and of course, that's always a matter of opinion. You could ask ten different tree fruit salesman and each one will give you a different opinion.

Knaster: Oh, I see.

Radovich: You have to more or less study it yourself and then discuss it with somebody who is knowledgeable, with your farm advisor, with your tree salesman, with your nursery people, and then throw all that in the hopper

and pick out a number and that's it. (laughter) There's really nothing that's certain.

Knaster: Is it more costly to produce one apple over another? For example, I know the two main varieties in this area are the Pippins and the Delicious. Is one easier or costlier to produce than the other?

Radovich: I would say the cost factor comes into the picture when you decide what markets you want to cater to. If you're going to grow apples for a juicer then you have less cost. If you are going to grow apples for a fresh market you have higher costs regardless of varieties, because you have to thin it closer to get better size. You have to prune it better. You probably have to do more irrigation. It's more related to market than it is to variety.

Mechanization

Knaster: I'm interested in the kinds of changes that have taken place in the apple business from, let's say, the Twenties until now, in terms of technology. I remember you talked about using horses in the orchards, and how that was replaced by tractors.

Radovich: I think we've progressed a long ways since the days when horses were used, although I really wasn't that active in those days.

Knaster: No, I understand that.

Radovich: That was a little bit before my time. But apples have not been a crop that one has been able to mechanize as much as some other crops. There are many other crops, I would say lettuce for one, that they've mechanized a lot more than we are able to do in apples. We have gone into speed spraying with these very highly developed sprayers, that say, eliminate four people with hoses. In the old days I remember there were always two men with a gun, and each one had a man to help him pull the hose, plus the man on the tractor that had to drive it, so that was five people that were replaced by equipment plus one man. So four people were eliminated on that one.

Knaster: When was that changed?

Radovich: I would say in the late Thirties.

Knaster: Was that originally done by horse too?

Radovich: Oh, yes. The horse pulled the spray rig first. Then they got a tractor to pull the spray rig. Nobody liked to give up their horses because they grew up with their horses, and the horses were very well trained. The horses would go through an orchard and duck at the right time, and shift to the side at the right time, and turn in a row at the right time. In fact, I know of times when we couldn't get somebody to handle our horses, they would just let the horses work by themselves, and the men who were operating the horses would just yell out the orders from time to time.

Knaster: And the horses would just follow?

Radovich: Oh sure.

Knaster: That's amazing.

Radovich: Oh, I remember that very clearly. If you called the name of one horse then she would turn to her left. If you called the name of the other horse she would turn to her right, because they always worked in teams and you always had to have the horse on the side that the horse worked. You couldn't shift them. For instance, if the horse worked on the left side, and was trained on the left side, that's where that horse stayed, and likewise on the right side. Their commands would be geared to their position wherever they were working.

Knaster: When did your father let them go?

Radovich: When I was in high school, that's when the last horse went. I think that must have been about 1935.

Knaster: Was that when your father introduced a tractor?

Radovich: Yes. He had the tractor working alongside the horses for a few years. You never make these transitions suddenly. All these transitions take place over a period of time, sometimes two years, sometimes three years, or one year, depending on the situation. Nothing ever came that was perfected. Even the tractors had their problems when they first appeared, and the spray rigs too. When the speed sprayers came out, everybody thought . . . I

remember when I saw the first speed sprayer, everybody said, "Oh, that airplane fan!" They had a big fan in the back and it looked like the propeller of an airplane. In fact, I think they were airplane parts that they used, and they said, "Oh, that's going to go so fast it's going to fly out of there. You just won't have anybody to spray if you just depend on that one piece of equipment." After a year or so they decided it wasn't going to fly apart, because it was a very high-speed thing.

Knaster: Do you remember any other equipment changes, anything else that went from hand or animal work, to mechanization?

Radovich: In an orchard?

Knaster: Yes.

Radovich: Well, we've got forklifts in the fields now.

Knaster: That you need for lifting up the boxes.

Radovich: For handling boxes. That was one of the things that everybody welcomed. Workers as well as employers, orchard owners and all, because handling boxes in the field was a really hard job. Handling all that weight all day long was not easy. So, everybody welcomed that. That was kind of a clumsy operation at first, because we had the small picking boxes on pallets and so many boxes would get dumped because it just wasn't perfected, the pallets . . . In the first place, the roadways in the fields were not very smooth

and we didn't want to go in to level them because there were so many apples on the ground that did not get picked up. So everybody said, "Well, just leave them alone and just let the forklift go in." And then when they stacked the boxes on the pallets, then if the operator wasn't real careful all the apples would go on the ground. Anyway, I think that only lasted one year, until somebody decided that boxes were not the thing, that bins were the thing to have them empty into.

Knaster: When was the forklift introduced?

Radovich: Well, we got our first forklift about 1955.

Knaster: Oh, well it's not that much . . .

Radovich: No, it's relatively recent.

Knaster: Were boxes changed a lot over the years? Or was it basically from the box to the bin?

Radovich: Well, in the old days they used more or less the same box for harvesting and selling. It was the same type of package all the way through. But now they've separated it. They've got one bin type of container in the field and then when it comes to the packing house for processing and packaging, they use a carton, which is less expensive.

Knaster: So in the early days they used wooden boxes.

Radovich: Oh, yes.

Knaster: And how many pounds would be in a box? I guess it was standard for shipping purposes.

Radovich: Well, it was called a bushel. I think around forty pounds.

Knaster: I think today too, they're sold in forty pound carton boxes.

Radovich: Well, it's kind of a standard weight. Some go thirty-eight pounds, some forty, some forty-two, depending on what your equipment is geared to.

Knaster: Were they stored in those days too?

Radovich: That's a recent innovation. Yes, they were stored ever since I can remember. It was the Twenties.

Knaster: Was it in refrigeration or in some cool area?

Radovich: It was under refrigeration.

Knaster: Oh, it was even then. I'd heard a story from someone about how they used to get the apples and then at Christmas time, or whenever, they'd have them under redwood trees where it would be cool.

Radovich: Yes, they had a lot of that too, because, well, naturally everything you do to apples adds to your cost, and if somebody had a redwood grove

nearby, he was much better off to leave them there, because he had practically the equivalent of a cold storage. He had the humidity. He had the cool air at night which helped to keep the fruit cool. Refrigeration would have let him keep the fruit until April or May, whereas under the redwoods he could keep them until perhaps January. It was not a long-life operation, but it was long enough until that person could sell them.

Knaster: Has the introduction of these various methods decreased the numbers of workers that you need to hire?

Radovich: Well, I would say yes. I think it's more noticeable in the thinning of apples, because we use chemical thinners now, which we didn't use in the past, thinking in terms of twenty years ago. But as far as harvesting is concerned, we still do that by hand, so the same number of people are involved. Pruning the same. I think thinning is the only place where you really notice it.

Knaster: How did controlled atmosphere storage change your business?

Radovich: Controlled atmosphere is a relatively recent development. In some ways it has helped and in some ways it hasn't. It's prolonged our season, so our apples are in good enough condition where they can go into market later in the year than when you used just regular cold storage.

Knaster: When did you convert to controlled atmosphere storage?

Radovich: Well, we don't own our own cold storages. We just rent space from those who do. Of course we started using it as soon as it was available. Being growers and not packers at the present time, we like to do whatever our packers want us to do. But there is always that question of is it good to have apples go into the next season? As an apple grower, if we start harvesting in September and we've got the previous season's apples still available in September, we're competing, you see, with our own apples.

Knaster: With your own apples.

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: Has that been the case? That there would be apples left over up until December?

Radovich: Oh sure. Processing people always arrange it that way because they don't like to use new crop apples right away. They feel they're too green.

Knaster: I'm curious, because I know that in the fresh market there are no apples from this area any longer. There haven't been for at least a month, maybe two months. And so are apples still kept under storage for processing purposes but not for the fresh market?

Radovich: There are still apples in town.

Knaster: I see.

Radovich: But when the price is good, no grower is going to sit on apples that are profitable to sell just because somebody wants to have Watsonville apples in the store in August. You know, the name of the game is profit, so you take your profit when you have it, because profit is very elusive. You might have it today but not have it two months from now. So you're better off to take it when you can.

Inspection and Standards

Knaster: I was wondering how the apples were divided, in terms of standards? Was there a classification process? Did they use things like Grade A, Grade B?

Radovich: Oh, yes. Except that it was in terms of fancy, C-Grade, and culls. Those were the first classification on apples. And then, of course, there are refinements now, extra-fancy, fancy. I think there's only one C-Grade. There are various sub-grades that you can make, depending on what the buyer demands.

Knaster: Were standards strictly enforced by inspection crews?

Radovich: Oh, yes.

Knaster: Did he have a lot of dealings with the agricultural commissioner?

Radovich: Oh, sure. They go to the packing houses and they observe your operation, and then when you get through and want to ship a certain block of fruit they will check it out and issue a certificate.

Knaster: Could you not send fruit without that certificate?

Radovich: Well, a lot would depend on where they're going. If they're to a San Francisco or Los Angeles market sometimes they'd be inspected at the other end. So if you didn't demand your inspection up here and were automatically inspected at they other end, you might have problems. They'd send them back.

Knaster: Did you have to do this for foreign exportation as well?

Radovich: Oh well, that you'd have to have certification for before you shipped. The state would be involved on that. That would require state inspection, whereas a California would require only a . . .

Knaster: I know that the agricultural commissioner was a kind of regulatory office, but there was also the farm advisor. Did you ever avail yourself of the Agricultural Extension Service?

Radovich: Oh, very much so. We always did.

Knaster: In what way?

Radovich: Whenever you have a problem that you feel that you can't handle yourself just go over there, and if they don't know when you submit the problem, they will find out for you.

Knaster: Is this a free service?

Radovich: It's a free service. And we have a very good man here in town.

Knaster: Who is that?

Radovich: Ron Tyler.

Knaster: Did you ever feel that there were other services that you could have used?

Radovich: Well, we've always used University services, of course. You get the University through the Extension Service here in town. We've always availed ourselves of whatever we could get. Big chemical companies, they also provide a service. They have their research staffs and you can ask them. I think there are a lot of services available. It's just that some of the problems baffle the services and the farmer and everybody. Your pest problems are always changing. Your particular conditions in your own orchards are sometimes unique in your own orchard. It's a continuous challenge.

Harvesting

Knaster: We talked about mechanization. Were there any changes in terms of actual harvesting, in the picking? Was there a change in the kind of equipment used, in the number of people used?

Radovich: Well, mechanical harvesting has been tried. I would say at the present time it's not yet perfected. Hand labor, even though it has kind of degenerated as far as picking is concerned, still seems to be the best way to do it.

Knaster: How has it degenerated?

Radovich: Well, people are not as careful anymore. They bruise a lot of apples. They don't take the time they used to take, because to pick an apple you kind of have to twist it. Nowadays they pull too much. In the old days, a person picked apples this year, well, he was back next year to pick apples. It seems like the trend nowadays is . . . you pick apples this year, well, maybe next year a person would want to go into some other work that he thinks is more desirable. There's a constant shifting of workers. I don't know what it is. It just might be a new feeling that people have. They don't like to be doing the same job all the time. So when you are continuously using new people, you're continuously fighting the same problems of how to handle the fruit, how not to handle it, and that's the way it is.

Knaster: Has the kind of ladder changed over the years? I guess they use a bucket of some sort. Has that equipment changed at all?

Radovich: Oh yes. They used picking buckets in the old days. I guess it's about a two-gallon size. But they found out that it was too slow, so from the picking bucket they went into the sack type of handling, which is all right, but it also has a tendency to bruise fruit because when they lean against the ladder the canvas is not strong enough to protect the fruit.

Knaster: Is this something to put around your neck and hang like an apron?

Radovich: Yes. And they use also an aluminium ladder now, which is much lighter weight than the wood ladders.

Dwarf Trees

Of course, all of these are reasons why we are now going into the dwarf type of tree, because in the dwarf type of tree you use a smaller ladder; you can do more work from the ground. The person working can accomplish more. He can make more money for himself because he spends less time on the ladder, and there are all kinds of economic reasons [why] it's feasible to go into a dwarf orchard planting rather than to stay with the old-type trees.

Knaster: Will a dwarf tree produce as many apples as a standard?

Radovich: Not the single tree, but what produces more is the fact that you have more of those trees on an acre of ground.

There are many advantages when you read articles about developments in the Northwest and elsewhere. We, ourselves, who have been in dwarf orchards, say for about ten years, are beginning to see some of the advantages. I don't think it's always obvious until you do get into it yourself. There are those advantages that come with smaller trees. Less ladder work— it's easier to get labor to work on smaller trees. It's easier to spray them efficiently. It's easier to prune them efficiently. It's, of course, easier to thin them efficiently. You get more production per acre.

Knaster: Is that because you have more trees?

Radovich: More trees per acre. You farm less ground and have more trees.

Knaster: What are the differences between a standard and a dwarf in terms of how many trees per acre and spacing?

Radovich: Well, the standard trees are planted anywhere from fifty to seventy trees per acre, whereas the dwarf trees are planted anywhere from two hundred trees to the acre, to three hundred.

Knaster: That's really an increase—two hundred to three hundred.

Radovich: Depending on the root, depending on the soil, depending on whether or not you want to plant a lot of trees closer. Then when they get overcrowded you go into a thinning process where you take out some trees that would develop a pattern, and then pull out trees that would not follow

that pattern. There are so many variables in all of this that it's hard to say exactly what . . .

Knaster: How far apart are the trees set?

Radovich: Well, there again your equipment determines the width of your spacings. See, in the rows we plant, we have one orchard now that's ten feet apart, but the other way it's twenty feet apart, and only because our equipment needs that much space to get through.

Knaster: Were standard trees set even further apart than that?

Radovich: Oh, yes. Standard are anywhere from a square of twenty-five feet, or thirty feet square, or thirty-five square, depending on the soil, again. Any root will perform within certain limits. If you have a dwarf root that is supposed to 'x' feet in one soil, it may grow to 'x + y' feet in a better soil, and conversely, in poorer [soil] it will do less.

Knaster: Do your dwarf trees take fewer years to yield than standard trees?

Radovich: Yes, generally speaking, standard trees will not produce until they're approximately fifteen years old. Dwarf trees will start producing in the second year. It all depends on a pruning program that you establish. Some farmers would like to develop a tree, say in the first five years, and not have production, because it's difficult to have both. You cannot develop a tree and have production at the same time, because fruit naturally retards

the growth of a tree because it take so much out of it. So we, ourselves, use a kind of modified system. We don't like to make the trees overbear too young because we do feel that we like to develop a tree with the branches properly spaced and so forth.

Knaster: So you wouldn't pick the fruit the second year?

Radovich: We usually try to knock it off, because then that gives more growth to the tree.

Marketing

Knaster: One time you had talked about a marketing order. Could you describe what that is and how it operates among the apple growers.

Radovich: Well, to begin with, a marketing order is established for various reasons. One particular apple group established a marketing order to promote sales, to conduct research, and do advertising. Other marketing orders are established for other reasons. Our marketing orders failed in that last referendum. Everybody has their ideas of why it failed.

Knaster: What's yours?

Radovich: My opinion? Well, we're in a period of transition. We've got a lot of growers who are faced with farming orchards that are no longer prime. We've got other growers who are now farming new types of orchards. It is very difficult to get those two groups around a table thinking the same way,

because one group is just trying to exist and the other group is trying to go forward. You can't have a marketing order be successful with two different types of thinking.

Knaster: Was it ever successful here?

Radovich: I think it was when we started about, oh I don't know off hand, but I would say seven or eight years ago it was successful. I think that with a little effort it could have been still successful, but the time is fast approaching when those who just want to exist in the business are just going to be caught into other problems—high prices of land. They cannot afford to stay in farming and perhaps are a little . . . they're in a situation where it's still a little too premature for them to go into subdivisions and things like that because the trends are now to preserve farm lands, but it's easier said than done. I mean, farm lands should be preserved, but then you have to consider the people who are in it. Can they exist fighting a situation that is quickly becoming obsolete?

Knaster: How did the marketing order operate several years ago?

Radovich: We had an organization. We had a manager, a staff who were paid by assessments imposed on the members.

Knaster: Were all the growers in the area involved in this?

Radovich: Oh, it was a state order.

Knaster: What are the advantages for the grower?

Radovich: Of a marketing order?

Knaster: Yes.

Radovich: One of the reasons is because your competition has it. The Northwest has it. They have an apple commission that promotes a lot of advertising. They go into a lot of research for their growers, and when their product comes to the marketplace people are aware of it, and so therefore they buy it. The public is very much conscious of advertising, and well, I shouldn't say swayed by advertising, but they are influenced by advertising.

Knaster: Were there any disadvantages to the marketing order?

Radovich: Obviously there were, or else it wouldn't have failed (laughter)

Knaster: Were there any for you?

Radovich: I don't think so, no. I think that we had everything to gain, but, there again, we don't have orchards that are . . .we've removed the orchards that were marginal, the ones that were just no longer economical to operate. But there are some people that just can't absorb the cost of going into new orchards. It's a very expensive thing today.

Knaster: So it's basically the assessments that would deter someone?

Radovich: Well, yes, because the assessments on some grades of fruit were two dollars a ton, and two dollars a ton is quite big. Unless you have an extremely high rate of production per acre, two dollars a ton can make a big difference.

Knaster: It was true what you said about the advertising, because I suddenly recall hearing about Washington state apples. I don't remember hearing about Pajaro Valley apples. (laughter)

Radovich: Well, that's right. You probably didn't hear about Pajaro Valley apples, because our assessments were not that great. We could only afford to advertise in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and that's about it. Television time is expensive, newspaper advertising is expensive, and you just can't afford to put a man in every market in the state because that becomes very expensive too. But there was a time when they had a man in San Francisco and a man in Los Angeles who contacted the various markets and chain stores. So, it's all a matter of how much money an industry can generate to reach a certain number of people, because you do employ these public relations people, and whatnot, who analyze these things for you and they tell you how much mileage you can expect out of a certain number of dollars. So it's just a matter of dollars and cents. Washington generates an awful lot of money. They're the largest producing [apple area] in the United States.

Knaster: Oh, I noticed in the market just recently . . . I've been buying Red Delicious and they're from Washington. Because I knew that we didn't have any more apples here . . .

Radovich: In Watsonville?

Knaster: Yes. So I was wondering where they were coming from, and the man in the store told me from Washington, and the green ones were coming from New Zealand.

Radovich: Oh, yes, the Granny Smiths.

Knaster: The Granny Smiths. Oh, before I forget, I meant to ask you when we were talking about the dwarf trees—do you know when they were first introduced into Santa Cruz County?

Radovich: People have been experimenting with them for quite a while. I would say at least fifteen to twenty years.

Knaster: Do you recall who might have been the first one to venture out and use . . . did the transplanting?

Radovich: Well, on an experimental basis a lot of them were planting them, but that would mean a block of ten trees, or fifteen, or twenty. But on a commercial basis, I don't know . . . I would say there was more than one person who had gone into it on a commercial basis. It's something that . . . nobody would want to be first in a thing like that because there's just too

many things involved. Well, it's a transition that you would have to get out of one kind of an orchard and into another, and you couldn't change your mind. Once you were into it, you were into it. So everybody evaluated the change very carefully before they went into it.

Knaster: I was wondering if you could talk about some changes in the markets over the years—what markets apples were shipped to, and how that has changed, whether you're shipping to new markets or continually shipping to the same ones, or have new ones opened up?

Radovich: Well, I think, as far as markets are concerned, the trend is the same as in everything else—the small mama and papa stores don't buy anymore because you cannot afford to ship to them and they cannot afford to look us up to buy from us. I would say thirty years ago, I remember many people in San Jose who had these small mama and papa stores, and in San Francisco would come down and buy all their produce.

Knaster: Oh, really.

Radovich: Yes. Today that's just not feasible. They can't do it. In fact, they're no longer in business. It's the chain stores that are the principal buyers. Of course, there are a lot of these roadside stands that are now becoming popular. They go out and buy, but there again, a group of them usually get together and get their supplies through one supplier. So they tried to work it so that they can handle more volume, both hauling-wise and selling-wise,

because costs have become so great that they just can't afford to go get these small lots of apples to sell.

Knaster: Have the markets changed geographically over the years?

Radovich: Well, surely. Wherever you get a bigger concentration of people you have more demand, for apples in this particular case. Los Angeles is the biggest market in the West, because not only are the people there, the market, but they're a point of trans-shipment to other states, to Texas, to the various southwestern states, Arizona, Nevada. So the Northwest is always wooing the Los Angeles market because that takes a tremendous amount of apples.

Knaster: What about internationally?

Radovich: Well, internationally, since the war, the Japanese, the Europeans, the Koreans, everybody is planting their own apples.

Knaster: Oh, is that true?

Radovich: Oh yes. All these new varieties are finding places everywhere.

Knaster: So they're no longer ordering apples from the United States.

Radovich: They are only in the off-season. For instance, when we have apples we might be able to sell to the Orient, or places like that, perhaps for a short time, but then they get apples out of . . . Well, for instance New

Zealand is now shipping to us, but they're shipping all over the world, wherever there are no fresh fruits now. Of course, I am sure there are times when we ship into England too. If they have a crop failure, well then, we may get some apples in there, but the situation has changed since the war.

Knaster: I remember you were mentioning once that there was a particular apple that the Chinese liked, and that they provided a fairly big market for this . . .

Radovich: Yes. Of course, you can't trade with China right now, so I'm sure they've long forgotten it. The generation that enjoyed that apple is gone, and so it's a new generation and they probably brought on some of their own new types of apples.

Knaster: Would you say there are more growers now than when your father was in the business, or are there fewer growers?

Radovich: Oh, definitely fewer.

Knaster: Do you think that that's because certain businesses were phased out, or because larger growers swallowed up smaller ones?

Radovich: Neither. Very few orchardists here become bigger than they were. The people who were in farming, say twenty or thirty years ago, and who are not in farming now, got out because they became less and less of an economic unit as costs went up. At each stage of the game, somebody had to

drop out. If he had an orchard up in the foothills somewhere, and it consisted of thirty acres, well, he went out when the time came that thirty acres was not an economic unit. The fellows with ten acres went out first, then the ones with twenty, and then thirty. Probably now it's up to forty or fifty.

Knaster: How many acres does a grower need in order to survive in this business? I mean, the minimum.

Radovich: Well, if a grower were going to start today, I would say the minimum would be five hundred acres. Because the cost of your equipment is too great for a small operation unless you went in and bought used equipment and made it do with, say equipment that was either obsolete or, not what I consider modern equipment. But if a person were going to go in with completely new equipment, modern . . . and to become an economic unit today you would have to go into packing and selling. To have all that packing equipment and your management and your sales people it wouldn't be feasible to go in with less than five hundred acres.

Knaster: Do most of the growers in this area have about that many acres?

Radovich: No.

Knaster: But because they started earlier . . .

Radovich: Well, they were in it. Of course, I would say the people who are the outstanding people in the valley today are the ones who are in that position. The Buak Fruit Company, the Resetar people—they're the biggest and they're in that category.

Knaster: In the five hundred acre category?

Radovich: Yes, five hundred or more.

Knaster: Oh, I see. For the sake of chronology, do you have any idea when your grandfather got started in apples, about what year, and maybe how many acres he started with? I think it would make a nice comparison.

Radovich: Well, just roughly speaking.

Knaster: Yes, roughly speaking, that's fine.

Radovich: I would say in the early 1900s.

Knaster: Do you have any idea of how large his first orchard was?

Radovich: Oh, it could have been thirty or forty acres, something like that. I know it was up in the hills, but it's hard to tell because they had mixed varieties and they didn't have orchards in terms of what orchards are today. Oh, they had a block of this variety and a block of that variety, and a block of that variety, and a block of another . . . maybe four or five varieties in one orchard, which today is out of the question. You just couldn't possibly farm

that way because there are only two major varieties that will sell. The rest you can produce, but you would have to go to Martinelli or somebody for cider, and that, of course, doesn't pay.

Knaster: Could you do the same thing for your father, about what year he started and how much acreage he started with?

Radovich: I would say he started shortly before the First World War, probably about 1910 or 1912. Oh, I imagine he had fifty or seventy-five acres at that time, but they were in small orchards scattered around the valley, not in any one particular place.

Knaster: So even within that short span of time it seems like one would start with maybe more acreage.

Radovich: Well, it was a progressive thing, of course. But I feel that the noticeable change came in the Forties during the war. I know just in the spraying alone we had big changes, because there were just no people to do the work. So they were forced into mechanical sprayers. Then other things came along, forklifts, and pallets, and bins, and whatnot—they all came very quickly after the war.

Knaster: So you would say that in a history of the apple industry in this county, in the Forties one could see the greatest changes.

Radovich: Yes, because it was much more difficult to get adequate help, so the changes just came.

Labor Unrest

Knaster: I want to go back a little bit. Do you remember any rioting in Watsonville around 1930?

Radovich: Oh, let's see, yes, there was some. I don't know whether you could consider a little bit of rock throwing as a riot.

Knaster: What was that about?

Radovich: Well, let's see, there was some labor unrest. I really don't know the exact [date] . . . that's forty years ago. But I do remember convoys and things like that, convoys of trucks going to San Francisco, with apples.

Knaster: You mean because laborers were rioting?

Radovich: Yes, as I recall it was workers.

Knaster: Did they not want to pick?

Radovich: No they picked but. To tell you the truth, I don't know the details, but there was friction. I think basically there were some attempts at unionizing then, and I think some of the cold storages and perhaps lettuce did become unionized at the time. But I don't know that it was rioting.

Knaster: Was it here in Watsonville?

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: Was there ever any kind of race rioting?

Radovich: Not that I know of.

Knaster: For someone had mentioned to me something about some kind of riot in 1930 against the Filipinos.

Radovich: Oh, there were. I can't say it was a riot, you know, in the sense of killings and muggings and all that. There were some problems, yes. But nothing that... When you talk about a riot, you get a thousand people here. Maybe it was forty or fifty people, something like that. Watsonville today is small. Well, think back forty years ago, it was that much smaller. There just weren't that many people around here.

Watsonville during the Great Depression

Knaster: In general, what was it like here in the depression? That was a difficult time all over the world.

Radovich: That's right.

Knaster: How did it particularly strike you and Watsonville?

Radovich: Well, I guess that's one of the reasons that I went to work, because my parents weren't sure what the future held. When there is a depression and nobody knows the length of it or the severity of it, they wanted to

prepare my sister and me for living. They felt that if they gave us a life of leisure and that wasn't what was to be, it would not have been the proper training to get.

Knaster: That's interesting that they considered you might have to take care of yourself.

Radovich: Sure.

Knaster: They didn't just expect you to get married, or that the natural course for any woman was to be taken care of by a man.

Radovich: Well, not really. My mother and father didn't really think that way.

Knaster: That's fairly progressive! (laughter)

Radovich: Yes, they both were. My mother in particular. She was very progressive and thought that women should not be clinging vines. She thought that if they were going to get married, they should help their husbands. And if they were not going to get married, help themselves.

Knaster: That is very progressive. And two good examples came out of that philosophy.

Radovich: Well, I guess so, because my sister now helps her husband. She does a lot of research for her husband.

Knaster: But she was also self-sufficient as an attorney.

Radovich: Oh yes, before she was married. In fact, she met her husband when she went to work for the United States Attorney's office in San Francisco. Because she worked there for awhile.

Knaster: Did you have a feeling of a real pinch in the family during the depression? Did you remember wanting from anything.

Radovich: Oh no. We were never denied any basic needs. (laughter) A lot of the frivolities of life that I missed at the time. There were fashions of men, just like there are now. And there were few things that I couldn't get because my mother just thought they were unnecessary. I remember one handbag that I wanted so badly. Because at that time when I was in high school, some of the girls had them. They were little dogs with a zipper on top. And you carried your little dog to school with you. They were made to look like real dogs, you know. They were about that big.

Knaster: That looks like a foot long.

Radovich: Yes. About like so. And with the zipper on top was the part where the handbag was. I wanted one so badly. I knew exactly what I wanted, because this girlfriend of mine had one. It was grey, and it was just the cutest little thing. And I came home to my mother, I remember this very clearly, and I explained it to her. I gave her a complete description, and the size and all that, and without batting an eye, she says, "No." I told her, "Well, how

come I can't have it?" And she said, "Just because you don't need it." And that was it. The way she said I didn't need it stopped that right there. (laughter)

Knaster: (laughter)

Radovich: So I didn't get it. But it was the fashion. It didn't last too long. But it was the fashion.

Knaster: Most things don't seem to. (laughter)

Radovich: No, that's right. Of course, I think it was mostly because it looked like a dog. I wanted the dog. But we couldn't, because we lived in town and my mother said that having a dog in town wasn't the thing. We did have one out at the ranch, but I never felt that it was my dog. You know, it was out there and it seems like it belonged to everybody. But we didn't have anything that we wanted. I can't say that we were denied anything that we really needed. Because in those days having a college education was more than what the average person got.

Knaster: And you were attending college toward the end of the depression.

Radovich: I went in 1936. The depression wasn't over until 1940. So I was in college during the depression.

Knaster: Do you remember the impact of the depression on Watsonville or on Santa Cruz County?

Radovich: Oh sure. Jobs were hard to get. Very hard to get. You always had a list, a waiting list of people who wanted to work for you.

Knaster: Did you see a lot of businesses fold, people leave town?

Radovich: Yes, I know of businesses that folded. And some people went to work for others.

Knaster: Was this true of agriculture, or was that basically true of stores and businesses of that nature?

Radovich: Well, it hit kind of a cross-section of everybody.

Knaster: It did.

Radovich: I know my father was heavily in debt. But everybody was. There was no way you could get out of it, because everything that you produced was sold for less than what your cost was. I do know that banks took over a lot of farming land, you know, that was mortgaged, and the people just couldn't pay. There were several orchards that the banks asked my father to farm for them, and he farmed for them. But we've never had anything like it since. I mean, regardless of what people today say about hardships there's no comparison. Because today, if anyone has any difficulties there's always some agency you can go to. In those days there was no agency. You'd go to the bank and your friendly banker was either friendly or otherwise. (laughter) So that was the extent of it.

Knaster: Was there any reaction in the community to help one another? I mean, since there weren't agencies the way there are now, welfare agencies— you couldn't get food stamps in those days. Were there mutual aid agencies that arose? Were there bread lines, or soup kitchens, things like that?

Radovich: Now are you speaking of individuals or businesses.

Knaster: Well, people helping each other and forming a communal center where people could go and get something to eat. Or was this such a small community that kind of activity did not take place?

Radovich: Well, I think I know what you're trying to ask. I know that in those days, now this goes back to the Thirties, the bums, those ones that walked the railroad track, they never came beyond the park in town here. They never came to the other side of town. That is, the northern part of town. But, every morning, around eight o'clock or so, they'd come to the back door, asking for food at various homes on the other side of town. So everybody would make a sandwich or something and give them something at the door.

Knaster: These were transients, though.

Radovich: Yes, transients. And of course we called them bums in those days. But nobody was afraid of them. They'd come. You'd give them something to eat and they'd go. Of course today you wouldn't dare do that.

Knaster: You don't open your door for anyone.

Radovich: Oh, you don't open your door, no. But in those days they did.

Knaster: That's a very sad change in society.

Radovich: Oh yes. Very much so. And then there was always the Salvation Army. There was the church, the Sisters. And people would help them, you know, the Sisters with food and whatnot and they in turn would help those that came to the door. I know when I was a child going to school there, we'd always see the bums coming to the door, in the morning, for their breakfast or whatever.

Knaster: So it sounds like there was at least some help on an individual level.

Radovich: Yes, there was.

World War II

Knaster: What was it like here during World War II, once the depression was over? Did things change drastically, or was it a gradual comeback to normalcy?

Radovich: After World War II or during World War II?

Knaster: Beginning after the depression, when World War II started.

Radovich: Well, when the war started, well, there were many changes. Number one, the labor supply was no longer there. I remember at the time my father had a cold storage, and to do those stacking of boxes inside, there would be teams from Fort Ord. The boys who would volunteer to work would come in and they'd work, that is the ones who could get off. And every night of the week there was a team available. You would sign up for it, and then they'd come in and work. The boys from the banks, that worked in the banks, they would sign up for work. A lot of the downtown businesses would have their staffs sign up and then you would draw from those groups.

Knaster: Did a lot of women and children work at that time?

Radovich: Yes, depending on what jobs were available.

Knaster: Did you see women fulfilling jobs that men had been involved in previously to that?

Radovich: Yes. There were some women working in the fields, that is harvesting, and different types of management work. But I don't remember too much about women in the orchards. They were more in other jobs.

Knaster: Was there a kind of super-patriotic reaction in town of ways to help the war effort?

Radovich: Yes, I'm sure there was. For instance Jennie Menasco—she's still living, in fact. She opened up a salvage shop and she came to my father, he had some storage there in town, there was one vacant and she asked him to donate that for their use and they collected . . . you know something like a rummage sale today but on a perpetual basis. She ran it throughout the war and all the proceeds would go towards helping the boys at Fort Ord with different things that they couldn't have through normal channels, and it would just help the community in general. I don't know offhand now what happened to the money, but it all went for that sort of thing. When the war ended then they closed the place.

Knaster: Did agricultural production increase or decrease during the war?

Radovich: Oh, I don't know that you could put it that way. Nobody would leave their land vacant, so the production was there. They may have shifted from one crop to another, but production was still there because land was always used.

Knaster: I'm thinking if there was a labor shortage, did that . . .

Radovich: Well, you would only shift to a crop that was less demanding.

Knaster: I see.

Urbanization

Have you seen changes in acreage, in terms of perhaps apples growing in a particular section of the county not growing there anymore, and then being planted in another part of the county? Or have apples basically been grown in the same places?

Radovich: No, they haven't stayed in the same places. There was a time when Day Valley, Valencia, Aptos, all those hills over there were full of apples, but it just wasn't economical to keep the orchards over there because their production per acre was a lot less than what it was here in the valleys, and they just became home sites. People subdivided their orchards and, of course, the old-timers died off and a lot of their children weren't particularly interested in carrying on, so they just sold out and subdivided it.

Knaster: How recently has that change come about?

Radovich: Oh, I would say within the last fifteen or twenty years.

Knaster: What do you see as the future of apples in Santa Cruz County? We talked so much about the past.

Radovich: Well, I see a future for only the best orchards, the most highly productive orchards. The marginal orchards are going to have to go. Costs are just going to force them out. The old-type of standard trees are just going to become too difficult to farm, with all the rules and regulations today about ladder work, about handling heavy bags of fruit, and so forth. And

then too, of course, I should say with women's lib, we have to permit women to work on a lot of those jobs, and regardless of what is said, it is just not feasible for women to do a lot of the kind of work that men have been doing in the fields. And then, there is the high price of land. Land is becoming higher priced all the time. It's being taxed higher. That all means that you just have to go into crops that are higher paying, those that produce higher returns. We do have to compete with areas like Washington and Idaho, Colorado. Just about every state in the union grows apples, and California has about the highest priced land when it comes to land that is being used for apples, so unless it is highly productive we're just not going to stay in apples. We'll go into crops that produce twice a year. For instance, lettuce, you can get two crops a year, and certain other crops you can get two a year, which means that you have a chance for profit twice, rather than with apples where you only have a single crop profit, if you make it.

Knaster: Isn't there a limit though as to how much lettuce can be marketed? Think of all the apples that are being produced here that people eat, they're suddenly not produced anymore but more lettuce is produced. I don't think people are going to give up apples.

Radovich: Well, it doesn't work that way. It's demand and supply. If we don't have the apples here, the Northwest will grow them. There's always an area that can plant a little bit more, but they're waiting to see what this area will do. If we pull out orchards, they're going to plant. If they pull out, we

plant. Because the national apple picture is always before you, you know what the demand over a certain period of time has been, you know what supplies are, and that's the way you look at it. You don't look at it that because you're in Watsonville, California, you can produce better apples and should stay in apples. It doesn't work that way.

Labor Issues

Knaster: Have your labor needs in the orchards changed over the years? What kind of needs did you have back in the 1930s in terms of the number of workers you needed for the kinds of tasks then? Has that changed?

Radovich: Our needs in an apple orchard have always been more or less the same. You've always needed qualified workers, but that doesn't mean that we get what we want today. There are workers, but many of them are not interested in learning the business. They are transients. They just want to make a certain amount of dollars and leave. It's kind of the trend. People are more restless today than they were in the old days. Before they would do a certain job, learn it well, and come back the next year, do the same thing, but not any more.

Knaster: So you would have the same workers coming back year after year.

Radovich: Before, yes. It's becoming less and less so now. Now it's not that way.

Knaster: Who fulfilled your labor needs back in the Thirties?

Radovich: There were many people from the Midwest—Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and states back there—who would come out here and work during the fruit season and then go back home.

Knaster: Oh, so they were migrants.

Radovich: Well, I guess so. A lot of them stayed, so they weren't. We had quite a number of people that lived on our ranches year around. Today we don't have those people. We have mostly Mexican people.

Knaster: Did your father ever talk about different groups that supplied him with labor?

Radovich: You mean contract labor?

Knaster: Well no, like in the 1920s and in the teens, were there different national groups that were the laborers, or were they always people coming from the Midwest?

Radovich: No, there were national ethnic groups, or whatever you want to call them. There was a time when you could tell by looking at the best orchards in the valley who worked them. The Yugoslav workers—they were very good. They knew the work, of course. They come from a farming area that produced various fruits. They knew how to work the orchards, and if you had them you kept them year after year after year.

Knaster: When did they stop coming back?

Radovich: When they died off.

Knaster: Oh, there were no replacements. (laughter)

Radovich: There were no replacements. During the war, of course, nobody came over here. A few came in the 1930s, but immigration was much more difficult then. Of course, it's still difficult. A lot of the immigration we have here is illegal, so that's why it appears to be easy, but it's not.

Knaster: Did Oriental groups ever work in the orchards?

Radovich: A few, not so much. The Japanese are more row-crop people, and Chinese are row-crop people.

Knaster: Were there other Europeans who came over to do that work?

Radovich: In the orchards?

Knaster: Yes.

Radovich: Well, of course the Italians are fruit people but they didn't come into this valley. Oh, a few did, but none really to speak of. They're mostly over in the valley, Modesto and in those areas, Fresno and places like that.

Knaster: How did you get your workers? Did you go out and recruit them, or did you have labor contractors, or were there—I don't know, did you post bills?

Radovich: No. Well just everybody in the farming business has foremen, managers, and they recruit among themselves, among their own villagers, their friends, their relatives. It's just like any ethnic group from Europe. They all kind of come to one another. For instance, if our particular foreman is from San Pedro in Jalisco, and I would say that seventy-five or eighty percent of the people we have working for us today are from San Pedro in Jalisco.

Knaster: Oh, I see.

Radovich: They come to one another.

Knaster: Do you find that for you the best method of procuring labor is to have a foreman and have him take care of all that? He's considered a foreman. He's not considered a labor contractor?

Radovich: No, no we don't have contractors. No, he's a foreman. He lives on the ranch. We like it because it's usually people he knows. We're not becoming involved with drifters, because drifters bring problems. They're all reliable people. They do good work for us. We've seldom had problems, and if there are problems among them they take care of their own. I mean, if there happens to be a drunk in the bunch, they know it. They take care of their own problem. But if the person, for instance, a drunk or a particularly aggressive one is from another village, then they can't take care of the problem, you see, because there's not that respect from one another if he

comes from another area. We like it. It's kind of a self-policing thing, and we feel that it works.

Knaster: Since when have you had Mexican workers, as opposed to, let's say, groups from the Midwest?

Radovich: I would say that they came in after the Second World War.

Knaster: So then until then were there mostly Anglo people working in the orchards?

Radovich: Well, there were a lot of Spanish, as opposed to Mexicans, Spanish [immigrants] whose parents came from Spain. We had them, and the Anglos, a mixture of people. Whereas after the Second World War that group kind of got phased out, and we went to the Mexicans.

Knaster: You mentioned one of the differences that you noticed between workers then from now in terms of having the same workers come back. Do you see any other differences between the various groups that have made up the labor force?

Radovich: I don't think so. People were people then; they're people now. There really isn't any difference. We have excellent workers today; we've got some poor ones. Thirty years ago we had some excellent ones and some poor ones. (laughter) There really isn't that kind of a difference among workers. Generally, I would say the thing I notice is kind of a lack of incentive to

perform good work. Everyone's become very mercenary, and I guess you can't lay that onto the worker. It's probably the case with everybody involved in the business.

Knaster: At various times in production, have you hired women and children as well, or is it strictly a male operation? I mean, over the years.

Radovich: Over the years we've hired women at certain times of the year.

Knaster: What kinds of tasks would they do?

Radovich: Pick apples off the ground.

Knaster: That's what the children would do? The women, too?

Radovich: Yes. But we don't have children in the fields any more. The regulations are much too strict for us. We can't police it. For every three children you'd have to have a sitter, or somebody to police their activities, and we can't do that. One big problem is climbing the trees and we just couldn't watch children. There are just too many ways for them to get involved in problems.

Knaster: How did their wages, women's wages and children's wages, compare with the man's wages?

Radovich: Well, if the women were picking apples off the ground they got the same pay that we would pay a man who was picking off the ground.

Only the older men would pick off the ground because the younger ones would pick off the trees.

Knaster: So that would be a less well-paid job, picking off the ground rather than picking off the trees?

Radovich: Oh yes. Because, your return per ton for a ton of apples off the ground is, say fifty dollars a ton off the ground, whereas off the trees would be maybe eighty or ninety dollars, so the spread is pretty great. When you pick off the ground, you don't qualify the type of work you expect. If somebody picking off the ground throws the apples into the box, you don't say anything, because it doesn't make any difference.

Knaster: They're already bruised.

Radovich: They're already bruised. (laughter) But if you do that with apples off the tree, well then, that's where you have problems.

Knaster: Do women ever fill the same jobs as men? Thinning, pruning, spraying, picking the trees.

Radovich: Well, not in our orchards. I'm sure there are places where they have done it. We haven't tried it. I, myself, don't like it. Not that I think that women are not capable. I think they're capable, but I just feel that when men work in a field their language gets to be a little crude at times. Rather than using the sanitary facilities we have, they go behind a tree. You could have

one of those portable bathrooms right here and the fellow won't use it. He'll just go behind the tree. He says, "I like this better." (laughter) There's just nothing you can do about it. We've had that happen to us many times. We try to police, because you have to have sanitary facilities for workers in the field. We are checked from time to time, and we keep telling our foreman to insist that it's used. But he says, "What are you going to do if the fellow won't use it?" "Well, just tell them a couple of times and if he'll listen fine, and if he doesn't there's nothing we can do about it." After all, that's not part of our job, to tell the guy what to do when he wants to go to the rest room.

Knaster: Right. How many hours a day would a worker be involved in the orchard?

Radovich: Well, there are times when ten hours a day is not enough and there are times when six hours a day is too much. It depends on the weather, depends on the season of the year. There are a lot of things that are involved.

Knaster: Would they be paid by the hour or by the weight?

Radovich: They are paid by the hour.

Knaster: Were apple pickers and apple workers always paid by the hour?

Radovich: No. There are some piecework rates that are used. Harvesting is one where we use piecework. Very few workers will work by the hour on harvesting, because your qualifications and your ability will enable you to

make a lot more if you're good at it, and if you're not so good at it you make less. The worker who is able doesn't want to work alongside somebody who isn't able.

Knaster: So are they being paid piecework now, or by the hour?

Radovich: The work we are doing today?

Knaster: Yes.

Radovich: No, this is being done by the hour.

Knaster: Everything is being done by the hour now, including picking.

Radovich: Not picking.

Knaster: Not picking, except picking.

Radovich: They won't work. Very few farm workers will work on harvesting by an hourly rate.

Knaster: Could you give me a comparison of wages over the decades, piecework and hourly? Roughly speaking, I mean even close, however close you can get.

Radovich: Well in the Thirties men were making fifty cents an hour; today they're making four and five dollars an hour.

Knaster: Four and five dollars an hour. Those are good wages.

Radovich: Oh sure. Sure, farm workers are not underpaid, I don't think. Of course, everybody's underpaid today because the dollar is shrinking faster than a person can make it, but I would say the average farm worker is doing quite well.³

Knaster: That's a lot more than most secretaries make.

Radovich: I agree.

Knaster: Did the wages fluctuate each season, or were they pretty steady?

Radovich: Well, in what period are you referring?

Knaster: At any time you can recall. For example, you said that workers would come back year after year. Were they getting the wages all the time, or was there a lot of fluctuation?

Radovich: Oh, I would say that wages over the last thirty years have been rising continuously, but there are some years when the wages rose less than in other years, but to go from fifty cents an hour during the Thirties, and this is 1977, say in forty years to go up to four dollars an hour, or five dollars an hour—it's a steady rise.

Knaster: Did wages fluctuate within a particular season, or was there a standard wage throughout a season?

3. This interview was conducted during the great inflation of the 1970s.

Radovich: Oh no, there are always those little ups and downs. If it happened to be a good apple year and somebody wanted to harvest his fruit early so he could get the prime quality, naturally he'd pay a little more. You always have that situation, but that is not the general rule.

Knaster: Since a lot of workers came in just for the season, where did they live?

Radovich: Well, we happened to have quite a bit of our own housing. Today they live in homes that some Mexican families buy, and they rent out rooms to others. I know of houses here in town that have twenty and thirty people living in them, from a three bedroom house.

Knaster: Oh my!

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: But in those days did they live on your property around the orchard?

Radovich: Yes. We still have some living on it.

Knaster: Did you have bunk houses for them?

Radovich: No, we have family housing.

Knaster: It was mostly families that would come, rather than single men?

Radovich: Of course I'm only speaking for myself.

Knaster: Right, yes.

Radovich: Right now we have family housing; we have single men housing. I think most of the orchardists all have some housing of their own. Strawberry fields and lettuce fields where they employ an awful lot of people, they have housing but I think in proportion to the number of people they employ they have less than what we have.

Knaster: When you provided housing, was there a charge for the housing, or was that part of the agreement with workers?

Radovich: No, we charged what we consider a reasonable fee from what they feel is reasonable.

Knaster: Did you have to provide food for them and any other kind of facilities, or did they take care of themselves at home?

Radovich: No, we didn't ever provide food. Because every village has its own way of preparing their food and unless you got a cook out of their own village (laughter) you could never get them to eat the food. I know a lot of the labor camps have to get cooks who are from the ranks, so that the food is what the people in that camp will eat.

Knaster: Did you have to furnish the housing, or did people bring their own things with them?

Radovich: We've progressed through different stages. If they come without absolutely anything, we put together a comfortable house. And then when they make their own money, they buy what they want. We've got about maybe ten or fifteen units now that we furnish after a fashion. (laughter) Modern motel.

Knaster: Modern motel. (laughter) Since you did have workers on your property, were there ever problems in terms of theft, or destruction of property, or drunkenness . . .

Radovich: Well, it goes back to where I talked a little while ago, when the people you have working for you are from a certain village. If you have problems with anyone in particular, it's mostly drunkenness. They're basically honest just like everybody else, money for drinking their checks don't cover or something. They create big problems, but you handle it right there. You tell your foreman to just tell the boy to sleep it off and try to behave for a few days until he feels better, and then you tell him to come back to work when he's feeling better. It's not a matter of trying to reform anybody. We don't go into that. We just try to discipline them to the extent that—you just consider it an illness.

Knaster: Right.

Radovich: Then when he's feeling better he comes back to work.

Knaster: I was thinking sometimes people get into fights and they set places on fire. I was wondering if you had any bad incidents like that happen.

Radovich: No, we've never had that. We have had cases where we've had some potential problems that we just eliminated. For instance in the winter, if we thought a certain person was going to be too difficult, then we just told the foreman to [tell him that] when he goes back home to Mexico either to plan on going to work somewhere else or . . . You just find a way of eliminating them. You discuss it. We'd ask the foreman what he thinks, if that person has problems at home or something, because most problems occur . . . either he comes from a family that's known to be drunks, or he doesn't get along with his wife, or something. There's always something that generates these problems. If it's a permanent situation then you just eliminate it.

Knaster: Have your workers ever caused trouble, like getting together and striking or trying to strike, or something like that?

Radovich: No, our own workers have never done that. The problems we've had were created by complete strangers that were sent to our place by a union trying to instigate trouble.

Knaster: What kind of union people would come in? Are you talking about Teamsters?

Radovich: I'm talking about both Teamsters and UFW. Three or four years ago when they tried to organize the workers they sent out some organizers that were a little more difficult than others to deal with, and I would say that's the worst of the problems that we've had.

Knaster: Did you ever have that in the past, or is that just a recent phenomenon?

Radovich: No, we've never had it, never.

Knaster: Was there every any trouble during the Thirties, among maybe Okies?

Radovich: In the fields? No, we never had any trouble. There have been problems from time to time, but we've always tried to maintain a good relationship with our workers. Both as to living conditions, working conditions, there are probably some places where the management is not as close to their workers, where they've had strained relationships, but my husband's in the field and he's here to solve any problems or listen to any problems that come up.

Knaster: Is the apple industry unionized?

Radovich: Not completely. I don't know what percentage-wise, how much it is unionized. We happen to be Teamsters. Our contract is expiring soon.

Knaster: Did you ever have any problems in getting sufficient labor?

Radovich: No.

Knaster: Was there ever a shortage at any time?

Radovich: No, we never had any shortage.

Knaster: Is it usually a surplus? Are there workers who have to be turned away because there isn't enough for them?

Radovich: I would say in our particular case, yes, because we have, percentage-wise a lot more of the semi-dwarf orchards than some of the other growers, and of course the workers like to come into the semi-dwarf orchards. But we try to keep the people that are with us. We give them first chance. If they come back to work for us, then they have the chance to work in our orchards. We like to keep our rate of turnover down. It makes a better relationship.

Knaster: Oh, I see how it can. You don't have to keep retraining people.

Radovich: That's right. People know what you expect. You know what to expect from them. And they're more satisfied; you're more satisfied. It's a smoother operation.

Early Life

Knaster: I'd like to establish some chronology about your own life. We talked so much about your parents and your grandparents. I would like to start with when you were born and where you were born.

Radovich: I was born right here in Watsonville. In 1918.

Knaster: And your schooling?

Radovich: I went to Moreland Academy, went to the Sisters schools here in town. I went to school there for twelve years. That includes grammar school and high school. Then from there I went to Stanford University for four years, and came back.

Knaster: At any time in your schooling did you get particular instruction in agriculture?

Radovich: No, I didn't feel I needed it.

Knaster: Okay. (laughter)

Radovich: (laughter)

Knaster: Did you every work in any other capacity except with apples. Did you ever hold down any other jobs?

Radovich: No, I didn't. I worked just here, at home.

Knaster: How early did you start in your father's business with him, and what did you do?

Radovich: When I was fourteen I started, and I worked in the office.

Knaster: Was that while you were going to school?

Radovich: I'd work after school. I must have started about in the eighth grade, I guess, or when I was a freshman in high school. My dad had a desk for me set aside in the office. The bookkeeper would line up work for me to do, and I'd do it when I came out of school.

Knaster: Did the bookkeeper teach you what to do, or did your father?

Radovich: Oh both, depending on what there was to do.

Knaster: Do you feel that your father was grooming you in a sense for the business?

Radovich: I don't know that he was grooming me particularly, because both my sister and I did that after school. We both worked. Since I was somewhat handicapped I was expected to stay more in the office. She was more the bouncing around type so it was harder to ground her. (laughter)

Knaster: (laughter) Did she go out to the orchard?

Radovich: Oh, with my mother, yeah. And then too she was younger. So maybe it was an attempt to groom me for the job, but I'm sure that my Dad would not have shot himself if I didn't agree to what he expected. But I just kind of took to it. I've always been kind of interested in business. I can't say that I'm in love with the apple business. (laughter) It does have a lot of problems. I don't feel if I had it to do over again that I'd go into it.

Knaster: Did you study business in college?

Radovich: No.

Knaster: Were you in a liberal arts program?

Radovich: Yes. I fully intended to become a teacher, to tell you the truth.

Knaster: What did you want to teach?

Radovich: I enjoyed history, although my major in college was psychology and political science. I enjoyed psychology. I majored in it, because if I went into teaching it would have helped. But my mother became quite ill at the time and I just didn't go on with that. Because to become a teacher I would have had to go back for a Master's and so forth.

Knaster: Was this during the Thirties?

Radovich: I graduated in 1940.

Knaster: Did you continue to work in your father's business while you were in college?

Radovich: Yes. I stayed home in the fall quarter, which would be from September to December. Then I went back to school in January and stayed throughout the summer quarter.

Knaster: What kinds of things did you do in the business? What were you in charge of?

Radovich: When I was in college I worked in the office. Bookkeeping, payrolls. In those days I could do the payrolls and all the reports myself in no time at all, but today it's kind of a specialized job. (laughter)

Knaster: Oh, is it.

Radovich: Oh yes, because there're so many reports and whatnot that have to be maintained, that any office that hires more than twenty people has to have somebody be quite proficient at payrolls.

Knaster: Did you and your father ever talk about your going into the business? Or was this just something that you did because you're in the family.

Radovich: I was there. (laughter)

Knaster: Well, I mean, I used to go and help my father in his store.

Radovich: No, not really. I don't think we ever thought about it in those terms. I was just there, and the job was mine, and that's it. Of course, my father passed away in 1949, and so there really wasn't much time in between to make too many decisions as to whether I would stay or go or what to do. My mother died in 1941 and my father developed cancer about 1945. So there wasn't much time to decide what to do. You just did it, because of these other circumstances.

Knaster: So you started running the business.

Radovich: Yes, while he was sick I did. So perhaps if he were well then I would have been deciding to make up my mind whether to stay or to do something else, or who knows.

A Woman in a Non-Traditional Field

Knaster: In all the time that you've been in the business, did you ever encounter difficulty because you were a businesswoman? I get the impression that most of the people in the apple industry in Watsonville are men.

Radovich: They are.

Knaster: Did you ever feel that men in the business didn't take you as seriously, or deal with you the same as they did with the other people in the business?

Radovich: Well, it's possible, but I never looked at it that way, to tell you the truth. I've never thought about it. I've always felt an equal. Well, I didn't go bankrupt so they didn't force me out of business.

Knaster: (laughter)

Radovich: (laughter)

Knaster: That's a good observation!

Radovich: I've always been told that I think like a man. I think men have always respected my thinking. Maybe they would have like to have shot me a time or two, when I spoke up and didn't agree with them. I was on the Advisory Board for four or five years.

Knaster: The [Watsonville] Apple Growers Association?

Radovich: But the marketing end. I was on that board and I was on the Association board. I got elected to all the boards when it came time for election (laughter). So I can't say that I've ever felt discriminated [against].

Knaster: Do you ever think that people expressed surprise?

Radovich: Because I was running the business?

Knaster: Yes, and as well as you did.

Radovich: Well, I don't know how well I did, but I don't think so. I don't know. I think it's the fact that I was in since I was so very young. You know, when you start out about fourteen, which is what I was, I think a person's too young to think about discrimination and, what's he going to say because he is a man. I just never thought about it that way. I think the problem comes in when the person's older. I think women run into these problems because they don't venture into the business world until they're in their twenties, and then there is that antagonism because women have to go through a

period of adjustment. Sometimes there is an awkwardness that men sense and they aren't patient enough to put up with it.

Knaster: Do you see any advantages or disadvantages to being the only woman grower?

Radovich: In Watsonville?

Knaster: Yes.

Radovich: No, I don't see any disadvantages; I don't see any advantages. I think it's a strictly a man's world.

Knaster: Is it?

Radovich: And you have to learn to play by the rules. I don't think it'll ever be a woman's world, and I don't want it to be that way. I don't think women were meant to be the rulers of the world. I don't believe in a matriarchal society (laughter). I still think it's a man's world.

I have run into a few women growers in the last twenty years. There was one up in Washington that I met and I liked very much. I had visions of her being very mannish and very masculine, and when I met her I almost fell over!

Knaster: (laughter) Why?

Radovich: She was so petite. Just like a little doll! I said to myself, my gosh, how did this happen? Her husband [had] passed away just a few years after

they had been married, and she took over. When I met her she was in the business about fifteen years on her own. I thought she did a beautiful job. She later married Paul Stark, who has the Stark Brothers Nursery in Missouri. They're one of the biggest nursery people in the United States. She was a grower in Washington. I thought she was a real charming person.

Knaster: Did you basically run the business by yourself once your father got ill?

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: Did you ever have any help from the rest of the family? Well, your sister, I guess.

Radovich: No, because my sister's an attorney. At that time she was district attorney in Santa Cruz County.

Knaster: Is she still here?

Radovich: No, she's married to a judge in San Francisco. So they live up there.

Knaster: What years was she district attorney? What is her name?

Radovich: June Schnacke. She became district attorney in... Well, let's see, she graduated from law school in 1941. She immediately became assistant to

the then district attorney. That would be in 1942. She held the job from 1944 to about 1953.⁴

Knaster: Oh, that's quite a long stretch.

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: Was she the only woman district attorney that this . . .

Radovich: At that time, yeah.

Knaster: Have there been others since?

Radovich: Oh, yes women have become judges since. Don't you know Miss [Rose] Bird? (laughter)

Knaster: I'm talking in particular about Watsonville. Was it usual?

Radovich: Oh yes!

Knaster: That a woman became district attorney?

Radovich: Oh sure, of course, this is a small community. But we have not had a woman district attorney since.

4. June Schnacke became district attorney of Santa Cruz County in 1947 at age twenty-seven. She was the first woman to serve as district attorney in California. In 1954 she became deputy U.S. attorney in San Francisco. After Mary Ann Radovich died in 1991, Schnacke ran the apple farm until her death in 2000, at the age of eighty.

Knaster: Did it cause a furor?

Radovich: Well . . .

Knaster: (laughter)

Radovich: Yes and no. At first it did not, because there were so few men to take the job. They were all in the service. Later, when the boys came back, there were a few problems. But today it's become a very common thing.

Knaster: Have you ever known any other women growers in this area, or only from Washington?

Radovich: Well, I guess there have been a few on a small scale, you know, widows and some that have taken over from their parents and then gotten out . . . you know, kind of on an interim basis. But I don't know of any that have been in as long as I have.

Knaster: Then you're holding quite a record.

Radovich: I guess so. Of course, I'm somewhat out of it now and I'm not in it as I was before, because my husband is doing a lot of the work that I used to do.

Knaster: When did he start doing that?

Radovich: Oh, when we were married.

Knaster: When was that?

Radovich: Oh, let's see, 1957. We kind of split the work then. (laughter) We decided it would make a more harmonious existence.

Knaster: Not both of you being out there. (laughter)

Radovich: In the same place. (laughter) at the same time.

Knaster: Was he from Watsonville?

Radovich: No. He's from Europe. From Yugoslavia.

Knaster: Did you meet him in Yugoslavia?

Radovich: No. I met him here. But we still talk everything over and I've given up working with the help. He's a lot better to work with people than I am. I recognize my limitations. I find that men will not always accept orders from the women.

Knaster: Even if you're the boss?

Radovich: Well, I shouldn't put it that way. They will accept orders from me; that is the ones who have been with us, who are permanent workers, but a lot of the migrants don't regularly accept it.

Knaster: Do you think that's because of the Mexican culture, or because that's a general thing of men?

Radovich: It might be a cultural thing, although I really don't know. I've really not taken time to analyze it. But just on general principle, it seems to work better when the workers get their instructions from a man.

Knaster: Was your husband experienced in apples before he started helping in the business?

Radovich: No, we just kind of learnt things as we went along. Actually he was trained for restaurant work. He was a hotel manager in Newark. But it's not difficult to learn. I think the basic thing that is required is an ability to work with people, and when you can work with people there's no problem. Because people are the same whether you are working in a hotel, or whether you're working in an orchard, or whether you're working anywhere else—it's the same thing. You have to know people. You have to understand people. You have to be aware of their problems, [be] willing to listen to their problems. He's very good at that.

Ties with the Old Country

Knaster: Now that you're married to a Yugoslavian man do you maintain ties with the old country? Did your family do that all along, or was there a break once they came to the United States?

Radovich: Well, there was a break for a while. They always wrote back and forth to relatives. I can't say it was a complete break. I guess the fact that I am married to somebody from over there does mean that we are closer now.

And particularly because my husband has brothers there. But I don't think you can ever completely break the ties with an area where you have relatives.

Knaster: Did your parents ever go back to visit?

Radovich: No.

Knaster: Was the Yugoslavian language spoken at home?

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: Did you learn it too?

Radovich: Oh yes, I learned it when I was small.

Knaster: Can you still speak it?

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: Were there particular customs or traditions that were followed in the family that were brought over from Yugoslavia? Holidays that you celebrated, or foods that were prepared, or ways of doing things, ways of relating to each other?

Radovich: Well, yes religious holidays are very important, not that I say the Yugoslav people are particularly religious . . .

Knaster: (laughter)

Radovich: But the religious holidays are important to them. Christmas, New Year's, Easter, holidays like that are always meant to be feast days. If you ever have barbecued lamb and barbecued pig, that's when you have it.

Knaster: Was there anything you particularly remember as being Yugoslavian, something that was traditional, maybe clothing or food?

Radovich: Not much. It took a long time for my mother and father's generation to forget the hardships that they had, so anything that had too close a tie with the costumes, for instance a lot of the feast celebrations and all of that, didn't bring back pleasant memories. For instance, if someone went to a war, well anything related to that period of their life, they'd want to block that out. I think this period that we're going through now, there is a revival of interest in their costumes, and their languages and customs, and all of that. I notice it more now than in the last twenty years. Even I myself am more interested. In fact, I went to the trouble of having somebody over there make me up a costume when I was there.

Knaster: How nice!

Radovich: So I have the costume. I just thought, well, it's something to preserve. But I would never have dreamed about that say thirty years ago. It didn't impress me then. But now it does.

Knaster: What is distinctive about the costumes?

Radovich: Well it's the dress. The embroidery part up here that's made from homemade silk. And the cap that goes with it.

Knaster: Is it a kind of skirt?

Radovich: Yes.

Knaster: What kind of fabric do they use?

Radovich: Wool.

Knaster: Is it all wool?

Radovich: Oh, it has to be wool. Can't have polyester. (laughter)

Knaster: (laughter) Is it colorful?

Radovich: I have the winter costume, which is a black basic dress, and the tight belt and it's kind of like an apron, and that can be of silk. Most of the older ladies have the darker colors, and the young girls have the brighter colors. The jacket part is, everybody has to wear the same pattern in the embroidery work because that is native to each village. What I have is the village where my husband comes from. My mother's village might have had slight variations but I couldn't find anybody there to do it.

Knaster: Oh.

Radovich: And of course where my father came from, that was slightly different too, but basically that is the same. The colors vary from village to village.

Knaster: Sounds nice.

Radovich: It is interesting.

Knaster: Was the Yugoslavian community in Watsonville very organized in terms of social events, and clubs or associations?

Radovich: Well they had clubs and various groups, but truthfully we were not that active because we were just too busy. You know, it's not like in Europe where the winters were long and cold and you had to stay indoors. That's more conducive to an active social life. But around here you just work practically 365 days a year. Of course now it would be different because here the tendency is to work five or six days a week and rest some. But not in the old days. You just worked whenever the weather was right.

Knaster: I ask about Yugoslavian community organizations and clubs because I find that generally immigrant groups somehow band together and help each other in some way and preserve customs somehow.

Radovich: Well, that's true, although I can't say that in this particular area we have so much of that. I would say in area like San Jose where there were more people from a particular area in Europe, that they would be more

involved. Right here we just didn't have that many. We had a lot of people, but basically this is a small community here. In San Jose and San Francisco and Los Angeles we have big concentrations of people from particular places in Europe.

Knaster: What did you like most about the business? Is there any particular aspect of the business that you enjoyed or appreciated as a challenge?

Radovich: Well, I'm so accustomed to challenges they're no longer challenges.

Knaster: (laughter)

Radovich: (laughter) All the challenges I find today more or less fall into the same categories that I've been through before, so I really don't experience any new challenges in the business, mostly because we don't want to expand anymore. We want to remain status quo. I'm getting older; my husband's getting older. We have no children, so there's no incentive for us to develop a business that we'll pass on to somebody else. The parts that I find most difficult today are making the adjustments that are brought on by new ways of handling a farming operation, that is mechanically, government controls, new labor problems, new varieties that are introduced into the business—all of those things are probably challenges, although they've been taking place ever since I remember so they're not challenges, they're just . . . I would say problems that come up, and perhaps I get more impatient today because I

am older. Twenty years ago I probably would not have become impatient. I just would have shrugged them off. As far as what I like in the business, I think I could just generalize and say it would be the same as if I were in any other business. I do like meeting people that are in it. I think it's very interesting to work with people. It's not only people that you work with here, it's people that you meet in other phases of the business, people you sell to, people that supply you with materials—it's just very interesting.

Knaster: In all the years that you've been in this business, in looking back, if you had the opportunity to change or undo anything or some decision you made, what would that be? If any?

Radovich: Well I can't say that I . . . (laughter) I'm being egotistical or what, but I can't say that I ever made a really big mistake, because I think a person has to be fair with themselves. When you consider all the factors that are before you at a given time and you do what you feel is the product of your best judgement, then if it goes wrong it would have gone wrong anyway. Things have happened to me a few times like that. I remember the first time it happened to me it got me down pretty badly, and a very good friend of mine explained it to me in just that way. They said, "Well, you thought it out. You did everything you thought was right, and it still went wrong. That means it would have gone wrong anyway no matter what you did." So it was something that no one could have anticipated. That was shortly after my father died and this person said, "Well, even if your father were here he

probably would have done the very same thing that you did.” And when I stopped to think about it, and analyzed what I would have had to do to make it right, I said to myself, “Yes, I guess that would have happened to him too.” So I can’t say that anything I did was wrong. A few times I’ve missed the timing, but timing is something no one can predict. Other than that I can’t see anything that . . . I mean I don’t feel I’m overconfident. I think sometimes that can hurt a person, if they become overconfident.

Knaster: I don’t see it as making wrong decisions. I don’t think decisions are necessarily wrong once they’re made, but sometimes an opportunity comes up and later on you think, Well, gee, maybe I should have taken that, or maybe I shouldn’t have taken it, or maybe I should have expanded the business and maybe I shouldn’t have.

Radovich: Well, there is that problem, but all of life is a decision. (laughter) Should I or shouldn’t I? You’ve got that facing you continuously, and who knows, if I zigged, instead of zagged fifteen years ago, maybe something else could have gone wrong and vice versa, I don’t know. I just never look back. I don’t ever look at it that way.

Knaster: What advice would you give to someone starting out?

Radovich: In this business? Or any business?

Knaster: Well, I would say in the apple business. Since you’re so experienced.

Radovich: Well, I think it would be the same whether it would be the apple business or any business. It's a lot of hard work. I don't know of anything that has come easy. Everything that I've done or accomplished has come because I put a lot of thought into it. I think that a few times I could have considered myself lucky. But the times that I think I was lucky were pretty few. There weren't too many times that I was lucky. Most of the things that went right there were because I made it right. I think that goes for anybody going into a business. No matter how hard the business is or how easy the business is, it's still a lot of hard work. And it is consistent work. It's not something that you can say—it's an eight to five job, you fold your papers and put them away. It doesn't work that way. I know a lot of times I'd have to quit. I'd be working at something and trying to figure it out and analyze it and I'd get so tired I'd just put it away and then start thinking about it after resting a few hours. So it's not just a matter of time. You just do it when you're fresh. I know a lot of times I'd get up at five o'clock in the morning and try to figure out something, because in the evening or in the afternoon I'd just get groggy. So it's just a matter of putting in the effort.

Knaster: There have been a lot of ethnic groups that have flowed in and out of this community. Could you perhaps comment on the contributions you think any of them made to agriculture in the county?

Radovich: I would say that each group contributed in their own way. Each group's way has been important to agriculture. Some have gone more in

management; some groups have gone more into producing the crops; some more into harvesting, like these groups now.

Knaster: The Yugoslavian community has been so active in the apple industry. Wouldn't you say they really helped to promote that?

Radovich: Well, yes, but they aren't the only ones. There was a time when the Japanese were the predominant ones in the strawberries, but it's not necessarily true today. I would say each group contributes to the whole. I can't say the whole belongs to any one group. You know what I mean? In the apple business the Yugoslavs have been important. Maybe they've contributed more management. But it's taken the Mexicans, the whites that came in from Missouri and Kansas and those places—as I look back it's taken an awful lot of effort on the part of a lot of those groups to make the industry. I just can't say that the apple business belongs to the Yugoslavs, and the berry business belongs to the Japanese, and so forth.

Knaster: I think that's a really fair evaluation that you're making.

Radovich: You think so?

Knaster: Yes.

Radovich: Well, it's the way I see it, actually. (laughter) Because over the years that's the way it was.

Knaster: What happens, sometimes people make claims. But I think you assessed it in a very fair way by saying that all of these different groups have put in their share.

Radovich: Well, I think it comes from the fact that I've been exposed to it for so long. You know, someone in the business, say ten years, would not see the overall picture because his experience would be limited.

Knaster: That's why I'm talking to you!

Radovich: Oh. (laughter)

Knaster: Because you have all that experience. Thank you very much.