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Luke P. Cikuth: The Pajaro Valley Apple Industry, 1890-1930

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Abstract:
Luke P. Cikuth was born in Yugoslavia in 1873 and came to the United States in 1890. After spending several years at various odd jobs, he started an apple packing and shipping business which soon became one of Watsonville's largest packing companies. Cikuth describes his business operations and the apple industry as a whole, covering not only the packing and shipping of apples, but also the problems and techniques involved in growing apples, and the role of the various auxiliary apple industries such as the cider works, vinegar works, apple dryers, and cold storage facilities. He also discusses other agricultural crops that are, or have been, important in the Pajaro Valley and the ethnic groups that have been associated with some of these crops. In the concluding chapter of the manuscript Mr. Cikuth describes the town of Watsonville as it appeared to him in the 1890s.

University of California, Santa Cruz

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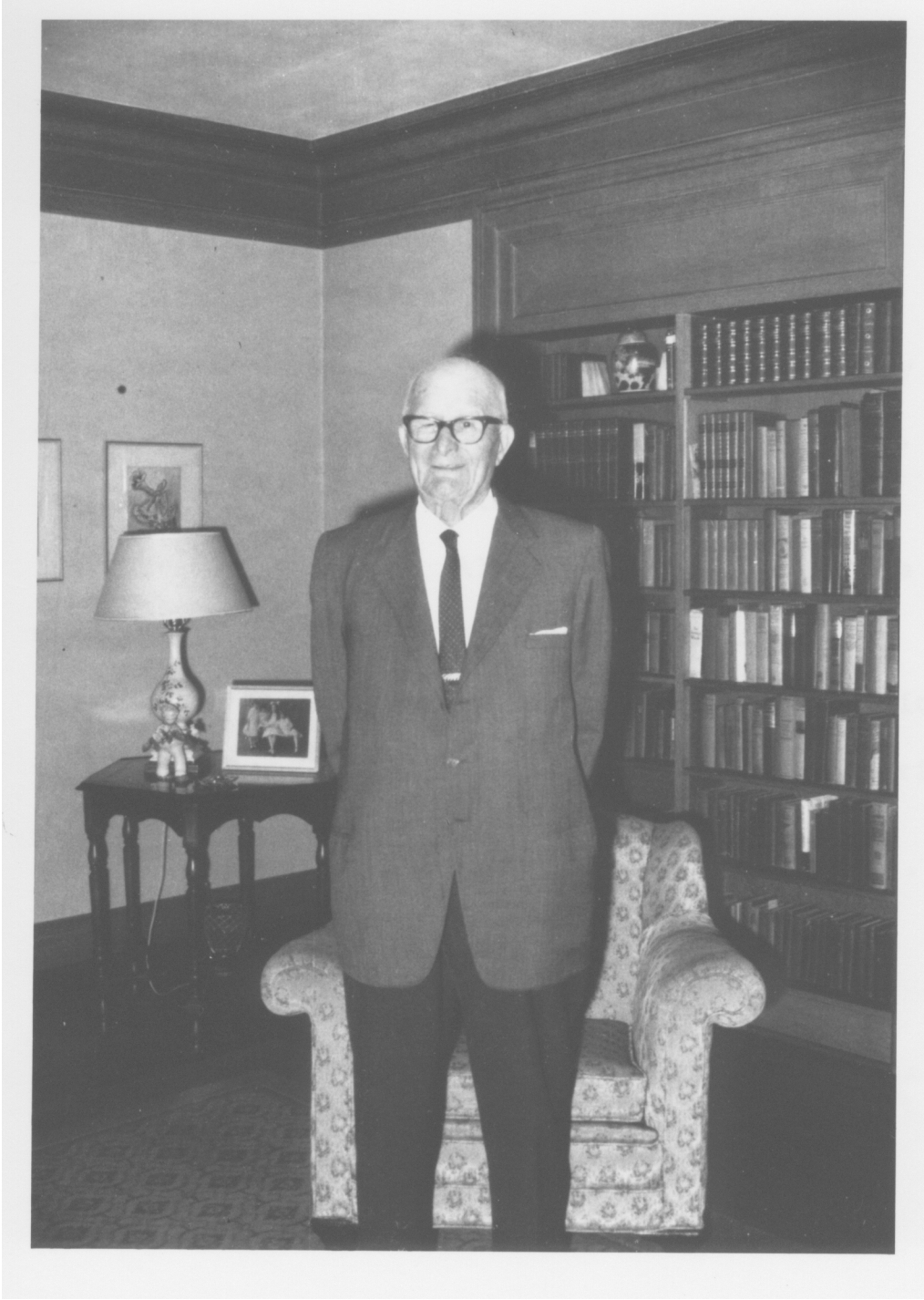
LUKE P. CIKUTH

THE PAJARO VALLEY APPLE INDUSTRY, 1890-1930

An Interview Conducted By
Elizabeth Spedding Calciano

Santa Cruz
1967



Luke P. Cikuth

In his Living Room

January 5, 1967

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INTRODUCTION

The first commercial orchard in the Watsonville area was planted in 1858, but it was several decades before apples became the dominant agricultural crop in the Pajaro Valley. Between 1860 and 1875 a few apple orchards were planted, but the industry did not make significant growth because the Santa Clara Valley was producing apples on a large scale (over a million trees by 1870) and took away our natural markets. Within the space of a few years, however, the pendulum began a dramatic swing. Around 1874 the Santa Clara Valley orchards were wiped out by an epidemic of red scale (now known as San Jose scale) and the Watsonville area slowly began to build up apple orchards to fill the gap. However, our orchards too were plagued with various diseases and pests, notably scale and codling moth, and it was not until effective remedies for them had been found that our plantings and production mushroomed. The increase was dramatic: in 1901 there were estimated to be 156,000 trees planted on 1,789 acres; by 1910 the million tree mark had been reached, half of them in full bearing, and the orchards covered roughly 14,000 acres. From this point on, apples were the king crop in the Watsonville area and have remained so except for a brief period in the mid 1950's when strawberries claimed first place as a revenue producing crop. Strawberry

plantings have since decreased, however, and in terms of dollar value apples far outstrip their nearest competitors, strawberries and lettuce.

The years around the turn of the century were exciting years to be involved in the "apple game" -- the best apple varieties for our area had to be determined; buying, handling, and shipping techniques had to be developed; and new markets had to be opened up. Most of the packing and shipping businesses were run by immigrants from Yugoslavia. It was they who fostered the amazing growth of the industry.

We were fortunate indeed to be able to interview Luke P. Cikuth about the early years in the apple industry. Mr. Cikuth was born in Konavle, Yugoslavia, in 1873. He emigrated to the United States late in 1889 and spent his first few years here working at a number of jobs varying all the way from dishwasher to fruit picker to worker in the beet-sugar factory. By 1897 he had saved enough money to form a partnership and start a fruit-packing business. At the end of the year his partner decided to return to Yugoslavia so Mr. Cikuth entered into another partnership which formed the J. P. Miovich Company. This was dissolved in 1907, and Mr. Cikuth continued in the fruit-packing business under his own name until 1924. Although he then retired from the packing business, Mr. Cikuth continued operating his own orchards for a number of years.

In our interviews Mr. Cikuth discussed his decision to come to the United States and the various jobs he found before becoming a fruit packer. He described his business operations and the apple industry as a whole, covering not only the packing and shipping aspects, but also the problems and techniques involved in raising apples, and the role of the various auxiliary apple industries such as cider works, vinegar works, apple dryers, and cold storage facilities.

Mr. Cikuth was also asked to talk about other agricultural crops that are, or have been, important in the Pajaro Valley (hay, sugar beets, strawberries, lettuce) and this in turn led to a discussion of several of the ethnic groups in the area, particularly the Japanese, Chinese, and Yugoslavs.

In the latter part of the book Mr. Cikuth gives his views on education and opportunities in America and describes some of his feelings about life in the United States, about becoming a citizen, and about learning to speak and read the English language. He also describes the town of Watsonville as it appeared to him in the 1890's.

Four interviews were held between August 14, 1964, and December 3, 1964. The recording sessions took place in the Cikuths' spacious and quiet living room. Mr. Cikuth is a charming man and was most gracious and relaxed.

He has a delightful sense of humor, which, unfortunately, is only partially evident in the finished manuscript.

The manuscript was organized and edited by the interviewer, and was returned to Mr. Cikuth and his daughters who made further changes and corrections. The picture of Mr. Cikuth was taken by the editor in January of 1967. When asked if there were any old pictures of the Cikuth packing business, Mrs. Cikuth very kindly searched for some and let us reproduce the picture of the Miovich Company packing shed and a sample of the stationery used when Mr. Cikuth was the sole owner of the business.

This manuscript is part of a collection of interviews on the history of Santa Cruz County which have been conducted by the Regional History Project. The Project is under the administrative supervision of Donald T. Clark, University Librarian.

Elizabeth Spedding Calciano

March 15, 1967
Regional History Project
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University of California, Santa Cruz

EARLY YEARS

Life in Yugoslavia

Calciano: What year were you born?

Cikuth: In 1873.

Calciano: And what month?

Cikuth: The date was February 18.

Calciano: How old were you when you came to this country?

Cikuth: I was seventeen years old when I came.

Calciano: Did you have a large family back in Yugoslavia?

Cikuth: Oh yes, I had a lot of brothers and sisters, but they're pretty near all dead now.

Calciano: They all stayed in Yugoslavia, didn't they?

Cikuth: Oh yes, they stayed there all the time. I've got some nieces and nephews and things like that, but my original family, sisters and brothers, except one sister, they're all gone.

Calciano: Were you one of the older sons or one of the younger ones?

Cikuth: No, no. I had an older brother. My brother was an older man, and then I had two sisters older than me.

Calciano: And did you have any younger brothers and sisters?

Cikuth: Yes, one sister and two brothers younger than I am.

Calciano: How did you happen to come to this country?

Cikuth: Well, I was looking for a better living.

Calciano: You'd heard about California?

Cikuth: I heard about California; that was all you heard about back home. You heard very little about any other state, except California.

Calciano: Why just California?

Cikuth: Because, I'll tell you the reasons why. There were a lot of people over here from the country that I come from, and they were mostly in California. They'd been writing back and forth, you see, and people talked with one another and got more familiar with this country. That was the thing. As far as the United States was concerned, we hardly ever thought about it, but California was always in our minds.

Calciano: Did you come all the way to California by boat, or...

Cikuth: Some part by boat, some part by rail.

Calciano: You went across this country by rail?

Cikuth: Yes, yes, and I came by rail to Germany and then to France. From France we took the boat.

Calciano: Well now, you didn't know any German or French, did

you?

Cikuth: Oh no, no. I didn't know any language, and very little of my own at that, (laughter) because I didn't have much schooling at home, you know.

Calciano: Wasn't there much schooling offered?

Cikuth: Well, there was. I went to private school for a while and then public school. You know we were under the Austrian government at that time, and their school came in so we had to quit our private school and go into public school or else be fined.

Calciano: Oh!

Cikuth: Oh yes, they'd fine us if we didn't go to public school, you know, because that's just the way the government was planned.

Calciano: Didn't this make you rather mad?

Cikuth: Well, it would have been better for me to keep on in my school. My father was a poor man, but still he was providing a little school for me, the private school. I would have rather gone to the private school than I would the public school because I could learn better. There were only a few of us in that private school, you know.

Calciano: But the Austrian schooling wasn't one of the reasons

you left Yugoslavia, was it?

Cikuth: No, that wasn't the reason I left.. Of course my father wanted to send me to work because there were too many of us in the family. He sent me out and said, "You might be able to make a better living in California."

Coming to California

Calciano: Didn't it cost quite a bit to get over to America?

Cikuth: Well, not a great deal. It was cheap transportation, but it took you a long time to get here.

Calciano: How long did it take you?

Cikuth: From home to get down here, it took a whole month.

Calciano: Well now, you shipped out of France, and did you land in New York?

Cikuth: Yes, from there to New York, that's right.

Calciano: And then how did you manage to tell people that you were going to California if you didn't know our language? How did you get on the right train?

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you, we had someone with us who understood a little English.

Calciano: You went with a group?

Cikuth: Yes, that's right, a group of people went together.

Calciano: About how many people?

Cikuth: Oh, there were about a dozen people in our group. There were a lot more people traveling also, but I didn't know who they were.

Calciano: Were there many families, or were they mostly young single men?

Cikuth: No families, no families that I know of. Just single boys.

Calciano: How did you arrange your transportation?

Cikuth: You see the agents in our country, they were Slavs, and they connected me with all the different lines of steamers and railroads. Well they sent us a different way so they could get the cheapest way that they could, but it took a long time to come. We stopped here and there, stopped here and there, stopped here, stopped everywhere. A lot of the time we went on freight trains and things like that.

Calciano: But you got here to California in a month?

Cikuth: Just about a month, or probably a little more.

Calciano: Well that's faster than I thought it would be.

Cikuth: Yes.

Calciano: When you took the train to California, where did you get off?

Cikuth: I took the train into California, but first we landed in Vancouver, Washington.

Calciano: In Vancouver?

Cikuth: Yes, and then to Seattle. In Seattle there was no town at all.

Calciano: No town?

Cikuth: Everything was burned up.

Calciano: Oh gracious.

Cikuth: Everything was burned up. The only way we could buy our supplies, bread and things like that, was to go to a canteen under a big tent, because the town was all burned flat. You know Seattle is on kind of a bench land, and when we were there, everything was burned black. Seattle was built up after that. Now it's a beautiful town; it has one of the best vegetable markets that I have ever seen in the world.

Calciano: Really?

Cikuth: Oh yes, it's wonderful.

Calciano: When you came down the coast, what town did you come to in California?

Cikuth: We came down to Sacramento first.

Calciano: What month did you get there?

Cikuth: It was either the month of April or May. Then from there we came right down here.

Calciano: Oh, you didn't stay in Sacramento at all?

Cikuth: No, no, we came right down here.

Calciano: How did you get over here?

Cikuth: Well, we got in here by rail. We didn't know anybody in Sacramento, but we knew people here; that's why we came here.

Calciano: I see. When did the first Yugoslavian people come to Watsonville?

Cikuth: Well, that I wouldn't know, but I heard that a fellow named Rabaza came here first. I didn't see him, so I don't know, but that's what I heard from the other people. Then after him different people came in here.

Calciano: And was Rabaza from the Dubrovnik area?

Cikuth: I don't know what part he was from.

Calciano: Are almost all the Yugoslavian people that are in Watsonville from the area around Dubrovnik?

Cikuth: Around that part, yes. And then of course there are quite a few islands there, but they're all close by you see.

Calciano: I've heard people say that Yugoslavians liked the

Watsonville area because its weather was so similar to Dubrovnik's.

Cikuth: Well, yes, but still it's hotter there in the summer.

Calciano: Is the weather worse there?

Cikuth: Well, it's cold in the winter, very cold, yes. There's no fog over in Yugoslavia, but there is tremendously cold weather; it snows and freezes in that part close to Belgrade.

First Jobs

Calciano: When you came over here, what was your first job?

Cikuth: The first job I had was down in San Jose washing dishes.

Calciano: How did you happen to get over there?

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you how it was; this fellow had a restaurant, you know, and he was inquiring of somebody down here if there were any young fellows that might work in a restaurant washing dishes. So somebody called upon me and I said I'd go, that it was all right with me. There were no jobs of any kind at that time.

Calciano: There weren't?

Cikuth: No jobs; none at all. Well, it was all fruit business in here at that time, but very little of that. And there was no other job that you could get, you know. In fact working in the fruit was a kind of a hard job, but there wasn't any kind of a job anyhow.

Calciano: Even if you'd been older?

Cikuth: Oh no, I tell you, it was trouble. It was difficult to make a living.

Calciano: Was it a Yugoslavian person who owned the restaurant in San Jose?

Cikuth: Oh yes. He was an old man, old man Zuzalo. He had a restaurant, and he had a son who was a professor in a school.

Calciano: What was your salary?

Cikuth: Ten dollars.

Calciano: Ten dollars a month?

Cikuth: Yes, and working about fourteen to fifteen hours a day. In fact I was working whenever they wanted me. Whatever time it was, any time, I had to be up. Whenever they wanted me to work, I was there to work.

Calciano: Did you live at the restaurant?

Cikuth: I lived there; he gave me a place over the restaurant.

Calciano: You were given both food and lodging?

Cikuth: Oh yes, oh yes, that was free you know, because if I had to pay for my lodging out of the ten dollars, there wouldn't have been enough to pay.

Calciano: But I guess you had to buy all your clothes and everything out of the ten dollars.

Cikuth: Oh I had to buy those things, oh yes. But there were cheap clothes in those days. You could buy a ten dollar suit, you know, and today I'd have to pay forty, fifty dollars I guess. There were cheap things then.

Calciano: How long did you work in San Jose?

Cikuth: I worked in the restaurant for six months, then I couldn't agree with the cook because he was rough, so I quit the restaurant. I went to work about ten miles south of San Jose, in some lime kilns where they made the lime, just like Mr. Cowell used to make.

Calciano: Did Cowell own the kilns?

Cikuth: No, no. This was a lime kiln up in Guadalupe.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: Yes. Guadalupe is the place where they made the lime, and there was also a quicksilver mine there too, but that wasn't working at the time when I was working on the lime kilns. I worked there for about two or three

months.

Calciano: Did you like that kind of work?

Cikuth: Well I liked that kind of work, but it wasn't, well I'll tell you, the work was all right, and I guess that the pay was good, but there wasn't much to eat.

Calciano: Oh dear. Who ran that place?

Cikuth: Well, I don't know, some concern from San Jose. It was a small outfit. You know in those days it was just like this: you had to take any kind of a job that was offered to you, and you couldn't say, "I am tired" or "I am hungry," because if you said anything like that, you were off. It isn't like today. When I had people working for me, they were the boss, not me. I had over a hundred working for me in the last two years that I was in business. And I never dared say much about how I felt, you know, or they'd leave me and go somewhere else.

Calciano: When you worked in the lime kilns, were you putting wood on the fire and drawing the lime, or what kind of work were you doing there?

Cikuth: I worked in the sidehill where they were blasting the rocks. I'd load the rock in a little car that ran on a rail and brought the lime down to the kiln.

Calciano: Was it hard work?

Cikuth: Oh, hard work, yes.

Calciano: So you worked there for two or three months.

Cikuth: Oh yes, I worked there till the fruit season came. Then I went to San Jose and worked on fruit.

Calciano: Was that about the middle of the summer?

Cikuth: Well, it was around July and August; it depended on the weather.

Calciano: Did you work as a picker?

Cikuth: Yes. I picked tomatoes, and picked up the corn from the ground, and all of that.

Calciano: How long did you do that?

Cikuth: I did that until the season ended -- for as long as they wanted me and the season lasted. After that I had to look for something else.

Calciano: How long did you stay in San Jose?

Cikuth: I was probably in San Jose for about three years, and then we commenced to thinking about this place here. That's when we came down here.

Calciano: What did you do your first year in Watsonville?

Cikuth: First I worked in the apple game for other people, you know, the Lettunich orchards. And in the apples we used to get small wages.

Calciano: You picked apples?

Cikuth: Yes, and picking apples you got just enough to board yourself. So after that I took a job at the sugar mill.

Working in the Sugar Mill

Cikuth: The sugar factory was out here. I worked there for a couple of years.

Calciano: What years?

Cikuth: That was 1896 and '97. I worked there for two years, that is two seasons, yes, about six or seven months a year. You see when I was a boy here, seventeen years old, just after I had arrived, I went down to work in the sugar beets at Salinas. That was all day long, from five o'clock or six o'clock in the morning up to about dark. A dollar a day and board, and that was good pay, too. But then later I worked in the sugar mill out here. That was when it was here in Watsonville.

Calciano: And that was when you were older?

Cikuth: Yes. At that time I was about twenty-four years old. Yes, I was a stronger man than when I was working on the sugar beets in the field, you know. I had to be a stronger man to work there, because it was harder

work, very, very heavy work.

Calciano: What did you do there? What kind of work?

Cikuth: In the sugar mill I was working on the heating. You know in those days there was no electricity; they used to bring the wood from the country, wagon after wagon. They were four foot lengths of wood, and we'd pile it up. Then after that they put me to work on sugar, piling up sugar in a railroad car.

Calciano: The finished sugar?

Cikuth: Well, it was raw sugar, not finished like it is now. It was kind of a brown sugar. They had to send it to San Francisco to be refined, but now they refine it down here in Salinas.

Calciano: So you worked there for two seasons?

Cikuth: Yes, I worked there two seasons. It was pretty hard work, too. You know every sack of sugar that went in the car had to be put on the scale first.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Every sack had to go on the scale, and they weighed from 170 to 175 pounds. I had to lift them from the ground. The boy would bring me the sack in a little wheelbarrow and dump it on the ground. I had to lift it, weigh it, and carry it over to the railroad car. I

did fifteen or sixteen hundred sacks a day you know.

Calciano: Oh, my!

Cikuth: Fifteen or sixteen hundred sacks for ten hours a day; that's working pretty hard. You'd take a pair of pants, jeans, and in a couple days there'd be a hole right in the knee because you settled the sacks there, and those sugar sacks were hard.

Calciano: You'd balance them on your leg?

Cikuth: Oh yes, you had to get it up there, you know, to lift it up to the car. Sure, it was very hard work. I was pretty tired after ten hours. Let me tell you, there were a dozen men that couldn't stand that kind of work. But I was good and young and a good deal stronger at that time than I am now. It was hard work, and yet I couldn't say I didn't want it, because they would say, "Well, if you don't want it, we'll get somebody else then and you're out."

Calciano: You didn't have much choice, did you! May I ask you what the season was in the sugar mill? From what month to what month?

Cikuth: It was from May or June until December.

Calciano: Did they close the mill down entirely?

Cikuth: Well, yes, but they had a crew to clean up in the

winter. They had a crew to clean up the vats and different things in there, but there weren't enough jobs for everyone. There were jobs all year around for the mechanics and different ones, but for me there wasn't any job.

Calciano: How much money did you earn there?

Cikuth: I didn't get very much; I got two dollars a day if I worked hard.

Calciano: Were you able to save some of that?

Cikuth: Oh yes, that's what I saved to go into business. Yes, that's where I saved it. I lived by myself in a little cabin. I couldn't afford to go and eat in restaurants. I didn't want any of that because there wouldn't have been enough money left.

Calciano: Did you build the cabin?

Cikuth: No, no, we had a place we rented from other people.

Calciano: I see. And you cooked for yourself?

Cikuth: Yes, there was a whole bunch of us.

Calciano: What did you do after the second sugar season?

Cikuth: Well, then I went into business.

PACKING AND SHIPPING

Starting into Business

Cikuth: I saved my money and then went into business with the little money that I had. I went in with another fellow. I think the other fellow had a thousand dollars and I had about five hundred dollars. We put it in together, and we made a little money in the first year. We made it on our own, you know, gradually, in a small way. Even if I had wanted to go in a big way, there wasn't enough fruit to buy. There weren't big orchards like there are today. To tell you the truth, there were a couple of big places here, but there wasn't enough for all of us and we had to go around and buy a few crops here and there from home orchards, things like that.

Calciano: What was your partner's name?

Cikuth: My partner's name, the first fellow's name was Zar.

Calciano: How long were you in partnership with him?

Cikuth: Well, we only stayed one year together because he wanted to go home.

Calciano: To Yugoslavia?

Cikuth: To Yugoslavia, yes. So, I made a deal with him and he went back.

Calciano: Who did you go with the next year?

Cikuth: Two other people, and I was the third one. There was a man that came from the old country, Mr. John Miovich,

and the other fellow was named Mitchell Pendo. Mr. Pendo worked with us up to about 1904, and then he left and went back to the old country. He had a brother and he wanted to take his brother back home. And Mr. Miovich worked with me up until 1908. Then he left to go back to the old country, and I was left alone. I carried that business by myself.

Calciano: So Mr. Zar went back to Yugoslavia and then your other partners did, too. Did a lot of the people who came here go back to the old country?

Cikuth: Oh, you mean in those days?

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you. They came over and got into the mining industry, you know. In those days they could do a little better in the mines than on a farm. So they stayed there, and if they happened to get a job in one year and drew an extra thousand dollars or something like that, they'd go back home. You see a thousand dollars was big money in those days.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: Today it is nothing.

Calciano: Well you never wanted to go back, did you?

Cikuth: I did.

Calciano: You went back to live there?

Cikuth: No, I never went back to live, but I did go back to visit my mother when she was sick. I had to go. In those days you didn't go if you didn't have to. Of course my mother was a sick woman, and she wrote me that I should come to see her before she passed on.

Calciano: Is that the only time you've gone back?

Cikuth: That's the only time, the only time I visited, and then I had to hurry up and come back to work.

Calciano: Did you meet your wife over there?

Cikuth: I met my wife right here. She came here from the old country. She had relations here, you know; they had a big family here.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: In fact back home where we were raised we weren't very far from each other, but then of course we didn't know each other at all. She came out here because she had her family living here.

Calciano: What was her maiden name?

Cikuth: Scurich. Yes, her family, let's see, she had four brothers and three sisters.

Calciano: Were they in produce and apples too?

Cikuth: Oh yes. Well, I'll tell you, all these Slav people who

are here today, they were all working that same line of business. That's what they learned from one another.

Calciano: There were a lot of small independent fruit packers, weren't there?

Cikuth: Oh yes, quite a few, yes.

Calciano: Did bigger companies start buying them out or?

Cikuth: Well, no, not exactly. There are still many in the same business.

Calciano: Am I not right in thinking that a lot of the fruit packing done now is by large companies, not little independent people?

Cikuth: Most are independent still.

Calciano: I see.

Buying Orchard Crops

Calciano: Well, getting back to when you went into business for yourself, what year was that?

Cikuth: That was 1896.

Calciano: And you bought apples and sold them. Was it just apples that you dealt with, or did you handle other fruit that first year?

Cikuth: Well, we took all kinds of things. When you went into

the little orchards, you got a few apples, and you got a few peaches, and you got a few prunes. It was all mixed up in those days, you know, not like today. Today you go into a straight orchard where there's nothing but one crop to buy, but in those days it was all mixed up. They had what they used to call "home_ orchards." You got a few peaches, and you got a few apricots, you got a few apples, a few prunes, and such as that. So you had to take all of them, see?

Calciano: I see. And then would you have pickers pick them, or would the homeowners pick them?

Cikuth: Well, we had to have people to help us pick, you know, but there were plenty of people to work back then. You could get them any time.

Calciano: Where would you sell the fruit?

Cikuth: We sold it to people who were in that business to buy, you know. We'd sell to anybody who came to buy the fruit from us, or we would send it to San Francisco to the commission houses and have them sell it.

Calciano: I see. And you said you made a little money the first year?

Cikuth: Yes, we made a couple thousand dollars the first year.

Calciano: Very good.

Cikuth: It was a big surprise to me.

Calciano: Yes, to go from two dollars a day to two thousand a year.

Cikuth: Oh yes. Well, I'll tell you, I was working almost day and night. I had a little shed out here, a little barn that had been a stable at one time. I never went into town at night or anywhere else, I was always preparing something for the next day.

Calciano: Was your partner working just as hard?

Cikuth: Well, no, he wasn't working just as hard, but he was always willing to be a help, you know. But boy, I was working. Now like if I had to pick a few apples the next day, we would have to have boxes, so I had to make them at night.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: I'd put a little lamp in the shed, because there was no electricity at all, and I'd make a few boxes. Then the next morning I put them in a little wagon and went out with them four or five miles to the orchard. I had to get up early in the morning.

Calciano: Did you have your own horse and wagon?

Cikuth: Yes.

Calciano: You said when you first started out that you used to handle all kinds of fruits because the little orchards

would have everything.

Cikuth: Well that's right, you had to take it all.

Calciano: Well now, after you'd been in business eight or ten years, did you start handling just apples, or did you always handle everything?

Cikuth: Well no, we confined ourselves to apples alone because there wasn't enough of the other stock to be bothered with.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: Once in a while we bought what we used to call orchard crops. We'd go into the orchard and estimate the crop. We'd offer the people so much money for it. Or, if they didn't want to sell it, that was all right too. But sometimes you'd find a few peaches in there, or a few pears, and we had to take that and include it too. We couldn't go and say, "I'll pick this and I'll pick that." No, they wouldn't stand for that. You included the whole business. Then it was up to you to figure out what to pay for the others besides the apples. It was big business when we were here. You had to go to the farmer and tell him, "I'll take your fruit. I'll handle it for you and sell it for you, and then I'll pay you for it."

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: You had to pay for it, though. There was one orchard here that in three years I paid a total of $9,000.

Calciano: Oh, goodness. Was it up to you to hire the pickers, though?

Cikuth: I had to hire the pickers. After the owners sold their crop to me, they had nothing to do except for the cultivating and spraying and all that stuff.

Spraying and Picking

Calciano: Did you ever have to spray?

Cikuth: No, they had to spray. Well with some orchards we bought, we had to spray; it all depended on how we made the contract. It depended on what the farmer wanted. Sometimes the farmer would say, "I'll take the lump sum, and you take everything," except they really had to plow it because we weren't fixed to plow land, you know. We didn't have any equipment, so they had to do that. And sometimes they'd say, "Well, I'll spray. I have an outfit to spray." Others would say, "Well I haven't got any outfit to spray, so you better buy the crop and do it yourself."

Calciano: I see. You didn't like to do that as well as just

buying the crop though, did you?

Cikuth: Well, no, but sometimes you had to do it in order to get the crop. But if you had to do all those things, then you figured out that you had to pay him a little less than it was worth because you had that much more expense attached to it.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: If he did that, then we'd pay him a little more.

Calciano: Did you use any particular nationality for picking out in the orchards?

Cikuth: Oh, we used all kinds of people; anyone that came along for any kind of a work that he could do, we used him. We only used that type of people for about a couple of months because those people, you might say, had no home and nothing.

Calciano: Migrant workers?

Cikuth: Yes, that's right. We hired those people. Sometimes they worked two or three days to get a few dollars and then they'd go and we'd get other ones. That's the way we did.

Calciano: Did you hire quite a few people?

Cikuth: We had so many that we put the people in a camp on the ranch. That was out in Corralitos. We had a house for them to sleep in and we put forty or fifty people in

that place. Then we had fifteen over in another place, and so forth along the line, according to the size of the place that had to be taken care of. But we'd have camps and we'd have a cook there. I supplied a kitchen and everything.

Calciano: Did your people do any of the packing there at the orchards, or would you bring all the apples down here to Watsonville?

Cikuth: We used to bring the apples to our packinghouse, yes, We'd gather them in the packinghouse and clean then there and pack them and ship them out. We couldn't do that from the orchard, not at that time. In fact not even today, because they have to be cleaned up, you know. There was a lot of dust and a lot of things that you had to see weren't on those apples, especially in those days when there was a lot of effect from the worms. They did not have to be as clean as they are today, but even then you had to have them somewhat clean. It was required by public law. Of course today it is different; for one thing, today the fruit is free of bugs. There might be dust on it and things like that, but as far as your bugs are concerned, there's nothing.

Calciano: Yes, the insects are better controlled now.

Cikuth: If the fruit had been clean, without worms, when I was in business, I would have made more money than I did. When I was in business, fifty per cent of my fruit went for nothing. We had to buy it cheap in order to get by, because if I had a thousand boxes of apples, about three or four hundred boxes of those were thrown in the river.

Calciano: Oh!

Cikuth: Yes, that's just exactly it. In those days there was no dryer; there was no vinegar works; there was nothing. There was a little bit of a cider works over here, but all they would take was forty or sixty thousand boxes. That was all you could sell to them. But after they built the bigger cider works, and a vinegar works, then everything was consumed.

Calciano: I see. If an orchard had a hundred trees, how many pickers would you put in the orchard, and how long would it take to pick the fruit?

Cikuth: Well, it depended. Now if you had an orchard that was running about sixty thousand boxes, you could put quite a few people to work there. And then again there were smaller orchards than that.

Calciano: How many boxes would you get from one tree, if it were

a big, good tree?

Cikuth: Well, that's quite a question, you know. It depends on the type of trees you have. We grew a different kind of apple at that time, and we used to get a hundred boxes to the tree. We grew what they called Rhode Island Greenings. Rhode Island Greenings are apples that are grown largely in the state of New York.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Yes, there are very few down here. But if you have them in good rich soil, they're tremendous producers. Tremendous producers. Of course they are not valuable apples like the Newtown Pippins and some others.

Calciano: Why are they not as valuable?

Cikuth: Well, it is not a marketing apple like the others. But the state of New York, that's great country for the Rhode Island Greening.

Calciano: Why did you grow Rhode Island Greenings?

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you how that happened. Sometimes in the early days when these people were raising young trees, the nurseries got mixed up. They themselves didn't know what it would be when they were grafting. They mixed them up. So when people bought those and planted them, sometimes they got something that they

didn't want, but they had them in the ground and didn't know it until the tree commenced to bear. So that's how they found out what they had.

Calciano: And that's how you got your Greenings?

Cikuth: Yes, that's right.

Calciano: Just a mistake?

Cikuth: Yes, sometimes they are that way, you know.

Calciano: But you say it produces more boxes per tree than a lot of apples?

Cikuth: Oh yes, they do. They produce a tremendous amount. You take a Newtown Pippin tree, one that is a fair size -- it produces fifty to sixty boxes, and some grow more. Actually that would be a good yield in that day, but in some cases they produced a little more. If you take an average of all the fruit trees, sixty boxes would be wonderful growth production.

Calciano: When a picker went into the orchard, did you have him take all the apples off a tree, or would he have to pick a tree several times to get apples of the right maturity?

Cikuth: Well, in some kinds of trees we had to pick twice.

Calciano: What type?

Cikuth: Bellflower you had to pick twice. And like today, the Delicious, you have to pick it twice.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: You see, they have to pick it when there's color and size.

Calciano: That makes it more expensive, doesn't it?

Cikuth: That makes them all expensive. Once in a while we used to do it in Newtowns, but not very much. Newtowns we let grow, and then we stripped them off all at one time. But of course even a Newtown, if you pick them two times you'll get more production, because the ones left on the tree will grow.

The Packing Sheds

Calciano: Could you describe your packing shed to me?

Cikuth: Oh yes, it was a tremendous big shed. You see in those days you had to have lots of room there, because there were a lot of boxes to be piled up and other supplies and equipment, so you had to have lots of space.

Calciano: I guess the wagons brought the loose apples to one end of the shed, is that right?

Cikuth: Yes, wagons brought the apples in boxes.

Calciano: Loose in boxes?

Apple Packinghouse
Luke P. Cikuth was a partner in
J.P. Miovich and Co. from 1898 to 1907

Cikuth: Yes, just loose, and then we put them in the packinghouse and segregated them and sorted them for sizes.

Calciano: Was each woman given a bunch of apples to sort?

Cikuth: Oh yes. In the early days, you know, there was the workbench, but then later we had machinery.

Calciano: A conveyor belt type of thing?

Cikuth: Yes. Before that the women had to pick this one here and that one there and put the ones of different sizes into different boxes.

Calciano: I see. And they'd throw out the bruised ones?

Cikuth: Yes. They threw any bruised ones to the side, end we took them into the vinegar works or cider works.

Calciano: Did you use women in the sheds back in the 1890's and 1900's?

Cikuth: Well, women worked back then, and even today they use women.

Calciano: Well today it's more common for women to work, but I didn't know whether you hired women in 1900.

Cikuth: Oh yes, we used to hire women.

Calciano: Did you use many Chinese?

Cikuth: Yes, we used Chinese people on packing the boxes. I had a dozen of them. After the apples were all prepared for them, they'd sit on a bench, and on one side were the apples and on the other side were the papers. They'd take the paper, wrap the apple, and put it in the container. We used to give them a little house where they lived.

Calciano: Were they mainly men or women?

Cikuth: No. No Chinese women; it was men.

Calciano: What would you pay them?

Cikuth: We'd pay them by piece work. We used to pay them three cents a box and four cents a box, according to the times.

Calciano: How long would it take them to pack one box?

Cikuth: A good man could pack about a hundred boxes a day.

Calciano: It sounds as if they got more money than the people who were sorting apples.

Cikuth: Well, if they worked fast they did. It was according to the time they put in, you know.

Calciano: What would you pay the people that were sorting the apples?

Cikuth: At that time we paid the people that were sorting apples a dollar a day. And then we paid a little more

as time went on.

Calciano: Did you wash the apples before you packed them?

Cikuth: No, not back in the 1900's, not at that time. No, at that time everything was as they came from the tree. No, it wasn't anything like it is today; today it is entirely different. When I see what they are doing today and compare it to the time when I was doing it, it's very different from what we did before. Well, today everything is sanitary.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: They wash the apples; they don't bruise the apples; they make it so the public will be satisfied.

Calciano: Nowadays when apples are packed, they're graded number one, number two, fancy pack, and such. Did you then?

Cikuth: Oh, they were all mixed up. But later on they had to be washed, and be segregated in sizes, and be inspected for any kind of a disease or anything like that. They had to be just so, you know, which was right because the public was demanding that. The public was willing to pay, so you just might as well satisfy the public. That's the proper way to be.

Calciano: Did you grade them at all in the early days?

Cikuth: Well, we used to mark them, you know, but not like today. Today we have segregated the apples into sizes,

and then we just mark them on the box. Well it's not a box anymore; they use cartons.

Calciano: Cardboard cartons?

Cikuth: Well yes, the regular paper ones. They hold thirty-five or forty pounds, and you just say whether it is number one, or number two, or whatever. But today they inspect all the time.

Calciano: When did the government start inspecting and getting strict; about what year did it start?

Cikuth: Oh, they started inspecting about, let's see, when I started business they weren't inspecting, but they were inspecting in 1927 when I quit the business. I guess that was one of the reasons I quit. They started regular-inspections you know, and they'd have an inspector who went into your packing shed, and sometimes he didn't know any more than I did, but he'd make believe he knew, and I'd get into difficulty and all that. I said to myself, "With all the warning that I'm getting, I'd better get out," so I just quit.

Calciano: Was that one of the main reasons you quit?

Cikuth: Well, one of the reasons. One time the inspectors came here and said, "This doesn't look good, and that doesn't look good," and something else didn't either,

and I said to myself, "What the devil is good?" (Laughter) Well, I got mad and said, "It's time to pull out. I can see that I'll have more grief then good out of it."

Calciano: Whom did you sell to?

Cikuth: No, I didn't sell; I just disbanded.

Calciano: You just disbanded?

Cikuth: I wasn't in business anymore; I didn't go out and buy from the farmers anymore. I did my own, but I wasn't interested anymore in customers. You got more worry than anything else out of it. In other words, you had to be responsible to everyone and nobody went around and felt responsible for you. You were on your own, and then pretty soon you got yourself so out of shape that you didn't know what you were doing. You just got piled up under this and that, and you know how that is. But you know, we were wrong, too. One trouble was that there wasn't very clean packing. There wasn't very clean content either. We used old boxes, and some were pretty bad, you know. You see, it was wrong. Now suppose I had fifty thousand boxes, all boxes from last year or two years back; those boxes were good enough to take around the orchard and pick fruit and

bring it home, isn't that right?

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: But we didn't do that; we did it wrong, and I know today it was wrong, but I didn't know it was wrong then. We bought material to make the boxes which were nice and clean, and we sent them out to the orchards and used the old ones to ship the fruit in. That was where we were wrong, you see. But at that time nobody thought that that was a bad thing to do.

Calciano: One thing I've been wondering: in old apple advertisements, I've seen several ads for cement coated nails. What were those?

Cikuth: Well, oh yes. We put those apples into the boxes, and then put lids on and covered them up. Of course the first thing we did was wrap those apples in a paper before we put them in the box, or another way we did it was to pack those apples without paper and put regular sheets of paper over them so they wouldn't be bruised so much when you put the covers on.

Calciano: But why did the nails have cement around them?

Cikuth: Cement coated nails?

Calciano: Yes, what did they do?

Cikuth: It was a little bit of a nail, and to make them stay in the boxes you had this cement, because otherwise

they wouldn't hold up right. It's the cement coat that made them hold tight.

Calciano: You couldn't use just a plain metal one?

Cikuth: No, no, no. If they're not coated nails, cement, then when the boards get a little bit dry, you can pull them out.

Calciano: Oh.

Cikuth: Yes, you can pull them out; the other way they stay there, you know.

Calciano: Do people still use them?

Cikuth: Well they do, but very seldom now because they have those apples going into cartons, and those cardboard cartons are pretty near as strong as boxes, and they're better to handle than the other way, than the old boxes, you know. They put about fifty pounds into those containers and then load them up in their truck or put them in the cold storage.

Calciano: When you were in business, you always used wooden boxes, didn't you?

Cikuth: I shipped them in boxes, yes, and the boxes all held about forty-four pounds. We would pack those apples in the boxes just one by one, you know, and wrap them in the paper and all that sort of thing.

Calciano: I'm still interested in how you graded them. Did you grade them according to size and everything?

Cikuth: I graded them and wrapped every one of them.

Calciano: What were your grades?

Cikuth: Extra fancy and fancy and some others we sent to be processed fruit.

Calciano: I see. So you'd wrap each one by hand. But this wasn't for the local market was it?

Cikuth: No, that was for San Francisco and for the Eastern markets or foreign markets. For the local market you could put them loose in boxes. We did packing, but we could put them loose, without packing. But in a foreign market, like the Eastern market, you had to be a little more careful and wrap them in the paper. We used to ship to London, England, and they had to be all wrapped in paper. We wanted the apples to be very clean, and we tied wire around the boxes so they'd be tight and be protected when they put them in a steamer.

Calciano: How many people did you have to employ?

Cikuth: Oh, sometimes I employed up to a hundred or a hundred and fifty people in the different places. Besides all the packing we had to have people to do our picking

and our hauling, so we had to have plenty of people to work. We had them picking apples from the trees and putting them in boxes and hauling them into the packing shed. And in the shed we had many people working, preparing the fruit for shipment.

Shipping

Calciano: You said you shipped some of your apples to San Francisco. Is that where you sold most of them?

Cikuth: Well you see it was this way. You had to send them to those people who were engaged in selling them for you. They were commission agents you see. They took their charges, and sometimes they'd give you something for your crop and sometimes they didn't give you very much, because it all depended on how much they actually could sell your apples for. Sometimes the prices were low.

Calciano: Are these people known as fruit brokers, or were you a fruit broker?

Cikuth: Well no, I was a buyer of the fruit from the farmer.

Calciano: You were a buyer. And then what were these people you sold to?

Cikuth: Those people that I sold it to, there were some people

that we called cash buyers. They'd buy, they'd pay you cash for it, and then in August they'd sell it. But then there also *were* in San Francisco what they called the commission houses. They'd sell your apples for you, and they'd charge a certain percentage for their work and sent you the balance.

Calciano: I see. So your profit all depended on how the market was?

Cikuth: Well, that's just exactly it. That goes and proves that demand rules the market. If there is a big demand, you get more. If there's more stuff on the market than the people consume, you get but very little.

Calciano: Did you ship many apples to London?

Cikuth: Oh, I shipped many of them. I shipped lots of stuff. You know during the war, I helped fight it. Pretty near four thousand boxes of my apples were sunk, and I never got anything out of it.

Calciano: Sunk!

Cikuth: Yes, but it was during the war when the Germans were at war with the United States you know.

Calciano: This was World War I?

Cikuth: That's right. And I had four carloads going over

there. I'll tell you what I did get out of it. There was insurance so you could insure those apples for two dollars a box, but the premium on them cost you quite a lot of money so you'd insure them for six bits, you know. That's all I got out of it — six bits a box for all that stuff.

Calciano: And what would they have brought if you'd sold them over there?

Cikuth: Well over there I could have sold them for two dollars a box, you know, easily. I took the chance that if I sold them there the profits would be higher and I would get more money out of it. During war, you know, you could get all kinds of money for anything that you wanted to sell.

Calciano: When you shipped to London, would you set up your own shipping, or would you send them to somebody who'd ship them for you?

Cikuth: Well, they had agents in New York; they were the ones. You shipped to them and they shipped to these different houses in London.

Calciano: I see. And what type of apple were you shipping?

Cikuth: Newtown. Because Englishmen didn't want anything but Newtowns.

Calciano: Oh really? Did they like sour apples, or what?

Cikuth: Well, it wasn't really a sour apple; they were a hard apple, you know. They didn't want any Bellflowers. Bellflowers are beautiful stuff, and Delicious too, but they were crazy for Newtowns because they were hard, the apples were hard. Englishmen wanted hard apples and Chinamen wanted hard apples. They liked what they used to call the Rhode Island Greening; Rhode Island Greening apples were just like rocks.

Calciano: Oh my.

Cikuth: You'd break your teeth on them. I used to have Chinamen down there and they were crazy for that stuff. They were hard just like a rock. With the Englishmen it was the same thing, only they wanted Newtowns, what they used to call Yellow Newtown Pippins.

Calciano: Oh, they were yellow?

Cikuth: They are yellow when they stay on the tree a little longer, oh yes. I'll show you the difference of opinion of the public today and back then. Today people want green apples; then the Englishmen wanted Newtowns just as yellow as if you had painted them.

Calciano: Really?

Cikuth: And today they don't want that kind. And right here in

California they wanted yellow. Yellow, yellow, but not today -- only green apples today. You see how the public changes?

Calciano: Yes, that's interesting. How did you store your apples, or did you store them at all?

Cikuth: We stored them in San Francisco in icehouses. There were some storage places then, but very few. There were cold storages for meats and things like that, but not very many for apples. Then later they built cold storages here and they were really for the apples.

Calciano: Just when did people start building cold storage units down here?

Cikuth: I really don't remember, but the cold storages have been here for many years. You see why they were needed. When we were picking apples you know, we'd have apples sometimes that people wouldn't take in the markets. We'd have to put them away. Maybe there would be a time later when the people wanted them, so we'd have to supply them what they needed. Sometimes you know, no matter what it is, meat or whatever, there can be overproduction. People have enough; they don't want any more.

Calciano: What would be your average price for a box of apples?

Cikuth: Well, it all depended; sometimes you didn't get very

much; sometimes you got quite a bit.

Calciano: What would it vary between?

Cikuth: Well, at the time I was in business, if you got around seventy-five or eighty cents per box, that was as high as you were ever going to get. But your expenses were low compared to now. Today at eighty cents you'd go broke. Today everything is a good deal bigger. Also it's different now, you know; today it is all based on weights and tonnage.

Calciano: Not by box?

Cikuth: By box, too. Also, apples are sold by bushels and sold by pounds. Today if you don't get a hundred dollars a ton, or at least seventy-five, you're in trouble. From sixty up to a hundred you can make money, but below that you maybe just make a living on it. But in my day, when it was forty dollars we were making plenty of money because expenses were down. Take fruit boxes. We used to buy them at the rate of about eight cents a box. Of course we had to make them; now they cost thirty and forty cents.

Calciano: Oh my.

Cikuth: See the differences here?

Vinegar and Cider

Calciano: You used to sell your bruised and damaged apples to the dryers, didn't you?

Cikuth: Yes, or to the vinegar works.

Calciano: Would you get more money for the apples that you sold to the dryer than you did for those that went to the vinegar works?

Cikuth: Well, it was pretty near equal; it was pretty near the same. There was a time, in the early years, when you couldn't do anything with the bad apples because there was no dryer; you had to dump them in the river.

Calciano: What a waste!

Cikuth: That's right. Dump them in the river. Or if somebody had a bunch of hogs, he would take the apples to feed the hogs. But then later a Chinese commenced to be interested in drying.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: The Chinese people were the ones interested in drying; it made a lot of work for those Chinese people. A lot of jobs. All those apples that we couldn't use for market because they were wormy or bruised, we'd sell to the dryer.

Calciano: Wormy apples?

Cikuth: Oh, they used wormy apples for drying, and they used wormy apples for vinegar.

Calciano: Oh!

Cikuth: And for cider.

Calciano: Oh no! (Laughter) Oh dear. Do they still use wormy apples for cider?

Cikuth: Yes, well of course I think they must have some way they strain it through something, you know, but that's where they go. I don't know how they manufacture it; I don't know anything about it, but I know they go there all right. The cider was made down here by the river, you know.

Calciano: Martinelli?

Cikuth: Well, Martinelli's cider is right in town here, but there were other people that made cider, down by the river. But Martinelli was always interested in the cider. I know one time there was a little cider mill right over in the next block, but it was a little bit of a thing. Martinelli was always here and Martinelli got bigger, bigger, bigger and is quite a big concern now.

Calciano: He makes a good cider, doesn't he?

Cikuth: Oh yes. I don't know how they process it, but today it's cleaner than it used to be because there are no worms today.

Calciano: What year did they finally figure out how to control the worms?

Cikuth: Well, they've been trying for many, many years to control the worms, but finally in the last fifteen years they found something so that the worms have practically disappeared. You will find a few wormy apples, the kind that you grow in your back yard and things like that. I have three trees back in the yard and this morning I saw there were worms in the apple tree and still I had a man to spray it. But, the big orchards don't get the worms anymore.

Calciano: Thank heavens! Did you sell apples to Martinelli too?

Cikuth: We did at one time, yes. Anything-that we had that couldn't be shipped, we sold to them. Sometimes we'd probably sell them to the other people because Martinelli would have more than he could handle, or the other people would give you two bits or four bits more per ton or something like that, you know. It's self-interest. When we sold apples to Martinelli, or to any one of those people who made cider or vinegar, after the apples went through the press, they had what

they called pulp left. When they squeezed it, there was nothing but powder left. And then what they used to do, they used to put that in sacks and send it to New York. They found out in New York that you could use the pulp for certain candies and things like that.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: But that has disappeared; that was years ago. That has disappeared because they found something else to substitute for that, you see.

Calciano: This was after they squeezed the apple.

Cikuth: Yes, after you squeeze the apple there is a certain amount of pulp left over, like any other thing. And they put that in a dryer and sent it back to New York in sacks. But that was only during the shortage during the wartime. During the wartime you can sell most anything.

Calciano: I imagine that's so.

Apple Dryers

Calciano: Could you tell me how the dryers work? They peel the apples and slice them and then just dry them or...

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you how they work. Yes, they take them

and they have machinery. I don't know how they do it now, but I think they're doing it pretty near the same way. There's a certain machine they hang them on you know. It takes the skin off, takes the core inside, and then cuts the apple into slices. Then they put them on trays and put the trays in a kiln where the sulfur is.

Calciano: I see. And these were your poorer quality apples?

Cikuth: Oh yes, the dryers got the bad ones, but not as bad as the vinegar works.

Calciano: Why did the kilns have sulfur?

Cikuth: You have to because when they come out without sulfur they look just like they did when you put them in there. There's no color or anything after drying. But you put them through the sulfur and they make beautiful, nice colored stuff.

Calciano: Oh, it wasn't to control bacteria or anything?

Cikuth: No, no, just to get them colored. And the same way with apricots, because if you put them in as they are, they come out dry but green.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Green, right. This way they look beautiful.

Calciano: What color does sulfur make an apple turn to?

Cikuth: Well, apples turn a little bit, but not like apricots. Apricots turn yellow, and apples get a little color, but not like apricots.

Calciano: That's for either sun drying or heat drying then?

Cikuth: Yes.

Calciano: Well why do they sun dry apricots but never sun dry apples?

Cikuth: No, they can't.

Calciano: Why?

Cikuth: No, no, apples have got to be in a kiln, in a kiln with a fire. Apples are different.

Calciano: How long do they leave the apples in the kiln?

Cikuth: They put them in there, well, a certain time, until they get a certain amount of dryness. Then they take them out and put them in a pile. You know, those apples when they put them in the pile, they're brittle and dry and they break. What they do then is they sprinkle them with water.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: They sprinkle them with water and turn them over so they draw that moisture through. They make them a

little softer so they won't break up. You see if you want to get dry apples to be number ones, they have got to be in one piece. If they commence to break, they don't get the price for them like they do for the other. If this piece is one, you get a good price, but if it's broken, you won't get it.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: Yes. That's why they put a little water on it.

Calciano: Well why did they dry them until they were so brittle? Why didn't they just dry them less?

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you. They have to. They have to get that water from them first and then put little amounts of moisture later on you see. They just put in what they think is enough to keep them that way.

Calciano: How did they used to package them for selling?

Cikuth: Oh, dry apples?

Calciano: Yes. -

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you, they had a fifty-pound box. They put them in there and they pressed them just as tight as they could. When you took those apples out of the box, it was just like taking out a brick. Solid.

Calciano: A solid block?

Cikuth: Yes, solid. They pressed them that way because they wanted to keep it ti[g]ht to retain that moisture that is in there, and to keep them tight so they wouldn't break.

Calciano: I see. And then who would buy them? Bakeries?

Cikuth: Oh, bakeries buy them. Bakeries buy lots of them you know. But most of those dried apples in my day were going to Germany.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Oh yes, most of those went to Germany.

Calciano: What would the Germans do with them?

Cikuth: Well, Germans, I don't know what they did, but the German people bought a lot of those dry apples, and dry apricots too. Yes, they bought a lot of that stuff. Why I don't know.

Calciano: Did you ever sell many apples for freezing?

Cikuth: At that time there wasn't freezing. Today they do that.

Calciano: And what about canning?

Cikuth: Canning, that was as good as drying. When I was in business I did sell a good many tons, oh, a couple of

hundred tons, to the California Packing Corporation for canning.

Calciano: Were there any local canneries?

Cikuth: No, the cannery was a San Francisco firm. They had it in San Francisco and we had to ship it to them in those open gondola cars. Yes, just dump the apples in.

Calciano: Oh my. These would be the Newtowns?

Cikuth: Yes, Newtowns mostly. I don't think there were any Bellflowers.

Calciano: I wouldn't think Bellflowers could stand being dumped into an open car, could they?

Cikuth: Well no, there would he bruises. Bellflowers are very delicate apples. Well, just like the Delicious is soft, but a Bellflower is a yellow apple, isn't that right? When you put a little mark on it, there's a bruise on it right away. On a Delicious you can put a mark on it but it is covered up because it is red, you see. You find out in the kitchen because when you cut it you find the bruises there, but you can't see from the outside because it's all red. On yellow apples it's visible; you can see it right away.

Quitting Business

Calciano: Oh, you said the other day that one of your packing sheds burned down?

Cikuth: It burned down, yes. It cost me pretty close to twenty thousand dollars.

Calciano: My goodness.

Cikuth: I only had insurance for fourteen hundred dollars.

Calciano: Oh no!

Cikuth: That's all I got out of it. It was my own fault. I was taking insurance on myself, but you see, sometimes you miss those things. And it burned my boxes and everything that was inside that shed. The shed was about two hundred feet long and about fifty or sixty feet wide. A big shed. We used to store everything there. When we got through picking we stored boxes, we stored wagons, we stored machinery there, everything was inside. Everything was burned up. There was wrapping paper; we had a lot of wrapping paper left over that we used to wrap the apples. You know, that sort of thing.

Calciano: How did it start?

Cikuth: I don't know. We had a little house along side of it, and I had a couple of people who were living in the

house, so really I don't know how it started or what happened, I knew the insurance adjuster, and I told him all about it. He said he was sorry for me. Well of course he was sorry, because I showed him how much loss I had. You know those adjusters, when they come you can't fool around with them; they come pretty close to finding out what you had. If you say, "I had that many boxes," they ask how high they were, how wide they were, how high you piled them up, how many piles you had and all that sort of thing. They're pretty clever, those people. So that's just the way it was. He was sympathizing with me, but I was sorry for myself, too.

Calciano: What year was that?

Cikuth: That was 1912. Then I had to build a new packing shed on the railroad track. The railroad leased me a piece of land. I leased and paid for it, and I built my shed there, but I never owned the land.

Calciano: You didn't?

Cikuth: No. I never owned the land. The railroad never sells you land; they'll lease it to you for a small amount, you know, but they never really do more than that.

Calciano: Did you sell the building to somebody or ...

Cikuth: Well my building burned again.

Calciano: Oh no!

Cikuth: Well, it burned again because the other people along side of me burned. You know there is a row of packing sheds over there on the railroad tracks. There are buildings straight through for a quarter of a mile, and the fellow way down at the end had a fire and the wind blew from his building all the way down the row. So my building burned there, but then I got insurance on that.

Calciano: Oh, good.

Cikuth: I got more than it cost me to build. I got a little more than it cost me to build, because at that time they figured that if I had to build that it would cost me more money.

Calciano: Replacement value?

Cikuth: Yes, replacement.

Calciano: What year was this that it burned the second time?

Cikuth: About 1923 or 4.

Calciano: Did you build a third one?

Cikuth: No, no, I didn't build it again.

Calciano: You didn't?

Cikuth: No, I quit my packing business entirely at that time. I didn't build anymore; I didn't buy anymore fruit; all I was handling was my own from the two orchards that I had. I sold the fruit to buyers. But I didn't build anymore. I had this orchard where Mintie White and E.A. Hall schools are. But the big orchard that I sold to them was ground that I bought for speculation. In 1927 I sold it to the school board.

Calciano: So you've been completely retired from the packing business since then?

Cikuth: Retired, yes. I'll tell you the reason why I retired. I had four daughters. I was in business, and it was all up and down, up and down. I made a little stake and said, "Well, if I keep on in business I could make more money." I knew I could make more money, but something might happen and I might lose money and not be able to send my children to school. You see at the time I am telling you about, I was prosperous, but, I told myself, I might run into misfortune sometime, which I pretty near did one time when I was in business here. One time I had around $80,000 and in two years time I was in debt $40,000.

Calciano: Oh my goodness. This was early in your business?

Cikuth: That was in 1916 and '17. First, in 1912, my big

packing shed burned up on me and I lost nearly $20,000 because I had no insurance for that. I was green enough not to realize what insurance was all about. Well, that was lost, so then I had to rebuild. I had to borrow money. Then year after year the crops were good for nothing.

Calciano: Oh dear.

Cikuth: So I was running into debt, you know. It's a good thing I had a bank in back of me that took pity on me and supported me. They never pressed me for the money that I had borrowed. Then later I made it again all right, but that's just the way it was.

Calciano: Goodness.

Cikuth: Yes, you can accumulate a fortune, but you can lose it. That's why I quit business in a big hurry; and I'll tell you the reason why I quit business. When I quit in 1927, I was making money, but you see I had four girls to send to college, and it takes money to send them. It was all right as long as they went to school here, but I had to send them to college outside, in a different town. And said, "If anything should happen to me again like it did before, those girls can't be educated." You see that's what I was

worrying about; not about me. I was worrying for them.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: As far as I was concerned, if it was just my wife and myself, we could work and make our way, bur in order to bring the children up right, I wanted to be sure, because I can see that there are many children today who are not brought up as well as they should be. That's why we've got so many difficulties and things like that today. You see people today without schooling don't have a chance, so I sent them all to school. They all got educated.

Calciano: You said they're all schoolteachers?

Cikuth: Three of them are, and one works in San Francisco as a secretary in an office. Then I've got grandchildren, too. I have one boy who's a doctor, he's a medical doctor; another is in real estate, and one is teaching high school in San Jose, and I have a granddaughter in college. If you have children today and you don't educate them, they don't get very far, isn't that right?

Calciano: Right, it's very important.

Cikuth: Very important. So I told the girls to study whatever they wanted, any profession that they wanted to take

as long as I had the ability to pay, and they said they wanted to be schoolteachers. I said go ahead, but you must remember that if you have decided that you want to be schoolteachers, you've got to finish it. You've got to finish it and no fooling around. (Laughter) I said they can have a chance, pick one thing or another, either one or the other, and either finish it right *or* go to work.

Calciano: Well, they all finished.

Cikuth: Yes, they did.

Calciano: If you'd stayed in business, would the Depression have hurt your business a lot?

Cikuth: Well, I don't know, I had plenty of money to work with, but I wanted to save that money. You see, when the snake bites you once, you become careful.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: Yes. So, that's why I said, "Well, I made money before and I lost it. Now I've made it again and paid everybody. I don't owe anything, and I've got plenty of money to put my children through school, so I'm going to do it, yes."

Calciano: What about your friends that were in the apple growing business when the Depression came. Did they get in

trouble?

Cikuth: Oh yes, oh yes. Well even today they're still in some trouble. Today apples aren't worth anything.

Calciano: So you got out at a good time?

Cikuth: Yes. Well after that there were some good years. There were always good years between the bad if you were careful.

Calciano: When you retired, what did you start spending your time on?

Cikuth: I retired as far as buying from other people, and I took care of two orchards of my own.

Calciano: You kept those for a number of years?

Cikuth: I kept those for a number of years, yes, till the time came to sell.

Calciano: And how many years did you continue to sell your own apples?

Cikuth: Well, I attended my own until 1927 when I sold this piece of land down here where the grammar school is. Then I had another place down there, I sold that in about 1945. So I didn't have any more land except the property here in town.

Calciano: You owned one ranch until 1945?

Cikuth: Yes. There were a few apples I had that I used to sell

myself. Then I commenced to think of it this way: I had to have more land or else sell the land I had, because you know the time comes when you have to have machinery, but you can't afford to have machinery for a small piece of land.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: That's why I sold the ranch.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: I wanted to buy the land that surrounded mine, but the other people wouldn't sell it, so I said, "Well, if you don't sell it, I'll sell mine, and I'll be through with it, because I won't buy machinery and spend ten, fifteen thousand dollars for it when I just have a small piece of land to work. It won't pay."

Calciano: No.

Cikuth: That's why I quit it, and I was glad of it, because I was getting older and all that sort of thing, and it was a lot of worry.

APPLE GROWING IN THE PAJARO VALLEY

Planting an Orchard

Calciano: You told me that the trees in old orchards were often

planted too close together.

Cikuth: Well, the trouble was that people didn't understand those things. You see when I was a young man, I went down and interviewed farmers to buy crops and everything like that. The first thing I said was, "How many acres do you have?" "Well," he said, "I have twenty acres." I said, "Well now, you must have a pretty good sized orchard." He said, "Yes, I've got a certain number of trees in the orchard." You see, he counted by trees.

Calciano: Oh.

Cikuth: Yes. The difference was that the people didn't understand. I don't think I would have understood then if I had been in their place. This is very rich land, you know, and you can't plant apple trees close together. They have to be at least thirty feet apart. That's why when they planted the trees too close together, they grew straight up. There was no chance to expand, isn't that right?

Calciano: Right.

Cikuth: And where you get the fruit is on your expanding branches, not on the top. Now on the top the fruit either would be sunburned, or birds would have pecked it, or something like that, and you got very little

fruit out of it. But near the ground, that's where you got your fruit; there was your good fruit. That's why we wanted trees to be spread wide and not grow straight up. You know one reason why the apple trees were planted too close together was because this valley used to have a lot of prune trees.

Calciano: It did?

Cikuth: Santa Clara County was the apple country, and what happened in Santa Clara happened to us later on. People there weren't prepared to raise the apples in the condition that apples require to be raised. There was a lot of disease, and the disease that killed the most trees was the red scale. If you got red scale on your trees, in the course of a year's time they died. Scale got in there, you know, and just ate the trees up. Well at that time they didn't have many prunes there, but they had the prunes here.

Calciano: Were there a lot of prunes?

Cikuth: We had quite a lot of prunes here. But when the apple trees in Santa Clara county commenced to wear out, orchardmen got out and began planting prunes, and that made our prunes no good.

Calciano: Theirs were better?

Cikuth: Yes, because we couldn't get color here. We couldn't get color or sugar or anything. In Santa Clara it's wonderful. -- the prunes get a lot of sugar, you know, and that's what people want. The prunes here were all right, productive, but no color, always pale. I used to pick quite a lot of the prunes here, you know. We used to have kind of a canvas we put around the tree, and then we'd shake the tree.

Calciano: Oh, you'd shake the fruit down?

Cikuth: Oh yes. We'd shake them; that's what they're doing in Santa Clara County today.

Calciano: They do?

Cikuth: Well, they shake them, but most of them they let fall down by themselves, and then they pick them from the ground. Then what they do, they pick them up, take them in, and dump them in hot water. Then they put them on trays, and in a couple of days they're dry. But our prunes, our prunes were selling good at that time, but then Santa Clara started raising prunes and we had to go out of that business. Now I come down to my point: when the farmer dug the prune trees out, the trees were only about twenty-four feet apart. And so they set the apple trees in the same way.

Calciano: Oh, that's why they did it.

Cikuth: You see, that's why they were losing larger crops.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: And then another thing about trees, I don't know whether you want to know this or not. You see today when you're planting trees in new ground, you can test the soil. If you've got poorer soil, you can put these trees a little closer together; if you've got rich soil, you've got to put them a little more separated.

Calciano: Oh really?

Cikuth: Trees today in good soil, like in this valley here, should never be planted less than thirty feet apart, and it wouldn't hurt if *you* put them thirty-two feet either, but not less than thirty feet. So you see that was the trouble here in the early days.

Pruning

Calciano: You also told me once that they didn't know much about how to prune trees back then.

Cikuth: Oh no, they didn't know anything about it. And I think that's why trees died. When the trees commenced to grow out and had no place to expand, they just got a saw and sawed branches off and let them crack. Then water got in there, and of course sometimes the trees

commenced to die. But today I could, if I had land, plant my orchard and never have to use any saws on the trees, because every year I could see where the leaves were going to be in the way and take a scissor and cut them off. You take a small piece like that, and it heals quick. Very seldom do you see anybody cutting limbs today. But they used to ruin the trees. They cut the limbs off, and if they cut through clean, the water probably would run off, but they used to cut them any way, just cut them part of the way and let them break off and leave that rough stuff against the sun, and rain would get in there and it'd crack, and then water would go inside the tree.

Calciano: Would it rot?

Cikuth: They'd rot, yes, little by little they'd rot and infect your row of trees. Well today they don't do that. Today the farmer is a professional, compared to what he was then.

Calciano: Did you used to have to prop your tree branches up?

Cikuth: Oh yes. I have the props down here in my own yard yet. We used *to* buy a lot of them.

Calciano: When you pruned your trees, the little *ones,* did you try to get three main support branches going out or did you use a different system?

Cikuth: Well, so many branches have to be taken out to make room for the others, you know. You've got to watch those trees when they're young. When they're young you can cut them, you can set them just where you want them, but if they grow big, you know, then you're going to need to saw the big limbs and maybe kill your trees.

Calciano: When you got your own orchards, did you plant the trees, or did you buy orchards that were already growing?

Cikuth: Well, we did it either way. Sometimes we bought it already planted, and sometimes we bought the ground and planted it our own way.

Calciano: Did you have to take out very many dead trees and plant new ones each year?

Cikuth: Oh well you had to, every once in a while you had to do that, and I'll tell you the reason why. The trees got diseases, just like any human being. One dies and the other lives. I've seen trees that I used to handle here in the country, and today some of them are about eighty years old. They're just as sound as ones that were planted here ten years ago. They were born a long time ago and they're just like the younger ones. It's just like people -- some of them live to be a hundred

years old, and others die when they're sixty years old.

The Advantages of Newtown Pippins

Calciano: I read somewhere that people started cutting out their apple orchards years ago because of disease and such. Did they?

Cikuth: Well, they did. They did commence to cut them out. The reason why is that red apples came into existence, and they brought more money.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: You know, you take these red apples. Red apples are not as good as Newtown Pippins; anybody knows that, but the look of the apples is better than the green apples. That's why the eye of the public goes for the red apples. But our valley here is still adapted to Newtown Pippins better than any other apple that can grow here. Yes, Newtown Pippin. Now I'll show you. For example, I can take Newtown Pippins to the vinegar works and make more money than I would for any other apple. I can take my Newtown Pippins to the cider works and they'll give me more money than for the other apples. I can take my apples to the dryer and they give me more money than for any other apples,

because they're firm.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: It's firm; it's an apple that lasts. You take these red apples, if they put them to dry, to make dry apples out of them, they have to have Newtown Pippins with them. Or, if you want these red apples for canned apples for pie, you'd better have Newtown Pippins with them.

Calciano: For tartness?

Cikuth: No. You put all of them together because the red apples alone are too mushy.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: The Newtowns are firm apples and they stay firm. They've got plenty of sugar, too. If some apples, the small ones, are left on the tree, sometimes they grow and then they fall down in the foliage. Then in the springtime when you commence working, you'll find some on the ground covered up with the foliage and they will be just as sound as a dollar.

Calciano: They will have been there all winter?

Cikuth: All winter, and sound as a dollar. They might be a little withered, but they're sound. The meat is just as white as it could be. You take a red apple and in

ten days it's rotten.

Calciano: That's interesting.

Cikuth: Newtowns are really the apples for this valley here. They're rough apples all right, but for any other purposes you can't beat them. You take them for pie, and they'll give you more money for Newtowns than for any other apple, because they're firm.

Calciano: Would many apples fall on the ground?

Cikuth: Yes, it depends on the kind of weather.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Sometimes it's cold for too long.

Calciano: Can you save the ones that fall on the ground?

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you what you do with those that are on the ground. You can't save those for anything except for vinegar or cider or dried apples. If they're a little bruised, more than they should be, you can take them to the vinegar works or the cider works. Those that are not that bad can be used for drying.

Weeds

Calciano: Did you have much problem with morning glory weed growing in your orchard?

Cikuth: Oh yes, quite a bit. There was a tremendous amount of morning glory. And when you talk about the morning glories, I'm going to tell you something about the other side of the town ...

Calciano: Near the river?

Cikuth: No, the west side of town where it goes down to Beach Road, about three miles from the ocean. We started in planting apples in that part of town, but it was never a success. The trees would grow, but they didn't produce. You know the ocean air comes in there and kind of keeps them back. And there was such a tremendous amount of morning glory that you could do hardly anything.

Calciano: Really?

Cikuth: Yes. People wanted to raise beans or sugar beets and the morning glory would grow over it. They had to work very, very hard in order to harvest and save the crops.

Calciano: My.

Cikuth: Oh yes, it was tremendous, but now they have cleaned them up.

Calciano: Do they use chemicals now, or do they just weed them out?

Cikuth: Well you see how it is now. They have turned all that land into lettuce; that land is very good for growing lettuce, and then with lettuce you're cultivating it right along. Every time they get a little morning glory, they cultivate it and cultivate it and irrigate it and then kill it. They have practically killed it entirely. You see very little morning glory anywhere around now.

Calciano: Were they about the worst weed that you had to contend with?

Cikuth: Well there were some other weeds that used to be there, like Jimsonweed, that was another one, but not as bad as morning glory. Morning glory was the worst. You see the trouble with morning glory is if you had a big field here of about fifty acres, and you happened to have a little patch of morning glory right on the corner, when you plowed the field, you scattered the seed and it would commence to bloom. But now it's pretty well cleared up.

Irrigation

Calciano: Did you ever irrigate your trees?

Cikuth: Oh yes.

Calciano: Oh you did?

Cikuth: Oh yes. Well, in the early days we didn't irrigate at all. What was the use when there was plenty of water all the way through the year? Even in summer there was water in the river. We used to get twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five inches of rain, you know. We didn't need irrigation here, but now we need that. And not only that, at that time the trees were younger; they didn't require as much water.

Calciano: I never thought of that.

Cikuth: Oh yes. Well, when our trees were young they didn't require as much water as they require today because they weren't heavy, they weren't producing. Trees today are producing, you know, and you have to help them out. Otherwise you're going to exhaust them. They're great producers.

Calciano: How many times a year do they irrigate?

Cikuth: Well, once.

Calciano: Once is enough?

Cikuth: Once is enough. Sometimes people irrigate right after they take the crop off.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: I used to do that myself, because sometimes if you had a dry year you'd say, "Well, I'm going to irrigate the

trees, because there might be another dry year." So you prepared so the trees had some water. If another rain came after you irrigated, it didn't hurt any.

Calciano: Yes, that's right. Where did you get the water to irrigate?

Cikuth: Well, we dug wells, or sometimes we got water from the different lakes around here, you know. But most farmers dug their own wells.

Calciano: Did you have trench irrigation ditches, or did you sprinkle?

Cikuth: They used to build ditches. Now some of them do that and others have sprinklers.

Calciano: The people who irrigated once *a* year, when did they do it? About July or so?

Cikuth: July's the month to irrigate. And as I say, if you have a dry year and you take your crop off, you might be irrigating in October or December to provide against the chance that you might have a dry year coming.

Calciano: Are most of the trees in the orchards here 3-rafted onto different roots, or are they non-grafted?

Cikuth: They are grafted. I'll tell you the reason they do that. They graft them onto wild roots.

Calciano: Wild?

Cikuth: That's true, wild roots. There's a lot of that wild stuff growing in the northwest, so they plant that and then when the tree grows up a bit they graft the kind they want on there. That way they get roots that are more solid; they're more sound in the soil than they would be otherwise.

Calciano: I see. So are a lot of the orchards down here composed of grafted trees?

Cikuth: Well, not all, because in the early days, they didn't know anything about that. They used to take the trees from the nursery, and the trees that they got from the nursery might be mixed up; sometimes they didn't know what they were. Maybe you wanted to buy Bellflowers, but you got some Newtowns too. In those days the nursery people themselves didn't know.

Calciano: Did you have to plant two kinds of trees in order to get cross-pollination?

Cikuth: Well, it is a good idea to do that. But in the early days, when I was in business, they didn't know that. Later they found out that it is better. If they had a straight block of twenty-five acres, for example, of Delicious, they planted something in between to palletize them.

Calciano: Oh, that's right, Delicious won't self-pollinate, will

they. Newtowns can self-pollinate pretty well, though, can't they?

Cikuth: Oh yes, very well by themselves. Newtowns can take care of themselves in any way that you want them to.

Thinning

Calciano: Did you used to thin your crops?

Cikuth: Yes. If you didn't thin; you didn't get any crop.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: If there are too many apples, later on they grow together or commence to push one another out.

Calciano: Did you usually thin them when they were about the size of a cherry or ...

Cikuth: Well, a little bigger. If you thin them when they're too small you can't do any work.

Calciano: About the size of a walnut, maybe?

Cikuth: Well, sometimes they'll be that big if you have . a short crew and you can't get to them at the right time. You have to be careful when you thin because they're close together. You have to cut them so it will leave the other stems solid and the apple will be steady. You have to be careful of the stems. You cut them right near the apple, not near the branch.

Calciano: How long does it take to thin a tree?

Cikuth: Well, if you had trees that produced forty or fifty boxes a man could do about two, three trees in a day. That is to thin them right it would take that long. It all depends on how the crop is.

Calciano: That's one man working?

Cikuth: Yes. Sometimes two men work on it, one on one side and one on the other side, but it equals about that much.

Calciano: So thinning is one of the most expensive things, isn't it?

Cikuth: It is expensive, and sometimes you do the thinning and then you find out later on you didn't do the right kind of work on it and your apples don't grow to the size you want.

Calciano: Is there no way you can use the little ones you pull off when you're thinning?

Cikuth: No, you can't do anything with them. That's just waste. You waste those apples, and if you don't take enough of them you waste your time too.

Diseases

Calciano: About what year did people first start spraying their apple trees?

Cikuth: Well, I don't remember exactly when. At one time disease in the apples was tremendous. They had what they call red scale. Red scale would come to your trees and dry them out in the course of a year, dry them out. It would just work on them and kill the trees entirely. Then there were people who came here to experiment with chemicals to protect those trees. They used what they call lime sulfur, and they used machinery to spray those trees to kill the red scale. The red scale had come from San Jose. As I told you, at one time there were a good many apples there in Santa Clara County, but red scale killed them, and that was the disease that came here and pretty near wiped us out. But, you see, this California Spray Chemical Institution was established here by two men, and they made this very valuable mixture for spraying and killing red scale.

Calciano: What year was this?

Cikuth: That was in the very early days; I don't really remember what year it was, but it was very early.

Calciano: Well, was it just after you started in business or ...

Cikuth: Just about that time.

Calciano: The late 1890's?

Cikuth: Yes, about that time.

Calciano: You said the other day that for a while they tried dusting the apple trees and then they found that spraying was better.

Cikuth: Yes, they were flying in here dusting for a certain disease.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Yes, what they call leaf roller. Leaf rollers are little bitty bugs that come into your leaves; they manage to get in there and they twist it up.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: And it's pretty hard to stop, if you don't get it quick. They're pretty hard to get because they're hiding inside. That's their name, leaf roller. And then later on they commenced to dust for different things, but they found out that spots wouldn't get covered. So now they've found out that the spraying is better.

Calciano: So they spray from underneath?

Cikuth: Yes. They've got a machine. It's a powerful machine, and when they go in the tree, they shake the trees up.

Calciano: You've mentioned the frequency of worms in the early days. It's the codling moth that makes worms, isn't it?

Cikuth: Yes, that's the thing. Yes, the codling moth creates the worm.

Calciano: How long has it been since they learned to control that?

Cikuth: Well, they cured that several years ago. There aren't any left. I'll tell you where there are a few -- around close to houses and things like that, you know, where people don't take care of it. But in a commercial orchard, there aren't any.

Calciano: Did you have much trouble with aphids?

Cikuth: At one time there was trouble with the aphids, but that's pretty well gone. At one time they were just as white as snow.

Calciano: Oh my.

Cikuth: Oh, they ruined the crop, yes. We used to spray them, but you couldn't control them because the stuff that you put in wasn't strong enough to destroy them.

Calciano: Would the aphids hurt the trees or the apples?

Cikuth: Well, they hurt your trees and they hurt your apples.

Calciano: Both?

Cikuth: You see in the first place they hurt your apples because the apples don't make their growth. When the trees don't make their growth, your apples don't make

their growth. The aphids stunted the growth.

Calciano: I see. What about mealybugs?

Cikuth: Mealybugs were bad too.

Calciano: Those too. How did you ever grow any apples!

(Laughter)

Cikuth: Yes, I tell you, the mealybugs were bad.

Calciano: When did they find out how to control them?

Cikuth: Well, it was quite a while ago. I tell you another thing that was ruining the apples for years: horned caterpillars. Horned caterpillars wore the ones that stripped your trees right out.

Calciano: They took all the leaves off?

Cikuth: They took the foliage out, and when your foliage is gone your tree is pretty near gone too. They would kill the trees in the course of time.

Calciano: You had some bad years with them?

Cikuth: Oh yes. We used to shake them from the trees and put tar around the trunk of the trees so when they'd fall down they couldn't go up, but we couldn't shake them all out.

Calciano: Oh my.

Cikuth: And then sometimes that stuff that you put on, that tar, it would dry so you'd have to go different times

to make it so that it was sticky, so they wouldn't go on up the trees. We had a devil of a time raising crops here in the early days. Today they've got new stuff, you know, so it's easier. Of course you need more money today to do it, but you produce something that the public wants.

Calciano: Yes. Did you ever have many tent caterpillars?

Cikuth: Well, there were some, but there weren't as many as the others. The tent caterpillars would crow in the trees and would gather up on a branch so you could shake them down and clean them up. But they didn't bother much. Of course they bothered a little bit; you'd probably lose a few apples, but nothing like the horned kind. The horned caterpillars would strip your trees.

Calciano: What about the skin worm? Did you have that at all?

Cikuth: The skin worm? Yes we had that.

Calciano: Was it bad or not?

Cikuth: Well, it was bad enough because it was a little bit of a thing; you couldn't see it, but it marked your apples. It was just like you'd taken a pin, you know, and scratched the skin. When you saw any kind of a mark on the apple, you had to throw it away for second

class, you know, for the vinegar works or something like that.

Calciano: Oh, so they did do quite a bit of damage.

Cikuth: Oh yes. They'd go walking around the outside, here and there, making marks. They didn't go inside like the other, but they'd bite the outside of the skin.

Calciano: Did you have any western flat-headed borers?

Cikuth: Well, there were some of them; they'd go right in the trees; they'd bore in.

Calciano: So you had those too.

Cikuth: We had all of them. We had every blessed thing that could keep you from producing the apples.

Calciano: Did you have mites?

Cikuth: Oh yes, we had everything.

Calciano: What would mites do to the trees?

Cikuth: Well, they wouldn't do a great deal of damage, but there is a certain damage that they can do all right.

Calciano: And what about apple leafhoppers?

Cikuth: Leafhoppers, I don't think I remember that here.

Calciano: Well I'm glad that there is at least one thing you didn't have.

Cikuth: No leafhoppers. They probably went more to the vegetable crops.

Calciano: Did you have any problem with little-leaf?

Cikuth: What was that?

Calciano: Little-leaf where the leaves get smaller and smaller and don't grow right.

Cikuth: Oh yes, we had that.

Calciano: Was there anything that you could do for it?

Cikuth: Well, these chemical people were always working on those things right along. You know, in California, they're always working those things out. Even now they're working on something that will control rust. In the Northwest the apples are clean and clear around the stem. Our apples here all have this rust on them on account of the fog.

Calciano: Oh, yes.

Cikuth: We have that rust now. Well, I suppose some day they'll figure out how to avoid that, to cure that, but it'll probably take time.

Calciano: Yes. Did you ever get crown galls on the apple trees where the grafts had been made?

Cikuth: Well, sometime, but ...

Calciano: But that wasn't much of a problem?

Cikuth: No.

Calciano: Did you get much root rot?

Cikuth: Oh yes.

Calciano: What caused that?

Cikuth: Well, it happens like this. Now on my own ranches that I used to have, you could *see* the trees one year, beautiful. The next year you'd see one branch of the tree getting kind of bare. Then the next year the other limbs would be bare. Well, first thing you started in digging and in the ground where the roots were spreading, it was all rotten. What the reason was, I don't know. And then there was another that would destroy your trees. They called it oak fungus, oh like, well I can't describe it.

Calciano: It was oak root fungus?

Cikuth: Yes. If you got oak fungus in your apples and it grew around, you could take the trees out, you could burn them up, you could do everything, but you couldn't get rid of it. It would kill your trees sooner or later. I've seen great big trees that it killed in no time.

Calciano: Well with all these diseases, how did any trees ever live?

Cikuth: Well, that's just one of those things. It's just like human beings, you know. Some people get cancer or something like that, and others live for a long time then gradually, gradually, they die. It's just something like that. Today if you know how to take

care of it, a Newtown Pippin can live a hundred years easily enough. But you've trot to know how you're going to start them out. As I said a while ago, if you have them close together, then you commence to saw off the big limbs and leave cracks and water goes in there and the trees all rot.

Calciano: Yes, and you've lost it. Did you get much scab in your orchards?

Cikuth: Oh yes, we got scab, but not now. They don't have it now because they spray for that.

Calciano: Was it bad in earlier years?

Cikuth: Oh, it used to be very bad.

Calciano: What would it do to the trees?

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you, it wouldn't do much to the trees, but it would do a great deal to the crop. Of course to a certain extent it might have a little effect on the tree, but most of it was the apples. If they got scab, then they were no good.

Calciano: What about powdery mildew. Did you get that?

Cikuth: Powdery mildew, yes, that too, but there's a spray for that.

Calciano: Could they spray for it when you were in business?

Cikuth: No, not at that time. A lot of those things they didn't know what to do with when I was in business.

Calciano: What would powdery mildew do to your crops?

Cikuth: Well, what powdery mildew would do to your crops is this: your foliage would die. The foliage of the tree died so the trees didn't grow like they should. And if the trees don't grow, your fruit on the trees doesn't grow accordingly because something is stopping it.

Calciano: When you used to store apples, I imagine you had trouble with the various kinds of rots, didn't you?

Cikuth: Yes, we had trouble with them. We blamed the cold storage people for their handling of the apples, and the cold storage people blamed the soil conditions, so between the two we didn't know what it was. I couldn't really say that my apples were in cold storage and I was going to sue the cold storage people for not keeping the proper temperature to preserve those apples. They would show me where they did keep the certain temperature which is required by the law and the apples didn't keep, so it could have been caused by something else. Well now, those things don't exist today. What it was in those days, I don't know. Maybe there something in the soil. Today we put apples there

at whatever temperature is best, and the apples come out perfect; at that time they wouldn't come out that way. So what caused it? I don't know. We couldn't determine what caused it. We tried cold storage at that time, you know, but if the apples spoiled and we put it into a lawsuit there was no way that we could prove anything.

Calciano: Was it mainly a mold or a brown rot or ...

Cikuth: Brown rot inside.

Calciano: Is that called internal browning?

Cikuth: Internal browning, yes. Your apples would be nice and green and you opened them up and they were black inside.

Calciano: Oh! How awful. Did men lose a lot of money on storing apples?

Cikuth: Oh yes. You took a chance. If they kept all right in storage, then you could get a better price later on. One time I had a good many carloads of apples in Los Angeles. I wanted to keep the apples to get a better price, you know. But I missed out. I missed it because the weather changed. If the weather stayed cooler, you got more money for your apples because you could store the apples for a longer time. They didn't wilt so quickly. But you had to take those chances, you know,

when you were raising apples. I had a share in a cold storage myself you know. We built one in Los Angeles one time. But we found out that our own cold storage was just as bad as anywhere else. It was just something wrong, and I wouldn't blame the cold storage for it, because at the same temperature today those apples come out sound. I wonder what was the matter then? It must have been something in the soil.

Calciano: I've heard that today they reduce the oxygen content in the storage sheds to keep apples from ripening so fast.

Cikuth: So that they keep more green?

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: Well they have that now so that the apples are put in the cold storage right off the trees and the next year they come out just like they were coming right off the trees.

Calciano: Did you ever have much trouble with bitter pit?

Cikuth: Yes, at one time, but that's disappearing. Litter pit, I'll tell you what bitter pit is from. Certain apples grew here that didn't belong to the soil here. In the early days they had Baldwin apples. They nearly always stayed big apples. But in California, the moment they

got a little bigger, there'd be a spot here and a spot there.

Calciano: Why was that?

Cikuth: The soil might be all right, but the condition of the air was not right. They didn't like the condition because it was a little different.

Calciano: I see. Did you have much of a problem with mold when you stored apples?

Cikuth: Very seldom. We didn't have any mold.

Calciano: In the reading I've done, I've noticed that the Watsonville area always grew Newtowns and the Bellflowers, but Sebastapol usually grew Gravensteins.

Cikuth: That's right, Gravensteins.

Calciano: Why didn't we grow them?

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you, we can't grow those apples as well as they do; they've got different climatic conditions. See, that is what applies if you're growing. Now you take the Newtowns that are growing here -- in Sebastapol they can't grow them very well. They can grow them a little bit but not as successfully as in here, because their climatic condition is different from ours.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: Now you take the Delicious apples that grow here, and you take the Delicious apples that grow in the Northwest and compare them, there's a lot of difference.

Calciano: Yes, I guess there is.

Cikuth: There's a lot of difference. Our apples are rougher because the conditions of the weather make them like that.

Calciano: Do you mean the rust?

Cikuth: Yes. You notice around the stems of the Newtown Pippins there is quite a little rust, just on account of the foggy weather here. They get that on the Delicious, too, around the stem.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: And in the Northwest they're just as shiny as you can get.

Calciano: Well now, the rust doesn't hurt the apples, does it?

Cikuth: No, no, only the looks.

Calciano: And I guess it doesn't affect the sales of the Newtowns, does it?

Cikuth: Well, of course you know how the people are -- they always like to buy things that have a good appearance.

If the Newtowns were smooth, like the Northwest apples are smooth, we would get more money for them, a lot of money. But as far as the eating, it's the same thing; it's only just looks.

Calciano: Now the fog also keeps our Delicious apples from getting bright red, doesn't it?

Cikuth: Yes. We don't get the color like the Washington apples. Well, I'll tell you, there are certain places in Santa Cruz County that they get a little better color than down here.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: You take them up in Aptos and, well, the Corralitos area is a little better than down here. But these down here, there's too much fog. We're only about four or five miles from the ocean and there's so much fog here that the apples are marred. You take in the early days, I know Hihn up in Aptos, you know ...

Calciano: Oh, Valencia?

Cikuth: Yes, Valencia. He had a tremendous orchard, and the apples were good and clean.

Calciano: But most of the orchards were down here, weren't they? Valencia is a relatively small area.

Cikuth: Oh yes, well I'll tell you, all this valley from down

here close to the river clear up to Corralitos was all trees. But they weren't on the other side of the highway. They can't grow trees on that side because they're close to the ocean. And from the bridge down here clear down to the line of San Benito County was all trees, too.

Calciano: Oh my.

Cikuth: There are still some today, but not as many as there were. It was solid, solid. There was nothing but apples there, nothing but apples.

VARIOUS PAJARO VALLEY CROPS

Sugar Beets

Calciano: A lot of this area is planted in lettuce now, isn't it?

Cikuth: Well, yes. They took some orchards out because lettuce is more profitable. As the trees got older they took, them out; they plant fewer new ones because the lettuce brings in more money. Now in the earlier days there were very few apples around here. The Spreckels sugar company planted sugar beets because the land here was all clean and had no trees. Then in a few years people commenced to plant some apples, and as

the apple trees got a little bigger, then the sugar beets disappeared.

Calciano: That was about when Spreckels moved the sugar company to Salinas?

Cikuth: Well you see they moved from here because there wasn't enough production here. Even when they built it here they had to build a little railroad from here to Salinas, a narrow gauge, a thirty-four narrow gauge.

Calciano: Oh yes.

Cikuth: It brought the sugar beets here to be manufactured here. But they found out that they couldn't raise much around here so they moved entirely down there because Salinas has a great big territory for sugar beets.

Calciano: Do sugar beets need a special kind of weather or terrain?

Cikuth: You know any kind of weather was all right for the sugar beets, yes.

Calciano: They aren't fussy?

Cikuth: There's all kinds of weather for sugar beets. It doesn't hurt them any at all you know, because they're a crop that goes into the ground. But the land here was taken by the apple trees, so they couldn't raise any more sugar beets. You see the original sugar beets were up in Capitola.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: I don't know exactly where it was, but that's where I was told they were. It was just a little bit of thing they started up, so later they wanted to enlarge. Spreckels came down here and bought the land and then the city gave them about twenty acres of land for nothing. That was so they'd build a factory to provide work for the laboring people. Well, what was the result of that? They raised the sugar beets here, but they couldn't raise enough here because the people planted trees, you know.

Calciano: When did the plant move?

Cikuth: The plant moved, oh, a good many years ago. I don't know exactly what year it was. The plant moved from here because there wasn't enough sugar beets here and it was too expensive to bring all that stuff here from Salinas. You see now, I'm going to tell you something that you might be interested in. When they made sugar, they used to have to extract the sugar from the sugar beets, and then there was a lot of that stuff that they called pulp left. They had to take it down to the slough and throw it away. They just threw that stuff away. Once in a while a farmer would go in there and take a little load for cattle, but very seldom would

they do that. So they had a railroad, a narrow gauge, from here to Salinas. We used to load those little cars with that stuff, and it would go along near Moss Landing and we would dump it without getting any benefit out of it. Then what they began to do with that in Salinas, they dried the pulp and put different stuff, some kind of Molasses in there, and sold that to feed the cattle. It was the finest thing that they ever had to feed the cattle.

Calciano: When did they start doing that?

Cikuth: Oh they were starting to do that even before 1897. Yes, even before the time when I was working there. The reason I mention that is because it was a very valuable thing for the cattle to feed on, you see. And if they threw it away it was good for nothing, good for nobody. They would even have to pay the people for the piece of ground that they were going to use to dump that.

Calciano: Isn't that something.

Cikuth: Yes. You see how brains work.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: It was a wonderful thing, you know. The only thing

they did before, they used to bring the cattle from Miller-Lux from Gilroy to feed them the meal. They did that for a little while, but most of that stuff was thrown away, dumped.

Calciano: Didn't they let the cattle eat the tops of the beets, though?

Cikuth: Yes, but that's different. You know when they got the beets out of the ground the workers, mostly Japanese and Chinese in the early days, would take the tops from the sugar beets and leave them on the fields, and a lot of people would come in with wagons and load up and take that to feed their cattle. Or otherwise a lot of them would bring their cattle and put a wire fence up and feed them in the field.

Calciano: So they ate it all..

Cikuth: They cleaned it up, yes, that's right, because cattle were crazy for those tops, you know. Today they raise sugar beets a little different from the time when I was a young man, working in the beets. You know they fertilized different then than now. At that time they didn't know anything about fertilizing at all. The land wasn't ridged up; it was level, just like this floor, and everyone had to get on their knees to work, you know. As you planted them, everything was in a

row, but you had to go on your knees to thin them out so that they wouldn't be too close together. And we worked there quite a bit; it was long hours, not like today. But they changed it so they can produce more sugar beets per acre than they could produce then. In the early days I understood there was a piece of land not far from here that they say used to produce pretty near forty tons to the acre. But you see the sugar people, the Spreckels people, would only pay them three and a half or four dollars a ton.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: And now when they produce less on the acreage they get more money, because now they go according to the sugar you get out of the beets.

Calciano: Oh really?

Cikuth: Now they pay them sometimes fourteen, fifteen dollars a ton. They don't produce as much an acre as they used to produce before, but still they're better off, they get more money out of it.

Calciano: They produce less beets, but the beets have more sugar in each beet, is that it?

Cikuth: Yes, that's right, that's right. It's because they put on a lot of fertilizer.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: Yes. In my time there was no such a thing as fertilizer, and no irrigation or anything.

Calciano: Did they ever use barley or potatoes to rotate with the sugar beets?

Cikuth: Well, yes, sometimes, because sugar beets draw on your ground pretty heavy so you have to rotate it in order to build your ground back again, yes.

Apricots, Cherries, and Prunes

Calciano: When you were in business, did you ever handle apricots?

Cikuth: Well I wasn't engaged too much in apricots at the time. Just a little bit here and there. When you bought orchards, you'd find a few trees here and there, but not a great deal. I wasn't much interested in them because that was kind of out of my business.

Calciano: Were there more apricots growing back at the turn of the century than there are now?

Cikuth: Well in those days there were a little more than there are today.

Calciano: I have read quite a bit about the apricot drying that was done.

Cikuth: Oh yes, they did that. Yes, there were more apricots in the early days because I'll tell you how it was. A lot of people had apple orchards. They had a funny way of doing things. They'd put apricots here and put apple trees there so they were all mixed up. Well I tell you, when I was a young man, if I had been planting anything like that, I would have done the same thing, because we didn't know any better. We didn't realize, because everything was new. But later on the people began to get wise and say, "This won't do. That won't do," so they worked it out in a practical way.

Calciano: Were there ever many peach trees here?

Cikuth: Peaches, not a great deal. Well, I'll tell you, just a few around here and there. We might have a few, but not really much. This is not country for that.

Calciano: What about walnuts?

Cikuth: Walnuts, no. Well there were walnuts here and there, but not like somewhere else. Nothing commercial. Nothing like San Jose where they have lots of places with big orchards of walnuts, and in Walnut Creek, you know, acre after acre of walnuts. Some of those counties are adapted more to that than they would be for something else. You know in some of those counties

apples don't grow well. I know I have a daughter living in Lodi; she and her husband live in the country. And my son-in-law told me one time that he wanted a couple of apple trees to put around his house, so I took some there and planted them. I know those apples produced big, but there was no color, no nothing. They grew there and the soil was all right, the water was all right, but the sun burned the apples right away.

Calciano: Were there ever very many cherry trees around here?

Cikuth: Well at one time, yes.

Calciano: When?

Cikuth: Oh around 1910, '15. Yes, there were a good many cherry trees around here, but they have all dis-appeared.

Calciano: Why?

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you why. There wasn't enough money in the raising of cherries.

Calciano: I see. Did the cherry trees grow well here, even though they didn't make very much money?

Cikuth: Well, cherries grew here pretty fair, but not as good as they did in Santa Clara County.

Calciano: Did we grow mainly the Royal Ann or what?

Cikuth: Well they used to, they used to grow Royal Anns here, and they used to grow Black Tartarians and others. The Black Tartarian is a black cherry, a wonderful cherry.

Calciano: They're an eating cherry?

Cikuth: Yes. But the Royal Ann was a bigger cherry; it was a good cherry, but it was more of a canning cherry.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: The Black Tartarian was a black cherry; it was a wonderful sweet cherry, you know, and a pretty good sized cherry. It went for public consumption.

Calciano: Fruit stands?

Cikuth: Yes. And the Royal Ann too, but most of the Royal Anns went into canning.

Calciano: The Royal Ann is a white cherry, isn't it?

Cikuth: Yes, but they get red.

Calciano: Oh they do?

Cikuth: Oh yes, they do if you keep them long enough on the trees, yes.

Calciano: Well when you open a can of them, aren't they usually white?

Cikuth: Well yes. You see the reason why is they don't let them go to red.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: No, no, not for canning, because they'd get a little

soft. They have to get them a little more firm.

Calciano: Were plums ever grown here?

Cikuth: Well yes, there were some plums that grew here, but very little. Most of it was French prunes.

Calciano: We didn't ever have very many pears down here, did we?

Cikuth: No, there were a few pears here at one time, but disease got into the pears and destroyed them, so they had to cut them down and doctor them. So finally people got disgusted and just took them out.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: Yes, took them out. There are very, very few pears around here now, very few.

Calciano: I read once that olives were grown here.

Cikuth: Olives? Not that I know of. Once in a while you'd see trees that just were ornamental or something like that, but not in any big quantity.

Calciano: Years ago when people planted new orchards, did they ever plant inter-crops for the first few years, like lettuce and such?

Cikuth: Well they did, they did that. In the early days they planted sugar beets. In the early days, you know, there were very few apples here -- it was all sugar beets, and they planted sugar beets between the trees until the trees got a certain age, and then they took

the sugar beets out.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: Well now even today they plant blackberries between young trees.

Calciano: They do?

Cikuth: Yes, they do that for *a* couple or three years until the trees get a little bigger, and then they take the berries out. The blackberries only last three or four years, you know, and then they take them out and the trees stay in the ground.

Calciano: Some orchards one sees have a lot of ground cover, but most of the orchards around here are absolutely bare underneath; the ground is stripped.

Cikuth: Oh yes.

Calciano: In earlier days, did they plant ground cover, like clover and such?

Cikuth: Well they used to do that, but they plowed that under, cut it out.

Calciano: Why don't most of the people do it now?

Cikuth: Well, I tell you, it sort of depends on the soil. If you have good soil, you don't need that.

Calciano: You mean that the ground cover is used to provide nutrients for the soil?

Cikuth: Yes.

Strawberries

Calciano: I read that in the years before sugar beets were grown between trees that sometimes strawberries were grown in young orchards.

Cikuth: Yes, because the strawberry is a thing that doesn't take very much of the strength out of the ground, you know.

Calciano: I see. So that means strawberries have been grown here for years and years and years.

Cikuth: Oh yes. I've seen the time here when they had a camp, a Chinese camp, down in this part of the country, hundreds of them, raising berries. They were the only people raising berries at that time.

Calciano: They were?

Cikuth: The Chinese, because they cultivated it themselves. They didn't have any way to cultivate except they had a little plow, and one man would pull it and the other would hold the handle.

Calciano: My goodness! (Laughter)

Cikuth: Yes, just like a horse, that's what they were doing. You know they had to just kind of scratch the weeds a little bit. They didn't have to go very deep or

anything like that; it was just to scratch them. They did that all right. Of course after the Chinese disappeared, the Japanese came in there and took their place. They raise berries now in far bigger quantities than they did then. In those days the berry was a little bit of a thing.

Calciano: Oh really?

Cikuth: But now the berries are bigger than walnuts.

Calciano: Yes, they're amazing.

Cikuth: And let me tell you something about the berries. When the wagon used to go through Main Street, or through any other street, you could smell those berries. Even if you hadn't tasted them, you could smell them. Today berries haven't got that kind of a taste because they have too much water. That's why I say the Chinese used to cultivate them to kill the weeds. And now they don't do that; they just water and water and water right along. That's why they're growing bigger. They're growing quite a bit more per acre than they did at that time.

Calciano: The ones that they used to grow were sort of like the wild ones then? Just very sweet?

Cikuth: They were just a little bigger than the wild ones, yes. And especially when the plants were young they

got to a pretty nice little size, but then the next year, and years after that, they got smaller, smaller, smaller, because the ground would get kind of weak, you know, and the plants exhausted themselves.

Calciano: I see. Why have grapes never been grown too much here?

Cikuth: Grapes? Well, the weather is not warm enough for them. They could grow them a little farther out on the top of a hill, you know, where they would get more sunshine. But down in the flatland, no, it wouldn't do.

Calciano: There were some private vineyards though, weren't there?

Cikuth: Private vineyards? Well, around homes.

Calciano: Didn't the Yugoslav people make their own wine, as the Italians did?

Cikuth: Well, they used to, but no more. Very seldom do they do that. Oh, I'll tell you, they did buy grapes from somebody else around Gilroy. That used to be grape country in Gilroy, you know. It was grape country just about twenty miles from here. They would go there and buy some grapes and make wine. Yes, in the early days I know they did. A good many of the Slavonians did because they like the wine like the Italians. They can't go without it. (Laughter)

Calciano: There aren't too many Italians in this end of the county, are there?

Cikuth: Not a great deal. They're in Santa Cruz, most of them. You see, when they came in the early days they were engaged in farming the small land, and lumbering, too.

Calciano: Yes.

Cattle and Poultry

Calciano: Were there ever very many dairy cattle in the Watsonville area?

Cikuth: Not many when I came. There were probably before I came here because everything was open fields, you know. But the cattle commenced to disappear because they were using the land for other purposes.

Calciano: I see. White and De Hart had a big feed mill here, didn't they?

Cikuth: White and De Hart had a big sawmill here at one time; they sawed their lumber out here.

Calciano: I knew they had a lumber mill, but then I thought I read that they also had a feed mill.

Cikuth: Yes, they did.

Calciano: And would they get their grain from right around here?

Cikuth: Well, yes, they gathered up the grain and different things and sold them to the people in the wintertime when they needed one thing or another.

Calciano: What kind of feed would they produce?

Cikuth: Well, for cows or chickens and all kinds of animals.

Calciano: Was there very much chicken raising around here?

Cikuth: Well not a great deal. Not as much as in later years. There was chicken raising here in early days in a private way. The reason there wasn't much was because the eggs weren't worth anything. You see in wintertime eggs would be very short; you'd have to pay probably six bits, or a dollar a dozen.

Calciano: Oh my!

Cikuth: And in the summertime when there was plenty of feed for the chickens and things like that, eggs would be down to ten, fifteen cents a dozen. You see there you are. Now your egg market is the same all year. It doesn't make much difference whether it's summer or winter.

Calciano: Is this because they can feed the chickens all year around?

Cikuth: Yes, they do. They have to feed the chicken, but before where they had a dozen chickens, now they have a hundred, two hundred, or five or six thousand

chickens to raise. They buy that feed cheaper than they would otherwise.

Calciano: Yes. When was chicken raising at it's peak around here? What years?

Cikuth: Well, I don't remember exactly, but it began to disappear about the last year or two. For the last couple of years it has commenced to get a little less and less because I've seen the time when you could go out here to a man who was raising chickens and you could buy about four or five hundred or a thousand small little chickens for ten or fifteen cents apiece, you know. But you see they found out that their feed costs too much money for them to produce that kind of stuff.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: So they commenced to cut it down. There are a few families down here yet who are raising chickens. But now if you want to raise a big quantity, you have to get into big expenses.

Calciano: When did people start getting these big chicken farms?

Cikuth: I don't remember exactly.

Calciano: Where are the big chicken farms? What part of town?

Cikuth: There's one here about three miles south, down Salinas Road. Then there's one here at the east side, you

know, toward Gilroy, and different places. But you see they build tremendous big buildings, just like the ones at that mushroom business as you go into Santa Cruz.

Calciano: Oh, yes.

Cikuth: Tremendous. And you know there's a lot of expense attached to it. I don't know how they made it, but by golly they built them just the same. You could go there to buy all the eggs you wanted for thirty-five, forty cents a dozen. I don't know how they could do it. The big quantity they needed to buy probably made a lower price than it would be if they had been small.

Lettuce

Calciano: When was lettuce first planted here?

Cikuth: I'm not sure of it, but I know there was no such a thing as lettuce when I came here. You might have had a little lettuce out in the yard and things like that, or celery. You know they used to import it from Utah. And I knew a fellow out here in the country, a fellow named Hutchings; he was Supervisor of Monterey County. He lived across the river and he married into a family that had quite a piece of land, you know. He raised lettuce, about three or four acres. People here

thought he raised enough lettuce to supply the world: (Laughter) Honest to God, just three, four acres. They figured if it spoiled they could feed it to the chickens, you know, or something like that, but you see how they started here? Gradually, gradually they built up.

Calciano: The lettuce fields imported Filipino workers, didn't they?

Cikuth: Filipinos, yes. Yes, there were quite a few, and there are quite a few here yet.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: But the Mexicans are taking care of that now.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: There are Filipinos around her in quite a few different places, different lines of business, you know. But if it wasn't for the Mexicans we wouldn't be raising this lettuce as we're raising it now, on account of we wouldn't have enough help. And I don't know how we're going to get along without them.

Calciano: Without the braceros?*

* Ed. Note: For a number of years the United States and Mexican governments made immigration agreements that allowed a specified number of Mexican citizens into the United States for seasonal contract labor. These men, known as braceros, were mainly used in harvesting crops, particularly crops requiring stoop labor such as tomatoes, asparagus, lettuce, etc. At the time of this interview, the United States government had just announced its intention to end the use of braceros.

Cikuth: Yes. When I go to my daughter's home in Lodi, there is tremendous open land through that country -- thousands and thousands of acres of nothing but the open land. You can't *see* hills anywhere. When I go there 1 see braceros picking tomatoes. You see hundreds of them in the field, just like the blackbirds. Well now on a day like this, a hot day like this and this time of year or *a* little sooner or later, who would go to do that kind of a job? There you are. Now if the Mexican government or our government is going to stop those people from coming, how are we going to raise that stuff? Who's going to work those things? I know my son-in-law controls about six hundred acres of land, his family's and his own. He told me today, he says, "What am I going to do without braceros now?" He said his land is producing sugar beets, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers and different things like that. He says, "Who's going to work that?" There you are; we're up against it.

Calciano: It's going to be interesting to see what happens.

Cikuth: In other words, if you can't produce what you want to produce on land, that land isn't worth much money, is it?

Calciano: No, he'd have to go into a different kind of crop.

Cikuth: Well, I know he'd have to go into something else, but there wouldn't be enough coming out of it to make it worth it, you see.

Calciano: Right.

Cikuth: Yes. So, I think that even with the way they're working to try to get braceros out, I don't 'think they'll do it. I think they'll come to realize that we have to have them for certain times of the year.

Calciano: The trouble is the people in the Middle West and East don't realize the situation. They know we've got unemployed people that can work and they don't realize these people refuse to work in the fields.

Cikuth: We've got unemployed people yes, that's true, but you bring them down here and they won't work. We haven't got the kind of work that they want to do.

Calciano: That's right.

Cikuth: We're an agricultural community; we're not a manufacturing community. That's why we need people to work on the farms. When I was a young man, as I said before, we would go down to the other side of Castroville and work on sugar beets there all day long, skinning those beets. But I had to do it because

I had no way to get along without doing it.

Grain and Hay

Calciano: In those years was very much of this land around here planted to oats and hay?

Cikuth: Oh plenty.

Calciano: Was it the old-time settlers that grew the hay and the oats?

Cikuth: Well, I tell you, the Irish people did most of it.

Calciano: The Irish?

Cikuth: There were a lot of Irish people here who knew the art of growing grain, you know. And there were Danish people too. The Danish people were interested in growing because, you see, when the Danish people came here what they were looking for was a piece of land where they could grow hay for their horses and different things for their own food, grain, barley, and beans or something of that nature.

Calciano: When did the Danish people come in to this area?

Cikuth: Oh they were here when I came here. They were early settlers here.

Calciano: Even earlier than the bulk of the Yugoslavians?

Cikuth: I think so. Now I don't know exactly, but I think they

were, yes.

Calciano: And are there quite a number of Danish people?

Cikuth: Oh yes. You *see* when they had that sugar mill here, most of those people who were working there were Danish.

ETHNIC GROUPS

Japanese

Calciano: When did the Japanese people start coming?

Cikuth: Well, the Japanese people came in here, oh, from about 1910 on up. I tell you, the Japanese people are good farmers, you know. Japanese farmers from Japan, there's no question about it that they're the best; they're one of the best, and they're clean too. Their children are clean, and their houses are clean. But in early days you couldn't depend on the Japanese to work for you when they said they would. Maybe they didn't understand the language, but no matter what kind of a contract you made, you couldn't depend on them. If you needed some Japanese, you'd say you needed, well, twenty of them to go work, to pick apples or whatever you wanted them to do. They'd say all right, they'd come. The next morning probably you'd have two or

three. They wouldn't come, you see. But then the trouble was that the people here were not satisfied with what the Japanese were doing, and they complained, so the American government made a complaint to the Japanese government that those people had to be responsible for something or they had to take them out. And then from then on, boy, when the Japanese told you something, it was just as good as gold.

Calciano: About what year was this?

Cikuth: That was around about 1915-16, about that time, just about the time they commenced to come in here, you know.

Calciano: Do you mean the Japanese people that came after that were more dependable, or did the people that were already here change?

Cikuth: Well the people who were here, they reformed. The others that came in, they were just as nice, every one of them. I had them working for me in the packing houses, packing. But they were just as nice and just as honest as anybody. They could be depended on. If they told you something, they'd do it, there was no question about it, but before, no. You see, they had to put clamps on them and tell them you've got to do

this or else.

Calciano: Why did the Japanese people come in here? Was it because there was work offered here?

Cikuth: The Japanese people, I think, were crowded back home. They had to emigrate to different places, wherever they could go, you know, in order to make their living better. You know Japan, the way I hear it, it's just so thick, so many millions of people there in a small area of land that they had to go on out. They're good farmers here.

Calciano: Yes, very successful.

Cikuth: You see where the Japanese has got the advantage over the other ones is that the Japanese wants to farm. He doesn't want a big farm; he wants a farm just so he and his family can take care of it. He uses his children, he uses his wife, he uses his sister, everybody works on the farm. I know I had a ranch out here, and there was a Japanese farming next to me. I've seen those children come from school and go over there and help do a little bit of field work. Girls that were in high school came home and changed dresses and went out to the field and helped their father with whatever the father was doing. *See* that way everybody

worked. That's why on a small piece of land they make more money than they would on a big piece, because then they'd have to hire people. This way everything they make is their own.

Chinese

Calciano: Now when the Chinese people came, it was usually just the men, no wives or families.

Cikuth: Well, no wives, the Chinese didn't have wives then, you know.

Calciano: But when the Japanese people came, they usually brought their families with them or sent for them, didn't they?

Cikuth: Oh yes, oh yes. When the Japanese came here, just as soon as he got a little bit ahead he'd send for his family and wife to come here.

Calciano: Why didn't the Chinese men do that?

Cikuth: Well the Chinese didn't do that. No, they didn't send for their family. I know I had a lot of Chinamen working for me at that time, and they were single men.

Calciano: Well did most of the Chinese men go back to China when they made some money?

Cikuth: Oh yes, they did. Whenever they got a chance to make a little something they went back. I know one fellow

that had a dryer out here; he was a good man. At one time he owed me a lot of money; he owed me over twenty thousand dollars at one time.

Calciano: Oh!

Cikuth: That's a pretty big lot of work. It was like this; I'd give him apples for drying, drying, drying. You know he bought the apples from me for drying. He was honest. And of course when the time came to pay, he couldn't pay me. At that time he came to my house, and he was crying like a baby. He said, "I can't make it." He said he's Chinese, and when the Chinese promise to do something and they can't make it, he said, that's a disgrace in the Chinese system. I said, "John, don't worry." What could I do, myself? You can't go kill the man. He's got the stuff, but the stuff's not worth any money. So he kept on going, you know, kept on going and I said let it go, let it go, and in the end he paid me everything. He paid me back every blessed penny he owed me. Then he went back to China to live for a while and I gave him a twenty dollar gold piece to give to his wife, you know. Then it came back with a letter saying that his wife sent it to me.

(Laughter)

Calciano: Did he go back several times?

Cikuth: Oh yes, he went back and forth.

Calciano: But he never brought his wife over here?

Cikuth: No, no, never. No, in those early days those Chinamen didn't. You know with their honesty, you couldn't beat them.

Calciano: I've read a number of articles written at the turn of the century which indicate that there was a great deal of resentment against the Chinese people. A lot of, well, really nasty things were written about the Chinese. Was it jealousy because they would work for less money or...

Cikuth: Well, I tell you, it was the jealousy of the people. Of course in the early days there was a lot of jealousy among any kind of people because people didn't realize. But today it's not so. You know in the early days the Chinaman, of course, was by himself. He didn't want to mingle with anybody; he wanted to live by himself; he wanted to cook his own food and everything like that. He'd go to his own Chinatown and buy what he wanted and he was kind of eccentric, but then too, that was his style. It was his right to do it. Of course the younger people today are different. The old-timers are gone; they're gone and the younger

people ate different today, you know. But the people used to be resentful. They said, "Why should they live this way?" Well, people don't care now. When people adopt a certain way to live, it doesn't bother you; we let them go their way.

Calciano: Most of the Chinese people lived across the river, didn't they?

Cikuth: At one time all the Chinese people lived in town, but that was not in my day. People told me where they had been, though. And then they moved them all from town. The Porter people built a place for the Chinese down there, and there was a big Chinatown down there.

Calciano: Now this was across the river?

Cikuth: Yes, right across the bridge there.

Calciano: Were the Chinese people forced to move there or did they want to?

Cikuth: Well, it was like this. Chinatown was down here on Union Street and it was crowded. There wasn't much room for them to expand, you know, and they wanted a bigger place. So these Porter people down there had a lot of land, and they built a place for them and the Chinamen commenced to build themselves little shacks here and there. That's what makes Chinatown, you know.

Of course the Chinamen, they're gamblers, heavy gamblers. They liked gambling. I know I had a dozen Chinese fellows that worked for me down there, and every blessed month they were broke. (Laughter) They used to come to me to give them a little money to buy rice and things like that.

Calciano: Oh my goodness.

Cikuth: They'd go down there and play fan-tan or whatever it was, and they'd lose it all, every penny.

Calciano: Were there regular gambling establishments?

Cikuth: Oh there was a lot of gambling around here. You see they had a Chinese lottery there, and they had some other games, fan-tan or something. I don't know, I never played the game, but I saw the different ways they were played, you know. But I know that Monday morning those who used to work for me were broke. They played every Saturday. Every Saturday they got their money, and by Monday morning they were broke.

Calciano: Well now in Santa Cruz a lot of the Caucasian people would gamble in the Chinese gambling houses.

Cikuth: Oh sure, sure. A lot of people from here went to Chinatown. They would go down there and gamble, yes.

Calciano: Well some of the Chinese men must have gotten rich from running the games.

Cikuth: Oh yes. I know one fellow down here in Chinatown was a very lucky man, just from gambling. They take a certain percent of the gambling, you know, and those Chinamen, if they made a little money they went wild.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: They went wild, and when they were broke they were broke, that's all.

Calciano: Did the men who ran the games have to pay the police department protection money?

Cikuth: Well, the police department at that time was easy to handle. Yes, I heard, I couldn't swear to it, but I heard that at one time the chief of police down here was involved. There were a few Chinamen on this side of the river, you know, and he said that he didn't want any of his men to bother those Chinamen. He said, "I'll take care of them," but I understand no arrests were ever made.

Chinese-Japanese Rivalry

Calciano: The other day you mentioned that you used Chinese men to wrap apples, and then later on you said you had Japanese people working for you; what did the Japanese do for you? Did they take over Chinese jobs?

Cikuth: Well you see I used to have Chinese. First I used to have white people to pack apples, but then of course we couldn't get along with just white people because there weren't enough of them, so we had to have the Chinaman. The Chinaman was all right, but he was a very slow worker.

Calciano: The Chinamen were?

Cikuth: Oh, slow, slow, slow. They were good and clean, but they were slow. If you had to prepare one carload of apples a day, you had to have ten Chinamen, but four Japanese could do the same job.

Calciano: Oh my goodness!

Cikuth: The Japanese are fast. The Japanese are faster than even white men. Yes, I used to have four Japanese workmen turn out a carload every day. Every blessed day they'd do five, six hundred boxes. Each one would do over a hundred boxes. They were fast as lightning.

Calciano: Well then they could make a lot more money than the Chinese could?

Cikuth: Well, you paid them the same rate as you paid the Chinamen, but when the Chinaman has gathered up three boxes he gets tired, and in the same time the Japanese has gathered up five, you see, so they're really

making more money. We paid them four cents a box. If you pay the Chinaman four cents and you pay the Japanese four cents, the Japanese will make almost double. They're very fast and boy, when they looked at something they knew exactly where it went.

Calciano: You mean sorting them out and everything?

Cikuth: Oh yes. Well you see *we* had women to sort the apples. The apples were brought to them sorted in *a* box. All they had to do was pick them up, pick them up, pick them up, and take paper and wrap them, just like a machine, you know.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: Yes, I used to do the work myself, but I couldn't compete with them, you know.

Calciano: You couldn't?

Cikuth: No, no, I couldn't do it. The Japanese is really a tremendous worker, there's no question about it. And now another thing about a Japanese, if he came to work for you, he was prepared. He wouldn't come to work for you if he didn't know how because you see the Japanese decided among themselves, and if they furnished you a man, he was good. If he wasn't, they wouldn't furnish him.

Calciano: That's interesting.

Cikuth: No, they wouldn't bring him. And they taught him at home before they brought him.

Calciano: Really?

Cikuth: Yes. They'd take a whole box of apples home, and they'd practice day and night, you know, to bring him up. And when they brought him to work, he was all right; he was prepared. He was prepared to do the work. But as I said before, Chinamen are slow. I guess it's the nature of the people that they are that way. I used to have those Japanese next door. They used to come down there late at night when the Chinamen were working you know, and they'd laugh. The Chinaman and Jap never could work together.

Calciano: Oh they couldn't?

Cikuth: Oh no, no. If you had a Chinaman, the Jap wouldn't want to work there, and if a Japanese was working, a Chinaman would never come close by.

Calciano: Now why was this I wonder?

Cikuth: Rivalry. They wouldn't do it; they wouldn't do it. They'd rather fight than do that.

Calciano: Oh my.

Cikuth: Yes, they despised one another. I don't know why, but that's just how it was you know. You asked a Chinaman

about a Japanese and they cussed and they said they're no good this and that, dirty and all that. And you asked a Japanese about a Chinaman and the Japanese laughed. (Laughter) The Japanese laughed. If you said, "Well, what do you think about an old Chinaman?" they'd just laugh. They didn't pay any attention to them anyway.

Calciano: How strange.

Cikuth: They ignored them. Well I had those Japanese, and then sometimes I would need them at night. Sometimes I needed them at night to finish up something for the next day. We might be short four or five hundred boxes and I'd want them to come at night to work about an hour in order to prepare for the next day. Oh they'd do it, they'd do it. They wouldn't charge any more money; they'd charge you just four cents a box or five cents a box, whatever it was. They wouldn't take any more money, but they'd do it all right. But the Chinese, no.

Calciano: I believe you said that some of the Chinese established dryers, isn't that right?

Cikuth: Yes, the Chinese were good for that. There's no question about that. They were good for that because

that was their work, you see. They are good for those things, yes.

Calciano: Why were they better at that?

Cikuth: Well they were better at that because they seemed to be better adapted to it.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: It's the idea you know. They knew all about those things better than I would or maybe the Japanese would. There were some Japanese that had dryers, but the Chinese were better for that than your Japanese, because that's slow work you know. They're more adapted to that kind of a thing.

Yugoslavs

Cikuth: Now I'll tell you about the Yugoslav people. When they came in the early days, they didn't establish themselves around the farm. They went to the cities where they went into restaurants and clothing or something else, you see.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: That was in the early days. Most of our people came in here in the early days, seventy or a hundred years

ago. They came in here and settled, but mostly they were scattered in the larger cities like San Francisco.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Yes, in San Francisco mostly. That's where you might say their headquarters were. From there they commenced to migrate around to different places.

Calciano: I see,

Cikuth: Now when I came in here, I didn't know anything about this place here or San Jose. But we got in contact with some people who had come in before us. We didn't know them personally, but we knew where they came from, so we tried to get in contact so that we could get around. We wanted someone that we could speak our language with.

Calciano: I see. Are there still a lot of Yugoslavs in San Francisco today?

Cikuth: Oh yes. There are many in San Francisco.

Calciano: Back in Yugoslavia had these people been farmers or city dwellers?

Cikuth: In certain parts of Yugoslavia there's a great deal of farming and industry and things like that, but where we came from the country was very poor, very poor. We

had a little land and a few animals, but not as much as there should be for the people who were living there, you know. It was nice ground, I think, nice conditions and nice seashore and all that, but it was a very poor country.

Calciano: Earlier we mentioned that the Japanese people usually brought their wives over and the Chinese didn't. What about the Yugoslav people that came over here? Did most of them marry girls from Yugoslavia or did most of them go back there to marry?

Cikuth: Yes, most of them married girls from Yugoslavia, but also some went back to Yugoslavia; married girls there, and returned with them. The immigration laws allowed that.

Calciano: I remember that you said your partners all went back to Yugoslavia and stayed.

Cikuth: Yes, they stayed and died there.

Calciano: Did a lot of the Yugoslav men who came over here go back and stay?

Cikuth: Well, not too many.

Calciano: You just happened to have partners who did?

Cikuth: Yes, but others didn't because where most of our people came from, it was very difficult to make a

living, you know. So when we came here we made our home here; we commenced to make a little money here, whether we were working in our business or otherwise; we commenced to have a better living. We thought that this country was good enough for us to stay. Some of us went back, but very few. Some went back and returned again.

Calciano: Yes, I see.

Cikuth: I went back one time and I probably wouldn't have gone at that time, but my mother was sick, you know, so I went over. I was thinking myself here years ago of going back there for a visit, but why should I go back? What do I have over there? The people who were closest to me have died. I have nephews and nieces there, but that's a long way back; they're third generation, you know.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: But I never forget them, and whenever I get a chance to send them a few dollars I do. I myself, you know, it's this way. When I came here I was a young man about seventeen. Well I've lived here so long that I. really don't know anything about anywhere else. To tell you the truth about it, wherever you're born you

have that in your heart always, but a lot of things have changed there since my boyhood. I can *see* from letters I receive from the old country that there have been many changes. My relatives and friends are gone and a new generation has taken over.

Calciano: When did your wife and her family come over?

Cikuth: She came over more than sixty years ago.

Calciano: Oh really?

Cikuth: Her family came here before that. She had a big family here -- four brothers were here before her.

Calciano: What was her family name?

Cikuth: Scurich.

Calciano: Were the Scurichs one of the first Yugoslav families here?

Cikuth: They came very early, and there's a lot of them around here still, yes.

L.P. CIKUTH

Views on Education and Opportunities in America

Cikuth: I had that little home next door here before I was married, that little one over there. I was going to get married and I had an opportunity to buy it and I

said, "I'm going to buy that little home there so I'll have a little roof over my head."

Calciano: What year was that?

Cikuth: Oh that was 1903 I guess. Yes, that's right. Let's see, I've been married sixty some odd years, you know.

Calciano: How wonderful.

Cikuth: Living with one wife all that time is terrible! (Laughter) People from Yugoslavia came to this country because here everyone has a chance to make good. Well now, you *see,* the man who's running for United States President, Goldwater, I read the history of his family. His grandfather came from Poland.

Calciano: Oh, that's right.

Cikuth: His grandfather was named Goldwasser. He started as a junkman and then gradually he got to do a big business. Just like anybody else, just like when I started my own business. I started my own business with the one horse and, by golly, it was *a* lame horse at that. (Laughter) And of course in those days there weren't as many apples that you could buy like today, you know. A few here and there. There were some orchards that you would have to pay a thousand dollars for, but I couldn't afford those because I hadn't any money to buy that size orchard, so I went in the

smaller places.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: So little by little I commenced to build up, and I commenced to go on to bigger places, some as big as any there were in the valley.

Calciano: Oh my.

Cikuth: Yes, I had one orchard here that I paid ninety-two thousand dollars for in three years time. That was for the crop alone.

Calciano: Were you one of the biggest buyers then?

Cikuth: Well, I was pretty good size.

Calciano: You must have been.

Cikuth: I wasn't afraid to tackle anything in those days, but then, of course, time came when I had to be more careful. You know when you're young you do a lot of things that you can't do later on.

Calciano: I guess that's right.

Cikuth: Yes, I had to be more careful because my daughters had to be sent to school, you know. A lot of people say, "Well, my father didn't give me an education, why should I educate my children?" Well, it doesn't make any difference what my father did; maybe he would have done it if he had been able to do it, but he wasn't

able, so why should I deprive my own if I can afford to do it. There you are; that's the way I was thinking.

Calciano: Yes, I see.

Cikuth: My father was a poor man, but he sent me to a private school back home just enough to learn to read and write a little. He paid for it, but he couldn't do anything else but that because there was no public school then. He did all he could. He gave me more than he could afford to give me. Well, if I can afford to give my children an education, I'm going to give it to them, or my grandchildren, or anyone I am connected with. If I'm able to do it, I'll do it. That's the way I feel about it.

Learning to Speak and Read the English Language

Calciano: Did you change the spelling of your name when you came over?

Cikuth: Yes, well I put the "h" in it, you know, because I thought it would be easier to pronounce.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: My name would be Cikut -- the last letter would be a "t". But you see I had that "h" added to it.

Calciano: You did that when you came over to this country?

Cikuth: Yes, that's right.

Calciano: A lot of the Slavic people have "vich" on the end of the name.

Cikuth: Well, most of them added that too, you know. Like my wife, now she was named Scurich. By rights it would be Scuric. They added the "h" to it.

Calciano: It helps Americans pronounce it?

Cikuth: Yes. I am always trying to learn the English pronunciation. I am always learning when I talk with people like you. Nothing suits me any better than when I have people to talk to. Sometimes they can't understand my English, my mistakes, you know. But that's all right. You can do only what you can, that's all. I express myself as well as I can.

Calciano: Yes, and very well, too.

Cikuth: By golly, I tell you, I never went to school in this country.

Calciano: Well, a lot of your generation didn't.

Cikuth: I know, a lot of my generation didn't. All I can do is read well. But still, when I'm reading sometimes I can't make it out, but then I can go back again and then pretty soon I get the points that I need.

Calciano: How did you learn to read English, anyway?

Cikuth: Well ...

Calciano: Did you learn shortly after you came to this country?

Cikuth: Oh no, I didn't have any time. (Laughter) If there had been a school like there is today, free, night school, I could have gone to night school. Naturally I couldn't go to day school because I had to work for my living, but if I could have spent two hours a time at night, I could have picked up something. But back then there wasn't even that. Or if you wanted to go somewhere to a private night school you'd have to pay for it, and how was I going to pay for it when I didn't have any money to pay?

Calciano: So how did you learn how to read? Did somebody show you?

Cikuth: Well, yes. Somebody showed me and then my girls helped you know. Sometimes I asked them certain questions about things. I never go to bed without reading for two hours or an hour or until I get to sleep. And we get the paper every day. We've gotten the Examiner for fifty years, every day.

Calciano: That long?

Cikuth: Oh yes. I read it all the time.

Calciano: I can tell that you've educated yourself a great deal.

Cikuth: Well, I tell you, what I have learned I learned from

people like you. But I'll tell you, I always like to talk with people who are more educated than myself, because in that way I learn.

Becoming a Citizen

Calciano: When did you get naturalized?

Cikuth: I got naturalized in 1903.

Calciano: Did you have to go to citizenship classes the way that people do now?

Cikuth: No, no, no, not at all.

Calciano: What did you do?

Cikuth: There were a lot of our people working in the mining industry who never even knew how to sign their name. Never knew how to sign their name, but they were citizens all right; they were given papers at that time. I tell you how it was when I became a citizen. I didn't have any intention of going that day, but I did. I had a fellow that I had done business with, I used to handle his crops, you know. He was going up to Santa Cruz one time and he said to me, "Let's go up to Santa Cruz." I said, "Well, why should I go up to Santa Cruz; I've got no business there." He said, "Let's go to pass the time," so I said, "All right,

let's go." So we went up there and he said, "By the way, have you got your citizen papers?" I said I did riot. "Well," he says, "Let's get them now." So I said all right. You know who was the judge? Judge Lucas was the judge at that time. Right there I got the paper and that was the end of it.

Calciano: Oh no. (Laughter)

Cikuth: That's so.

Calciano: Oh my goodness.

Cikuth: The only thing they asked you was this, "Are you declaring yourself against the country where you were born?" That's all you had to say, and you got your papers.

Calciano: Did they ask you how long you'd lived here?

Cikuth: Oh no, no, they didn't ask you anything. Nothing. That was the easiest thing I've ever done.

Calciano: There is something else I've been wondering about. I was looking at some of the old voting registers and you're listed as Luke Cikuth.

Cikuth: Oh yes, Luke, that's right.

Calciano: Well you're Louis, aren't you?

Cikuth: Well they call me L.P. or some people call me Louis, you know, but my register cards are Luke P. My father was Peter, my name is Luke, and they call me Louis but

that's my name.

Calciano: Well which is your name, Louis or Luke?

Cikuth: Luke, but I go by the name of Louis.

Calciano: I see. Well now, when you sign things, do you sign them Louis?

Cikuth: I sign them L.P.

Calciano: What should I put on your book, Luke or Louis?

Cikuth: Well I think you can put Luke P.

Calciano: All right. When did they start calling you Louis?

Cikuth: I don't remember, but my nickname was Louie, and I suppose it came from that. I think when you put that down, it would be proper to use the original; originally my name was Luke.

Calciano: What does your wife call you, Luke or ...

Cikuth: My wife calls me Dad most of the time. It's the family way, you know. And my children call me Dad, so hardly anybody calls me by that name.

Calciano: I see. When did you first vote? What year was that?

Cikuth: I think I voted the same year as I took the papers.

Calciano: Today you hear new citizens talking about how marvelous it is the first time they vote; did people think that back then or not? Were you excited the first time you voted, or did you just sort of walk

into the polls and vote?

Cikuth: I just went in there and voted, that's all. But I've never missed voting since then. Later on I helped with the voting. I was a witness to many people who couldn't read but were entitled to vote. I had to go in the booth with them, me and another fellow, so that they would vote, you see. Some of those people who were from our country got their citizen papers without knowing how to vote, you know. We had to go there to tell them this is for this man and this is for that.

Calciano: I see. Was one of you a Republican and the other a Democrat, or was it just any two men?

Cikuth: One was a Republican and one was a Democrat. We were allowed to show him; if he wanted to vote for the Republican, we showed him the right side; if he wanted the Democrat, we showed him the other side. We showed him where to put his mark. Now there are some of our people, Slavonian people, who are not citizens.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Yes. There are some who don't believe in some of those things. They say, "Why should I change my citizenship?" Well I say this, "Why not, because it doesn't hurt you." I want to be one of the country and

be able to vote.

Slavic Societies

Calciano: There's a Slavic American Benevolent Society in Watsonville, isn't there?

Cikuth: Yes, there is.

Calciano: Do you belong to that?

Cikuth: Yes, I've belonged to that since they organized it. I go to the meetings and pay my dues and, well, it's the same thing with the Elks, only I very seldom go to the Elks meetings now since they've moved. I used to go downtown here, but you see they are far out now and I don't care to go that far at night. But I belong there so I suppose I should.

Calciano: Are you the oldest person belonging?

Cikuth: Of all the Slavonian people, I was the first to join the Elks.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Yes. The first one. There is one fellow here who was born here, but of the foreigners like me that came in here, I was the first one.

Calciano: That's interesting. When did you join?

Cikuth: It was about forty years ago when I joined. Now there are a lot of Slavs in the club.

Calciano: When did the Slavic Benevolent Society form?

Cikuth: Well, I don't know exactly now. I couldn't recall that, but it was very, very early. I'll tell you how they started that society here. The society from San Jose had a branch here, you know. But we found out that we would be better by ourselves than being connected with somebody else. We still have connections; if their members are sick over here we take care of them or if our members are there they take care of them.

Calciano: I see. Are there a lot of Slavic people in the San Jose area?

Cikuth: Quite a few. I think a lot have come to be well-to-do around there. In early days they bought small pieces of land, four or five acres here, there. My niece is down there, and she's got a piece of land there,, and I don't think the land that she bought there was worth sixteen hundred dollars when she got it. Now it's worth a hundred thousand dollars. it is worth over a hundred thousand dollars.

Calciano: Oh my.

Cikuth: You see Slavonians have a lot of that land down there, land in the Santa Clara Valley. They bought it and now, of course, if you have the same fifteen acres or five acres of land in certain places, they'll give you ten, fifteen thousand dollars an acre, and things like that. Because, you know, when those industries go there, they don't care how much they're going to pay. As long as they get the place where they want, they don't care about money.

Calciano: I guess that's right.

Cikuth: Some of the Slavs are very well-to-do, very well-to-do. In fact some of them have come over here to buy land here just for investment. I know one fellow down here, he had land there and I think he sold it for three hundred thousand dollars. All around San Jose there, you know. You should go out and see it. In my days, when I was in San Jose that first time when I had just come over, I stayed in San Jose washing dishes. What was in San Jose then? A market or two. Now from San Jose to Los Gatos it is practically a solid town.

Calciano: That's right.

Cikuth: Solid town. Those big industries went there and bought up all that land. All those beautiful acres of prune

orchards, pear orchards, acres of it were all dug out. All gone. Big business is buying and everyone else. The government is buying too. I saw in the paper last night that they're going to try to build a big town between San Jose and Morgan Hill.

Calciano: I read that, yes. It's quite a plan. A few minutes ago you mentioned joining the Elks. Did you belong to many organizations in town?

Cikuth: Well, yes, I belong to the Elks, the Slavonian Lodge, the Knights of Columbus, the Rotary Club, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Calciano: That's a good-sized list. There is another Slavic group that I've seen mentioned. Can you tell me exactly what the Croatian Fraternal Union is?

Cikuth: Well, that's a little different. The Croatian Fraternal Union is big, they're quite big. They're worth a lot of money, you know. They were in trouble one time. They were entangled in politics during the time when this administration was opposing the Bolsheviks and things like that, you know. Some of them were in the order and they had a devil of a time cleaning them out.

Calciano: Oh, the Bolsheviks were in the Croatian order?

Cikuth: Oh yes, oh yes.

Calciano: So what happened.

Cikuth: They had a little difficulty and then, well, they straightened it out all right.

Calciano: Well now, I'm confused. There's the Slavic American Benevolent Society and then there's the Croatian Fraternal Union. They are two different things?

Cikuth: Yes, the Croatian has some kind of insurance, but I don't know much about it. The Slavic American Benevolent Society gives you sick and death benefits. Or if someone is not able to do anything, they give him a little money to support himself and keep him from want and such things, you see.

Calciano: But then neither one of these is like the Knights of Columbus or Elks or Masons or anything.

Cikuth: Oh no.

Calciano: You don't go to meetings?

Cikuth: Not very often.

Calciano: I see. Well, are there any Slavic social organizations?

Cikuth: No, not any that I know of. Well, there could be in some larger city, but not here.

Director of the Bank of America

Calciano: You've been associated with the Bank of America for quite some time, haven't you?

Cikuth: I've been connected with our bank for some sixty odd years.

Calciano: You're a director of the bank, aren't you?

Cikuth: Oh yes, I've been a director of the bank for years. In fact I'm the chairman of the board.

Calciano: Oh my! I didn't know that.

Cikuth: It's just a name, that's all. You know I was connected with the Bank of America when it was the Bank of Italy. Old man Fletcher was a good friend and a good banker. He asked me one time if I would be interested, and I said, "Well, what would you get out of me? I don't know anything about banking." And he said, "It doesn't make any difference. We want you there." So I said, "All right," and I've been there from then on, and quite a few of the others have been too. So then finally here four or five years ago a fellow died, you know, and they asked me if I wanted to be chairman. They. asked me first but I said, "No, I don't think so. I don't want to be bothered with it because I don't know any-thing about it." But the others said, "Well, there's nothing to do except to sit there,

that's all." (Laughter) That's all there is to it. So I'm back there now and I don't know how long I'll be there because I'm getting so that I don't want any more of that kind of thing. I like to be home, yes, by myself, and I like to go and see my children, you know.

EARLY WATSONVILLE

The Galoot Club

Calciano: Do you know anything about a club that existed years ago in Watsonville called the Galoot Club?

Cikuth: Well, they were some people and some farmers who came here and they had a little club. They played cards and drank or something like that and that's what they called their club. I never really knew what it was, but I heard a good deal about it.

Calciano: Oh you did?

Cikuth: Yes, that's right. •

Calciano: Did it have quite a large number of members?

Cikuth: Well, a few, a few, not very many. A few farmers and a few of these townspeople here gathered up. I really don't know first hand what it was all about. I heard about it, but I never knew what it was. Well, of course, at that time I didn't have any time to know

anything about it; I was pretty well occupied in my business, you know. Some of us used to have a little club in the early days in the Odd Fellows Building under the town clock there. We used to have a little place where we went in the afternoon to play a game of cards or something like that, you know. It was just a few merchants. We got in together and played a couple of hours there and then everybody went home.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: Yes, that's right, that was the thing.

Calciano: Did that club have a name?

Cikuth: Well, we used to call it the Chamber of Commerce at the time that we belonged..

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Yes. But it wasn't really a Chamber of Commerce; it was just called that and that's about it. But I tell you, I didn't play cards for a long time in my life because I didn't have the time. Once in a while I would go to the Odd Fellows Building there to interview some people who I had done business with, you know. Many of those farmers used to come there on Saturday, you see. Well sometimes you couldn't go out to their farms to see them, but you'd go to the Odd Fellows Building once in a while to see them and shake

hands with them and remind them that you were in the business and see if they had anything to sell or something like that.

Churches

Calciano: In Yugoslavia, if I have my history right, there are three main religions, aren't there? Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Moslem. Is that right?

Cikuth: Yes, but the Turks, there were a lot of Turks there in the early days, but they're disappearing.

Calciano: Are there still a lot of Greek Orthodox?

Cikuth: Oh yes, oh yes.

Calciano: Did many of the Greek Orthodox come over to America, or was it mostly the Roman Catholic Yugoslavs that came?

Cikuth: Both Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Yugoslavs came to America, and many of the Greek Orthodox are now in Los Angeles and the Mother Lode country.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: They were in the mining industry in the early days and they have a church there outside of Jackson. They've got their own church there, their own cemetery, and they're building a beautiful settlement there for all their people, you know, to be settled down.

Calciano: How interesting.

Cikuth: Oh, it's a wonderful place they are building. All those people used to work in the mining industry. That was what their object was, to come to work in the mining industry, because in those days if you got work in the mines, you know, you got about two dollars a day. When they accumulated four or five hundred dollars, or a thousand dollars, they went back home. Some of them left here but others stayed and are building themselves up.

Calciano: I see. Now most of the people who came to Watsonville were from the Rowan Catholic section of Yugoslavia, weren't they?

Cikuth: Yes, yes, most of them, that's right. There are a few differences you know, but most of them are Catholic. They're from what we call the province of Dalmatia, you know. It's right on the Adriatic seaboard.

Calciano: There are several Catholic churches in Watsonville, aren't there?

Cikuth: Three. There's one over across the river; there is St. Patricks here in town, and there's one across from the Saint Francis school out here, two miles out.

Calciano: Do all the Yugoslavian people go mainly to one of them, or ....

Cikuth: Oh well, most of our people go to St. Patrick's because it's closer, you see. Some of them go to the others if they are closer to the parishes.

Calciano: I see. I asked because in many towns in the East there will be a Catholic church mainly for the Polish people and one that is mainly for the Italians and one mainly for the Irish. But that's not the way it is in this town?

Cikuth: Oh no, no. Here everybody goes to their parish church. You know in the larger cities, like in Los Angeles, there are Slavonian churches that are separate from the others. They're for the Yugoslav people, you know. But anybody can go to them if they want. It's the same thing with the churches in San Francisco.

Calciano: With so many people in Watsonville speaking the Croatian language, I wonder why a separate church here was never started?

Cikuth: Yes, but I know why. In Los Angeles and San Francisco there are enough people who can support another church, but you can't do that here.

Calciano: What churches were in town when you first arrived?

Cikuth: Well, I'll tell you what churches were in town. There was one church on the corner of Van Ness and West Lake

Avenue. It was the Christian Church. That was on the old Brassel property. That was on the corner there where the garage is now. But it burned so from there they moved to the corner of Main Street and East Lake Avenue, right on the corner there. Then that church burned there, so they built another church right over on the corner of Alexander and East Lake where the oil station is. They had a beautiful church there one time, but then that also burned down.

Calciano: Oh dear.

Cikuth: From there they went up East Lake here three or four blocks and built another church.

Calciano: And where is their church now?

Cikuth: It is still on Madison and East Lake. And of course the Catholic church was where it is now, but it was old; it was an old building. Calciano: Oh, I see.

Cikuth: Yes, it was an old church. They moved it when they built the new. They moved the old church back and made a parish hall out of it. Now they've torn it down to make the parking lots. The church here, next to our house, is the Bethel Tabernacle. They are good people, fine people who are there, you know. No trouble. They used to be noisy people many years ago but it's different now. And then there's a Presbyterian church

over on Third Street. The Seventh-Day Adventists are out here somewhere. Then the Methodist church is way out on the north side of town. They used to be right downtown here, but they moved because they were a little crowded. They needed room for parking, you know.

Calciano: What churches besides the Catholic and Christian were here when you first came to town?

Cikuth: Well, the only churches that I knew of were the Christian church, and the Methodist. The Methodist was at the corner of Wall Street and Van Ness Avenue.

Calciano: What about the Catholic church; was there just one or were there already three Catholic churches?

Cikuth: Well, no, there was one in town here and there was one out by St. Francis school. That was Franciscan then, but now it's Silesian. Now they don't build any more Catholic churches here; they think they've got too many already. (Laughter) You know the Catholic church always wants money. Well of course they need it, they need help like any other, you know, because you can't afford anything unless you have a little money. The St. Francis school out here, it's run by the Salesian order. They are taking boys and educating them and preparing them for the priesthood and all that sort of

thing.

Calciano: Do very many Watsonville boys go into the priesthood?

Cikuth: Oh, some. The Catholics always seem to need more money. They show where they spend it and all that. They show everything. Now when they built that school, Mora High School, a lot of people gave four, five thousand dollars or a hundred dollars, two hundred dollars, five hundred dollars, such amounts as that. Then they built up the things around the church, with the parking, you know, and everything's fixed up. It's beautiful; there's no question about that. Well, you know, sometimes you might say, "Oh, where'd that money go?" Well you can see where it went, yes, you can see it.

Schools

Cikuth: Next year they're going to build a beautiful Sister's academy across the street from the church. That's where all my girls were educated, you know. Calciano: Oh, all your girls?

Cikuth: Oh yes, all my girls were educated at Moreland Notre Dame Academy, and then from there they went to college.

Calciano: Did you have to pay to have them educated there?

Cikuth: Oh yes, we had to pay. Not a great deal, but we had to pay something. You know I remember when there was no high school in Watsonville, either. Calciano: No high school?

Cikuth: No, no high school. I'll tell you where the grammar school was -- right across the street here, where the Purity store is. Right here on East Lake. And a primary school was a little bit down, about a half a block down from here. Right there where Moriarity is. But the high school wasn't here then, no. That's why you take people my age -- at that time if there was a free school like they have today, probably I could have gone to school and learned something, but there was no school then, and if you wanted to go *to* private school you had to pay for it, and I had no money to pay with. You see? There you are. We were up against it; that's why we didn't learn as we should learn. Today I see a lot of these people come from my old country, and right away they go to school. They've got free schools and they go there to learn, But that wasn't available in my time. Did you know that from here many people went to Santa Cruz's Chestnutwood's College?

Calciano: Oh really?

Cikuth: Yes. They finished up in Santa Cruz. One of our bankers down here, and one of our leading men in Ford's Company went to that school, Chestnutwood College. And of course there was nothing like school buses back then, or any of that kind of thing. In fact when I went through the country I used to see those little schools that would have probably four or five children, or ten children you know. And the schoolteacher used to go there at five and make the fire to keep that warmed up. You see what a wonderful thing they used to do? To me it's wonderful, because I know my own girl used to go out here in the country and do that kind of work when she was a schoolteacher. Now what they're doing is they're grouping all that together. They're making bigger schools.

Calciano: Yes, they are.

Cikuth: It's a wonderful thing to have these buses that bring the children from the step of your home right there to the school. It's wonderful. I tell you that's one of the greatest improvements that I've seen, because I enjoy seeing those children being protected. Now of course they can't bring all those children to their home where they live, but there is a certain place where they stop so they don't have very far to go to

their home, you see. They go very close, yes. Wonderful, oh, I admire that. I admire that even if you have to pay more taxes; that's all right; that's well spent. It protects children and you've got to protect the generation to come.

Calciano: Yes. When you first came here, did most of the little boys and girls go to school, or did some just never go?

Cikuth: Well, they were going to school all right, but of course the school system wasn't as good as it is today. They had no facilities. Now how could you get school children to go out to a little schoolhouse in the woods with no heat of any kind unless it had a little wood stove. Today children are fighting to go to school. In those days they wanted to keep away from school.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: They kept away because there was no enjoyment for them. They had no place in the school and they had to go out and play in the wet and all that sort of thing, but today everything's protected. I know my own girls complained. Notre Dame, you know, was a little better school than going out in the country, but still they

said that it was pretty cold there sometimes.

Calciano: Did most of the children stop their schooling about eighth or ninth grade back then?

Cikuth: Yes, yes.

Calciano: Would the boys quit even sooner than that sometimes?

Cikuth: Yes. Some would.

Downtown Watsonville

Calciano: The first time you came to town, did you come by railroad or horse or ...

Cikuth: No, we came by railroad into San Jose.

Calciano: Yes, and then when was the first time you ever saw Watsonville?

Cikuth: Oh that was the first year that I came into this country.

Calciano: Oh, you came right over here.

Cikuth: Right, I came over here. And from here I went to San Jose.

Calciano: I see. Well now, did you get into Watsonville by train? Is that how you came?

Cikuth: Yes, that's right.

Calciano: What did you think of Watsonville?

Cikuth: Well I tell you, I thought Watsonville was a great

town because I came from the country where there was nothing that compared to Watsonville.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: And now, if I look back to what Watsonville was then I say to myself, "I wonder where I'm living now?" So far as the town of Watsonville was concerned, there wasn't anything around here at all.

Calciano: East Lake Street was empty?

Cikuth: This little house next to us was there, but I don't think there was any other house for a half mile down; it was empty. And across the street there were a few houses down a way, and then the balance of it was open field down to where an old man by the name of Waters had a nursery. His nursery had all kinds of things -- roses and apple trees and prune trees and apricot trees, and all kinds of things. He had a lot of land there, and he had a big ranch on the Pajaro where he raised all that stuff; it was nothing but nursery right along. And then after a while he commenced to clean up; he divided his land, built homes, and kept on building, kept on building, until they got down as far as, well, almost to the creek. They're going to build another town down there, with a business section in it you know. Of course to me, when I look at it, I

see the time when I used to go pick prunes there. Today it's nothing but homes.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: Yes, nothing but homes.

Calciano: What were the main stores in town when you came here?

Cikuth: The Ford Company was there on the corner, but it was not as large a store as it is now. It was not one quarter of the size it is now. And then another store was down below on the corner of Main and Second Street; they used to call it the Lewis store. The Lewis store was a store where you could go in and buy anything. The Ford Company store was right on the corner, and the balance of the corner was all homes.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Yes, it was all a residential district, all the way through. And right here where the Resetar Hotel is, right there was a blacksmith shop, a big blacksmith shop, and the rest of the town was down below.

Calciano: Down below?

Cikuth: Down below, from the river up, you know. The town was established down there, and from there it spread out. The best part of the town was right where they're building the new city hall now. Yes, that was the best

part of town a long time ago.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: Then the town started moving this way because the river would overflow.

Calciano: That's interesting. What else do you remember of the time when you first came?

Cikuth: Well, when I came here I found it a wild country, but then it wasn't wild to me compared to where I came from in the old country.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: There was a little store here in that day where you could go to buy things you wanted. It was right there where the California Bank is now, on the corner of Wall and Main. It was owned by a fellow named old man Cooper. I think the Coopers were from Santa Cruz. They owned the building there, a shack; it was like a barn. When you went there you had to go down two or three steps.

Calciano: To get into the store?

Cikuth: Yes, to get into it. It was a kind of a cellar there. The old man had, well he had different things to buy -- tobacco, overalls, and things like that. The store at that time had everything.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: I used to go there sometimes and play cards and things like that. Then they built a building there that was a two-story building, but lately they have taken the second story off, leveled it off so they won't have to pay taxes, because the two-story building wasn't paying.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Upstairs don't pay, you know. No, they don't pay anymore. Now you take the electric building down there -- it's just an elephant on your hands as far as your upstairs is concerned because there's so darn many of them there and nobody stays there, and you know that costs money to keep that up.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: And that's why they don't build that kind of a building today. Not in a small town like this. In San Francisco it's different because they haven't got any ground to spare; that's why they're building four or five, six, ten-story buildings, but not in here in a town like this. See the Lettunich Building down there is a four-story building, and it's an elephant on your hands. Yes, nobody wants that.

Calciano: Who owns the Lettunich Building?

Cikuth: Lettunich Building is still owned by the Lettunich people.

Calciano: I was wondering what was the plaza like when you first came?

Cikuth: When I came? Well there was nothing but wild stuff there, cypress trees grew all around, and there were wooden sidewalks and all that; it was not like today. No, it was different. As small as it is, this plaza down here is a beautiful spot, and they keep it nice, too.

Calciano: Didn't they used to have trouble with people who let their cows wander through the plaza?

Cikuth: Oh yes, they used to. Well in the early days, you know, there were no limits to anything like that. There is something else we used to see in the early days. I've seen wagons on Main Street stuck in the mud.

Calciano: My goodness.

Cikuth: They carried sugar beets down to the mill, and there were no paved streets like there are now, you know; it was nothing but mud. If you wanted to cross the street, you had to have planks and boards so you could get over.

Calciano: When did they start paving the street?

Cikuth: They started paving the streets around about 1915 I think. About that time. But you see even when they commenced paving the streets, they weren't doing the right kind of a job. They had no power machinery like they have now. You know how they pressed that stuff down? With horses. They had a big roller and a team of horses, four or five horses together, and they pressed that down. Well, of course, you couldn't make good work that way, you know. And some of those streets were built with the center very high and the edges low. That was so the water would go on each side.

Calciano: Were the streets as wide as they are now?

Cikuth: Well, yes, certain streets were as wide as they are now. Some of the new streets are probably wider than the old ones.

Calciano: Was Main Street always that wide?

Cikuth: Well, they made that wider, and I'll tell you how. They cut people's property on each side in order to make the three lanes or four lanes or whatever it is.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: I know it cost me. I have a piece of property down there, and it cost me close to two thousand dollars.

Calciano: My!

Cikuth: Yes, it cost me that much, and besides I had to give them some land.

Calciano: Did you get paid for the land?

Cikuth: I got paid for that as part of my assessment. I have about seventy feet there, so I had to pay so much money, you know.

Calciano: Do you own a store there?

Cikuth: I own five stores there.

Calciano: Oh!

Cikuth: Oh yes.

Calciano: What buildings do you own down there?

Cikuth: I've got the buildings right next to the corner there.

Calciano: Main Street and East Lake?

Cikuth: Yes. On Main Street I have the store there that has the parlor room for billiards and pool, and then I've got a store where they clean clothes.

Calciano: Oliverius Cleaners?

Cikuth: Yes, Oliverius. And I've got the next store, a barber shop, and the next store is a restaurant. And then my property goes in an L-shape and I've got a store on this side, on East Lake Avenue, a shoe store. One of

my stores there on Main Street is a two-story building, but I never rent the upstairs. Nobody wants it, you know. There used to be doctors' offices there at one time, but no more. You see all the doctors want to be on the ground.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: Wherever you go, they're down.

Calciano: Dentists and lawyers used to rent up above stores too, didn't they?

Cikuth: Oh well, yes, but no more. No more. You see there's a big concern, Wyckoff, Gardener, and such, and they used to have the top floor of the Lettunich Building, the entire floor on the top. Then they bought some property there and built, and they've got a big parking lot; they've got everything down on a low level. There aren't any more high offices. And especially lawyers; they want to get away from the noise downtown.

Calciano: The Lettunich Building wasn't built until long after you came, was it?

Cikuth: The Lettunich Building was built about forty years ago.

Calciano: Was the main street called Pajaro Street when you first came?

Cikuth: Well that was what they called it in the early days, yes. And this street here, where we are here, they called it Ford Street.

Calciano: East Lake used to be Ford?

Cikuth: Yes, they called it Ford Street. But they changed it, you see. Now Wall Street down there was called a different name, but they changed that to Wall Street, like Wall Street in New York. They wanted to be like New York, you know. (Laughter)

Calciano: When did they make all these changes?

Cikuth: Well I don't know. Not long ago; about thirty or forty years ago. Yes, not very long ago. I know I had a warehouse for my business down at the railroad tracks. My warehouse was facing the tracks, and in the same building I had an office on Wall Street that backed out onto the railroad tracks.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: But for my office address they said, "Put him on Wall Street." (Laughter)

Calciano: That was the address?

Cikuth: Yes.

Calciano: Why did they change this street from Ford to East Lake?

Cikuth: Well, I tell you, they changed that street because there was a lake out here, College Lake, so they named it after that, East Lake.

Calciano: I see.

Camp Goodall

Calciano: Was there ever any kind of trolley system in Watsonville?

Cikuth: Well, in the early days we did have trolley cars from Main Street that went down Beach Road to Camp Goodall.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: They used to have ports down there in the early days, you know, for shipping. There was what they called Camp Goodall, and there were quite a few homes there. They built a trolley from town clear down there to the steamer landing, but that was given up; that was not a success at all because in those places you've got to go way out in the ocean to prevent the piers from being smashed by the breakers. The pier there was all washed away in the early days. I remember there were still some homes there when I came, but I never remember seeing any vessels come through there at that time. That was before my day.

Calciano: Was there a race track down there?

Cikuth: Well there was a race track in the early days, but I don't remember it running.

Calciano: I see.

Floods

Calciano: From some of the things I read about the river down here, it sounds as if there used to be more water in it. Was there or not?

Cikuth: This river down here?

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: Well, you know where our city Plaza is, in the middle of the town?

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: I've seen water from the river come up into the Plaza in early days.

Calciano: You mean during floods?

Cikuth: Floods, yes. I've seen that many, many times. The river was tremendous after much of a rain, you know, and the river would flow right over. I've seen the boats coming to the city hall.

Calciano: Oh, my.

Cikuth: Yes, there was lots of water down there at that time.

But you see now, several years ago the government appropriated money to build a levee on each side of the river. The town is in no danger of flood now, because of the government's big levee that protects it. And then they block that water over in San Benito County, too. The water flows down here and they've blocked it up in different places for irrigation purposes. So they let water go down slowly so there is never too much water there at one time.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: You know when you come to the bridge over the river, our town is down and the bridge is up.

Calciano: Why is that?

Cikuth: You know in the early days there was no cement bridge; it was a wooden bridge. When I came here it was a wooden bridge, but now they've made it cement, and they made the bridge up high, so when you're up here, your town is down this way a little bit. But they built a levee on each side, and when the floods have come, they've come almost to the top, but never gone over.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: What they do now is they clean the river bottom a little more so it can take more water. And besides

that, they block up the water down in the other part of the country. You know this water comes from San Benito County, way up there. So they block up that water at a dam someplace for irrigation purposes, and we don't get the water down here now like we used to.

Calciano: I wondered because there doesn't seem to be very much water in the river lots of times.

Cikuth: Yes. Well, there's a little water in the river, but it isn't anything like it used to be.

Calciano: How often did it used to flood in the old days?

Cikuth: Oh sometimes two, three times in a year.

Calciano: That often?

Cikuth: It depended on how the rainy weather came.

Calciano: Well what would happen to the businesses in town? Were they flooded?

Cikuth: Flooded down there? Oh sure. The store owners on Main Street had to build barricades in back of their doors. They put boards and gunnysacks with sand in them and blocked the doors so the mud wouldn't go inside.

Calciano: Oh dear.

Cikuth: Sometimes it would go inside just the same. Yes, I've seen the water down at Bridge Street one time, and I bet you it was up to about that high.

Calciano: Up to the top of your thigh?

Cikuth: Oh yes. Kids used to go and make marks on the building wall, you know, to show how high it came. (Laughter)

Calciano: Was there once a proposal to drain College Lake into Salsipuedes Creek?

Cikuth: Well, you mean to drain the lake?

Calciano: Wasn't there some talk about doing it around 1908? I don't think they ever did, but didn't they want to?

Cikuth: I don't know about that, but they used it to irrigate there. They let water go in there, but at certain times of the year when they wanted to use that water, they opened the gate and the water went right out and they used it for irrigating the crops. They were beans, mostly beans, because that crop grows fast.

Hunting and Fishing

Calciano: Was there a lot of hunting and fishing around here?

Cikuth: Yes.

Calciano: What did they used to hunt for?

Cikuth: In the early days they went down to Camp Goodall to get clams and other fish.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Yes, clamming. I saw them in the early days, they'd go down with a team of horses and plow at the edge of the ocean there and get millions of clams, those little ones, you know, but they don't allow you to do anything like that today.

Calciano: No.

Cikuth: Today you've got to have a certain amount of measure to your clams to take them.

Calciano: Right, five inches.

Cikuth: Because otherwise they'll be destroying the industry. In the early days you'd go down there and pick all the clams that were this big, that big, any size. But they stopped that, which is the good idea, to stop and protect the industry from people who came in and took everything. They still have places where they go fishing for bass, you know, for these big fish.

Calciano: Was there much duck hunting on College Lake?

Cikuth: No, no. Very little.

City Financing

Calciano: Where did the people get their water supply? Did everybody have wells or was there ...

Cikuth: Well, no, they didn't have wells, but water was supplied the same as now.

Calciano: Where did it come from?

Cikuth: Freedom.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Yes, Freedom. There was a little electricity outfit there, you know, and they had water supplied from there. But later there was a shortage of water and they had to dig some wells in different places so in case we needed water we'd know where we could get it.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: That was so it would be there in case of fire and things like that. But now we have reservoirs about six miles from here, in Corralitos. I know the time when they built the reservoir because they came to me and they wanted to borrow money from me to build it. The city wanted to borrow money from me.

Calciano: Oh really?

Cikuth: Yes, oh yes, to build with. They paid me later on and everything. And the water was supplied from those streams that come through that area.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: There's a water filtering plant there where they

filter the water. And from there they bring the water downtown.

Calciano: What year did they put this in?

Cikuth: Well, that was a good many years ago; I can't recollect exactly what year, but it was a good many years ago.

Calciano: Was it standard practice for a city to ask a private citizen for money?

Cikuth: Oh yes. The city wanted to borrow a certain amount of money. You see they bonded it, but after that they needed a certain amount of money for something else in a small way, four or five thousand dollars maybe. So they commenced to borrow money from me or some other businessmen and then they paid them in the course of time.

Calciano: Now is this from you personally, or from the Bank of America while you were a director there?

Cikuth: No, I wasn't director in the Bank of America at that time.

Calciano: And they borrowed from other people in the city, too?

Cikuth: Oh yes, if they needed it, yes. I know when they built the city pavilion down there at Second Street, a fellow named Rafael gave the money to build that.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: He gave it, and they paid it back. They just borrowed money from the individual for ten, fifteen, twenty thousand dollars depending on the course of time.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: They paid interest, and so much every month, every year, or whatever they designated it to be.

Calciano: How interesting. When did electricity come into the town?

Cikuth: Electricity was already around when I was here, but in a small way. There was no electricity in the homes. There was a little electricity on Main Street, but in very few places. The lights we had on Main Street were gas.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: Yes. An old man had to go at nighttime and light that up; the gas was for night. You see the little plant was over here, but it made very little electricity. I know when I built my warehouse down at the depot, we didn't have electricity there; you had to light lamps. But then after that electricity came, and then one after the other cooking and everything became electric and today it is complete.

Breweries, Saloons, and Temperance Groups

Calciano: Were there very many hop kilns in the early years?

Cikuth: Well, there were two or three places here that I know of. There was a place nearby the ranch I used to have, about a mile or two out, and then there was McGrath's. McGrath raised quite a large crop. But they don't raise that much any more.

Calciano: Because lettuce is more profitable?

Cikuth: Well, lettuce, yes, lettuce and sugar beets and then the apples.

Calciano: Were there any beer breweries here in the early days?

Cikuth: There were two. One was down by the bridge, and one was down here a little ways, just about four or five blocks from here.

Calciano: On East Lake?

Cikuth: On East Lake, yes.

Calciano: When did they stop producing?

Cikuth: Well, they stopped producing a good many years ago because these big breweries from San Francisco brought the stuff in cheaper than they could produce it here. That's why they disappeared.

Calciano: I see. Who used to own these breweries?

Cikuth: The fellow who owned one brewery was named Palmtag;

the people were German people. Down here on East Lake there was another one. I know the name, but I can't remember it now. It was right on the corner next to the Christian Church.

Calciano: Now one thing I was wondering, I know Santa Cruz back in 1890 and 1900 was just full of saloons and taverns. Did Watsonville have a lot of saloons and taverns too?

Cikuth: Oh yes.

Calciano: More than now?

Cikuth: Oh yes, more than now. Oh yes, yes.

Calciano: Well wasn't there also a temperance movement here?

Cikuth: The temperance movement was very early, very early. I remember that was a long time ago; if I had to tell you what year, I couldn't exactly. It was very early. Yes, they had that. They had gatherings here and there you know and talked about different things. Those groups were mostly composed of church people, isn't that right?

Calciano: Yes. Were they quite active?

Cikuth: Well, they were. They had meetings around on the street, you know, and all that sort of thing. Oh yes, I remember that, but I didn't really pay much attention to what year that was.

Calciano: But they weren't very successful, I imagine.

Cikuth: Oh no, no.

Calciano: The taverns still operated?

Cikuth: Yes. Most of them. Today you don't see that. But then the Salvation Army used to go up the street you know, singing and beating drums and all that, but they don't do that anymore. Now they go around collecting and things like that. Down on Main Street, when I used to go to our warehouse, there was a little hail there where the Chamber of Commerce is now located. There used to be an old barn there, and they used to have their services in there. My warehouse was right in back of it, and I used to drop in sometimes at night and sit down and listen to those people.

Calciano: Did it hurt one's reputation if one went into a tavern or saloon, or could anybody go without worrying?

Cikuth: Oh no, no, they wouldn't hurt anything. Of course some people you know, they're always scared of something, always have something to say.

Calciano: But it wasn't thought of as bad?

Cikuth: Oh no, no.

Whiskey Hill

Calciano: How did Whiskey Hill get that name. Do you know?

Cikuth: Well, yes, a fellow told me about it. There were a few Spanish fellows drinking, you know, and they said, "Well, if you want to get a drink, you've got to go on the hill, Whiskey Hill."

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: An old Spanish fellow used to have a saloon there at one time.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: That was in the early days, of course, so I don't remember that, but I saw afterwards that there was quite a little camp of Spanish people there. They had regular bull fights and one thing and another.

Calciano: Oh!

Cikuth: There was a little camp in there with real Spaniards who had come from the old country. They were separate, you know. Then after a while they intermarried with the Mexicans and raised families. Oh yes, I remember hearing about that. But a lot of it was before my time. At one time they used to say that was a dangerous place to go at night.

Calciano: Oh really?

Cikuth: Yes, that's what they claimed. Of course I don't know, but they say they were pretty tough. You know in those early days they didn't respect the law; their law was their own. And the drinking, they didn't know how to control themselves.

Calciano: I see.

Cikuth: I know there were two women that used to work for me for years, and they wouldn't speak a word of English. Not a word, and they were born here! They wouldn't speak any English. When I'd speak to them in English, they'd understand me, but they'd answer me in Spanish. They were good people, good clean people, good workers, but that's just the way it was. They wouldn't speak the English language to save their souls.

Calciano: Oh, isn't that strange.

Cikuth: But, if you talked to them they understood you just like you and I are talking.

Calciano: When did Whiskey Hill's name get changed to Freedom?

Cikuth: Well, not so long ago. I remember the time, but I can't exactly say when. When they commenced growing prunes and things I think they changed the name.

Calciano: How did they pick the name Freedom?

Cikuth: Well, that I don't know, but they picked a pretty good name when they said that, yes. Maybe they wanted to get away from that Whiskey Hill business. Oh I remember the time when they had a nice little store there. And I once knew a fellow who had the saloon there, and then other people had stores there and a little property, but there wasn't much activity there. You know it was just kind of a side issue from town, a little country store or something like that. But it was an accommodation for those people, all right, in those days. Of course there wasn't a road like there is today.

Calciano: No.

Cikuth: It was a rough road, you know. It wasn't anything like it is today. Today the roads around here are fine. In the county or the city limits, it doesn't make any difference, they're all good roads. You should have seen the roads here in my day when I used to have business up in Corralitos. I bought a lot of stuff in Corralitos at that time. To go there you had to go on a rough road, rocks here and there. Good God, if you tried to go with a bicycle you couldn't get anywhere. If you went with horses you couldn't get anywhere. Well it was a terrible thing to do, but we had to do

it at that time because we didn't know any better way.

Calciano: Would you go by horseback then?

Cikuth: Oh we used to go by horseback, or we had to walk and stay overnight in places because it took a long time to go back and forth. We had no machinery at that time of any kind except wagons and horses.

Calciano: Did you ever use oxen to pull your wagons?

Cikuth: No, not oxen, it was horses. In the early days they used to have oxen pulling the timber in the timber camps, yes, but not in my day. We all had horses, you know.

Railroads

Calciano: This is changing the subject a bit, but I was looking at an old map the other day, and there seemed to be a town called Vega near Aromas.

Cikuth: Vega is out here, oh about four and a half, five miles.

Calciano: What's it called now?

Cikuth: Well I think there was a little station there one time. There was a little railroad station there and a little warehouse in a place they used to call Clough.

It was named after a fellow named Clough.

Calciano: Oh?

Cikuth: They used to have a little warehouse there, and people would bring some things there and a train would stop and pick them up, but that's all discontinued now. That's all gone out because of this trucking business. They take a lot of things both ways you see. Trucks come in and pick it up right on your ground and go.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: I tell you, that's why the railroads are up against it. They're fighting all the time because the trucks are taking a lot of business away from them.

Calciano: Yes, that's right.

Apple Annual

Calciano: I recently saw a brochure from an old Apple Annual. I wonder if you can tell me anything more about the Apple Annual.

Cikuth: Oh yes, yes, I remember that all right. We had that apple exhibit down at the old pavilion there down on Second Street, beyond Main Street, you know. It has been a gathering place for different things, but at that time we packed and exhibited all these apples. We

exhibited them all around and there were lots of them, lots of them. Everybody put his apples there. At that time I put whole carloads there.

Calciano: So many?

Cikuth: You know in those days they wanted to show off everything.

Calciano: And would people come from all around?

Cikuth: Oh yes, oh yes, the people came around from different places to see those things.

Calciano: How many years did they have the Apple Annual?

Cikuth: They had an Apple Annual there for about three or four years, and then it commenced to kind of fading out, you *see.* The people got a little bit tired of those things. There was so darn much work there and you lost so much time and so many apples were exposed and deteriorated, you know, so they kind of discontinued that.

Calciano: I see. I always wondered why it didn't continue

Cikuth: Well now when they have a County Fair, everybody puts in a box or two, you know, just so something shows up, but that's not like we used to do. We did it in a grand, big way, you know. Oh boy.

Calciano: When did you first show at the County Fair?

Cikuth: Oh the County Fair was since they built this building out here on East Lake Avenue in about, I'm going to say about fifteen, twenty years ago now.

Calciano: I see.

Growers' Associations

Calciano: Were there apple grower's associations years ago?

Cikuth: Well, there were, yes, but they were never successful. You know how it is. Sometimes when you talk to the people for their own benefit, some people think that you're talking for your benefit not for theirs. That's where all the factions came in, right there. Well now suppose you wanted a whole bunch of people like me to meet to form something. Well, the question to me isn't what you're getting out of it, but what I'm getting out of it. If you can show me that I can better myself from what I am now, then I'll listen to you. Some people won't do that; they're stubborn.

Calciano: When did the growers association start getting organized here?

Cikuth: Well, they organized two or three different times, but

they broke it up each time.

Calciano: Did you belong?

Cikuth: No, no, I never did. At that time there wasn't much point in going, you know, even though I listened to their arguments, and all that sort of a thing. You see, to me, when you want to organize, you should organize when you're down or when you're big, just the same. At that time the organization wasn't as big because our production wasn't getting anywhere, and we weren't getting anything out of it. Well all right, let us get together and let us stay together because we're losing anyhow. We might just as well stay together until the time comes when we're going to find out where we benefit, isn't that right? But they wouldn't. Some of them thought they knew too much. Sometimes I thought I knew too much and I didn't know anything. Well today people are organizing, isn't that right?

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: Well, there you are. Any big business today, even railroads, you see where they're merging.

Calciano: Yes.

Cikuth: For instance, you take the Wells Fargo. Bank and the

American Trust Company. The American Trust Company was a big concern, and Wells Fargo Bank is an old-time concern. The Wells Fargo Bank started with the mining industry, and now the two banks have combined in order to do more business at less expense. That's why all the big businesses try to combine. The apple industry tried to combine at one time, but we couldn't make it because we hadn't the brains to find out where our benefit was.

Calciano: I see. Wasn't there a fruit exchange for a while?

Cikuth: Fruit exchange. There was one here one time.

Calciano: Can you tell me a little bit about it?

Cikuth: Well, the fruit exchange was here one time because of the growers, the growers themselves. But they disappeared. I'll tell you how they disappeared. Any kind of a chain or combine that you have with the people today, they've got to be honest people because if not, somebody is going to get hurt. Isn't that right? Well, I don't say anybody in the exchange here was dishonest, but they never made *a success* of it.

Calciano: About when did it start?

Cikuth: Oh, they started in the early days, you know. I'll show you how it was. When our people commenced to be

interested in buying, they called us lump buyers. A lump buyer buys the crop from whole orchards you know. Well the growers thought we were making a little profit, and they thought they could do the same thing, but they tried and they couldn't make it. The reasons I don't know. We bought from the farmers on a commission basis, like now suppose you were a farmer and you had a thousand, fifteen hundred, two thousand or twenty thousand boxes of apples, and I start coming to you. I'd say, "Well, you can consign those apples to me and I'll handle them. I'll furnish you boxes, I'll furnish you money and everything," and if I didn't have the money, I'd borrow money on the basis of the stuff you consigned to me. So, when they saw us making money they thought why shouldn't they themselves make a little money and they tried a fruit exchange, but all of them disappeared. So everything went to the lump buyer. Everything was in the hands of the lump buyer. Of course he'd go out there and pay for the fruit as he saw fit and like that. But, that was the way that it was.

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