

*Perry Patten:
Berkeley and the University
Just Prior to World War I
1913-1917*

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Interview with: Perry Patton, 925 San Benito Road, Berkeley, California
Date: April 10, 1981
Interviewer: Lawrence Parker, 1611 Beverly Place, Berkeley, California
Subject: BERKELEY AND THE UNIVERSITY JUST PRIOR
TO WORLD WAR I (1913-1917)

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Tape No. 1, Side A

Parker: Mr. Patton, when and where were you born, and what is your family background?

Patton: I was born in the Salinas Valley, not far from the little town of Gonzales, which is about 18 miles south of Salinas, on August the 28th, 1895. Which, if you are good at mathematics, will show you I am 85 years old.

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My family were farmers in the foothills of the Salinas Valley. My father had graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1873 and came to California in the early days in the settlement of the Salinas Valley and married my mother who was a native of California. We were a very happy family of five. I was the youngest of five children, five years younger than my next older sister. We lived on a little ranch north of the city of Gonzales. A city we called it, though it only had a population of three or four thousand then. I went to high school in Gonzales.

What did we do on the ranch? I used to say we raised hay to feed horses to plow ground to raise hay to feed horses. We couldn't make very much money that way. And so for that reason it was my ambition to leave the Salinas Valley which I now think is a paradise. But in those days my one ambition was to leave as soon as I graduated from high school.

Parker: When did you come to Berkeley?

Patton: I came to Berkeley in 1913 when I graduated from high school. I might add, that in 1912 there was a national essay competition in high schools on the subject of "The Reasonableness of International Peace," and as a young idealist I wrote an essay which my English teacher thought was worth submitting, and I won third prize nationally. In my innocence I thought there never would be another war, and you can see in my enthusiasm for peace I wasn't a very good prognosticator because I took part actively in two wars subsequently.

Patton interview -3-3

I came to California (University) with a total of \$50 in my pocket, \$25 of which was the prize from this essay and the other \$25 a gift from my sister who was a nurse, my father having died during my junior year in high school.

Parker: Did you come to Berkeley by automobile?

Patton: Oh no, automobiles were a rarity in those days. I don't think an automobile went through Gonzales more than once an hour in those days. But there was very fine train service. I might tell you about the roads from Gonzales, or from the Salinas Valley to San Francisco. They were unpaved then in those days. The only paved road was the part from San Jose to San Francisco. And the roads had, there was a word I don't know whether it is familiar to present day people, called chuckholes. The dirt roads had these pitfalls every once and awhile. The hard surface would be broken but it would be filled with dust. As you went along in a horse and buggy or a wagon your wheel would go bump, down into this chuckhole. And of course automobiles were even worse. The funny part of it was, the early automobiles could go fast enough, but it was the roads that prevented them from making any great speed.

When we came up, my sister who was five years older than I was, her name was Ruth and she was a nurse, and who felt I ought to come to college came with me by train. We stopped at Watsonville to visit a cousin of mine and I kept a diary of my trip north and I read it not too long ago. I was very much amused to find that I had never been, here I was a lad of seventeen years old, who had never been in an elevator and had never been in a shower bath until he got to Berkeley. You can see I

Patton interview -4-4

was a very raw youth off the farm.

Parker: When you came by train, did you take a train that came directly to Oakland?

Patton: No, we came to San Francisco, and in those days, of course, there were no bridges across the Bay. You took the ferry boats. I might explain about the ferry boats and the transportation in the Berkeley area. I was very much impressed with it when I first arrived and I still think it was a marvelous network of communications. There were two services across the Bay, there was the Key Route, or the red trains of the Southern Pacific. In Berkeley itself there were numerous streetcar lines that don't exist anymore. There was one that went up Euclid Avenue, a sort of "Tooneyville trolley;" it looked something like the cable cars in San Francisco, except it ran with an overhead electric system, by wire instead of by cable. And then there was one that came up Spruce Street. And there was a one up Dwight Avenue (Way). There was a network like that, like a cobweb of streetcar lines in Berkeley.

Let's go in the opposite direction. From Berkeley to San Francisco it didn't take us all that time in those days. It took us about 40 minutes, it took 20 minutes on the electric train to the pier, whether you went by Southern Pacific or went by Key Route, and then 20 glorious minutes on the ferry boat where you could see the far horizons. And I can tell you, it was not only more inspiring and romantic, but certainly more thought provoking than riding blindly through a tunnel as we do now.

Patton interview -5-5

Well, back to when we arrived in San Francisco. We took the ferry boat over^{to} Oakland and the train to the Berkeley station. At Shattuck and University there was a sort of a, it wasn't a terminal, but it was a main station. They had a regular station with a station master, and baggage. We got off there and my sister found a rooming house nearby and she stayed with me a couple of months while I got started in college.

Parker: What did Berkeley look like when you arrived in 1913?

Patton: My memory of Berkeley then was of a big city after the little town of Gonzales, but there were some areas that weren't too different from the way they are now. The buildings, of course, are more modern. University was still the center -- University and Shattuck -- was the center of the shopping district. But in the foothills, north where Cragmont rock is, and the hills beyond, were farms. There were actually cows there. It might amuse you, that my uncle, about that time, I think it was about 1914, a year after I arrived. My uncle was offered a piece of land called Cragmont Rock to build a house on at a very reasonable price. For just a few thousand dollars he could have had the whole area. But he thought it was too rough and rugged to build a house. Thank goodness he didn't because now of course it is a lovely park. But it was not all a wilderness, here and there was a house.

I might mention, if you are talking about streetcars, do you know why Marin Avenue is very steep, up and down, and straight? I understand from early settlers it was originally intended to have a cable car to run from the top of Grizzly Peak down to the circle to connect with the trains.

Patton interview -6-6

But as time went on, before they built the cable car, another supplement to the streetcar system, they discovered the traffic was not up and down, but north and south, that is, it went down Euclid, went down Spruce, down to the center of town. So they abandoned the idea of ever building a cable car on Marin Avenue. That's why it is so steep.

Parker: Was the rooming house you lived in on the south side of campus?

Patton: No, we only lived there a little while. It was on Addison Street, and the building is still there. My sister being a nurse went back to Hollister in San Benito County to resume her job as matron of the hospital after a couple of months. And I got a job on Vine Street in a restaurant. As I said, I only had \$50, but \$50 went a long way in those days. I got a job with Ma Beck. She was a marvelous German woman who had a little restaurant on Vine Street. At first I was a waiter but I soon discovered it was much better to be the dish washer because it was closer to the source of the food supply. You didn't get paid in cash, you understand, you worked three hours a day, you got three meals a day, and the thing was to be a dishwasher. And was she a marvelous cook! There was another chap working with me, also a country boy, from Cloverdale, named Charlie Grant. We have been lifelong friends and we worked for our food at this restaurant.

A little later I got a job on University at Milvia, it's a restaurant now, but in those days it was a garage —Smith's Garage. And in the back of Smith's Garage was a little room, a two room place where I shared it with a man by the name of Sebastian, a fellow student, he was a catcher

Patton interview -7-7

on the baseball team. I idolized Sebastian, he was one year ahead of me in college. My job was, I had a free room at this place. All I had to do was open up the garage doors at night and close them at eleven o'clock, and if anyone came in late I had to get up and let them in. There weren't very many automobiles in Berkeley in those days and you couldn't park on the street so you had to have a garage, you had to park your car in a garage. Smith's Garage was mostly for commercial vehicles, they were cars, not trucks. I learned to drive, I might say, by getting up at night and secretly going down into the garage and backing flivers, or T-Model Fords as they were called then, tin lizzies or flivers. I would back them up, back them in. That's how I learned how to drive without benefit of formal education.

Parker: While most of your activity was involved in studying, did you find time for a fling once and awhile, and what did you do for entertainment?

Patton: Well, my first year as a freshman I devoted myself to my dishwashing and a bicycle. I would ride madly. There were not as many buildings between Vine Street and the campus and I'd go to the campus and park my bike. Nobody stole a car in those days but I would hide my bike under the bushes to keep it out of sight and I would go to my classes. But in my sophomore year I got a little more affluent and I had entertainment besides our usual activities on the campus, like football games between the frosh and the sophomores, and the rallies. They had exactly the same rallies in those days as they do now. The Greek Theatre

Patton interview -8-8

was there, it was built before we got there. And they would have the bonfires, the Freshman rally, the Pajamarino rally. I remember with what enthusiasm I would go out with the rest of the freshmen and gather wood and take it up to the Greek Theatre for the rallies. We had a marvelous professor by the name of Henry Morse Stephens. He was a tradition at the University, everyone knows Henry Morse Stephens. He would preside at these rallies and he would always have the same answer. He would have a yell from the freshmen and he would have a yell from the sophomores and he would say "Well, the freshmen made the most noise but the sophomores were the best organized." And he also had a statement I used many many times in speeches. He always started his speeches saying his best impromptu speeches took him years to prepare.

You asked me what we did for entertainment, I got sidetracked didn't I? Well, I'll tell you what I did for entertainment. There were theatres, movies, only they were silent, flicks we called them. The English called them "a spot of dark." The theatre we used to go to was the "T & D" and we nicknamed it the "Tough & Dirty." I think the California Theatre is there now. Anyway it was in that same locality and we used to go there, we went to the matinees because they were cheaper. I think it cost a big sum of ten cents to get in for the matinee. And we only went to the classics. There was the Keystone comedies, they were very popular then, and there was a comedian by the name of Charlie Chaplin who was just becoming famous, a silly sort of a

Patton interview -9-9

fellow. We of a more academic turn of mind, we enjoyed more the classics like "The Birth of a Nation," and some of Cecil B. De Mille's great classics. Then if we had a date, maybe two of us, two men, would take our dates on a streetcar to Oakland and go to the "Orpheum," about once a month. It was supposed to be very educational too, it was a vaudeville show. A vaudeville usually had the same type of acts, the same general things, jugglers, comedians, an animal act with a dog or trained animal of some sort, and there would be a lovely waltz and dance. I remember one comedian that was very popular in those days. Probably nobody has heard of her. Her name was Charlotte Greenwood, and her gimick was, she could sing and she could dance very well, she was tall and slender, and it was supposed to be very scandalous. She had a sort of, I guess it was an elastic that ran from her hip clear down to her knee, a sort of garter, underneath her dress mind you. And then she would reach in and pull out her dress and snap it back on her thigh and it would go "snap." Of course that would bring howls of laughter from the crowd. That humor was very naughty in those days.

I remember at the Greek Theatre at one of the rallies, a friend of mine had written a song. It was about a farmer's daughter who went to the market to sell her eggs. She had a basket of eggs and the chorus was "She had such beautiful'eggs, though the prices were high, all wanted to buy, she had such beautiful'eggs." And that was so very naughty. The mere suggestion of it. The morality of our day was unbelievable, this prickness of propriety. It is almost embarrassing to tell you how

Patton interview -10-10

unsophisticated and how naive we were.

Parker: When you went on a date, were there any places you went besides the theatre?

Patton: There was one romantic place we'd go to. We took the streetcar down to Oakland to go to Lake Merritt. We could hire a rowboat and put our date, the girl, up in front, and row. They had Chinese and Japanese lanterns decorating the lake. There were no ducks like there are now, and there would be music on the shore where somebody would be playing the ukulele. And we'd row around and smooch a little.

Parker: Was there smooching on Grizzly Peak?

Patton: Oh no, nobody had cars then. How would you go up to Grizzly Peak? Remember, we are talking about the early days in Berkeley. I don't think there was all of a hundred cars when I first came here. From the period 1908 or a little earlier to 1916 it was not only "The Birth of a Nation" as far as the movies were concerned but it was also the birth of the automobile. In that period Henry Ford built something like, it's incredible, he built from nothing to six million cars in a decade. By the time I graduated from college the flivers, the T-model -- there were other cars, the Pope-Toledos, some very fancy cars, Pierce Arrows -- they called it "the car of destiny" and it turned out to be. But we couldn't go up to Grizzly Peak. I don't think ^{I went} there more than once, on a hike, and that was to kill rabbits.

Parker: I was wondering if there was even a public road up there at that time?

Patton interview -11-11

Patton: Yes there was, but mainly we didn't go up there. Mainly we went up, you know where the Big C still is. The Big C was there then on the back of the campus. We used to go hiking back in that general direction. There were no buildings then. It was a wilderness and we just went up there for a hike.

Parker: Were there big eucalyptus forests at that time?

Patton: Yes, the eucalyptus tree was very much here when I came. I came from Monterey County, as I told you, where the trees are all oaks and buckeyes. When I came to Berkeley in the fog the dripping eucalyptus, the tall trees had a sort of poetic inspiration about them. But I've always liked my oaks, and my California trees better than I do the eucalyptus, but they did impress me very much because of their height.

Parker: For entertainment were there any amusement parks in this area to go to?

Patton: We used to go to Idora Park which was on the border of Berkeley and Oakland. It was an amusement park and they had a very reasonable line of rides. The rides were only a nickle or a dime. They had a ferris wheel, they had merry-go-rounds, and the usual hot-dog stands. It was a place you took your girl because it was a pleasant enough.

But if you wanted to go on a big date you went to San Francisco. You got on the train at the Berkeley Station at University and Shattuck. It took you 20 minutes to the ferry and then you got on the ferry boat and it took you over to the Ferry Building. Now the Ferry Building in those days was a very live place. It was a beehive of activity, it was

Patton interview -12-12

as much a part of the East Bay as San Francisco because all the people passing through it were going to or from Alameda, Oakland, or Berkeley, the East Bay. It was a marvelous building and an institution I'm sorry it doesn't exist anymore. The building is still there but it doesn't exist like it did. Imagine the thousands of people going in and out, particularly in the evening, on the way home from work. Later after I returned to California and was working in San Francisco, after the war, I learned to appreciate more the significance of that marvelous building, the Ferry Building in San Francisco.

We'd go over there in our college days and there was the "Poodle Dog," among other places, one of the better known restaurants in those days, and we could get a steak dinner for, I really believe, I can't believe it, it seems to me if you didn't order wine, you could get a steak dinner for twenty-five cents. If you wanted to go for a night out on the town you went to the "Black Cat" or Tate's on the Beach," or one of the night clubs.

And a little later there was this fabulous place at Third and Market, the north side of Market at Third, called "Coffee Dan's." "Coffee Dan's" was a basement place where they only served coffee and a few doughnuts or something. It was a place you went after the theatre. The thing was; from the sidewalk to get down to the cellar, where this place was, you had to walk down some steps. As a man and his date would come down these steps they'd pound on the table and cheer and cheer as they could ^{see} the girl. First her feet, then her ankles, then her knees. In

Patton interview -13-13

those days, I was talking about the short skirt days, but it was even so in the long skirt days. And then you got to her waistline, and then her face. Then if she was a beautiful girl there would be cheers and if she was ugly there would be boos. You can imagine taking an ugly girl to a place like that and having her booed. Oh, "Coffee Dan's" was an institution, of which the likes I've never seen anywhere else in the world.

Parker: Were athletics and sports any different then they are now?

Tape No. 1, Side B

Patton: Strangely enough they have changed the least of any of our institutions. But they didn't have the Big Leagues then because of the lack of fast transportation. We had the Coast League, the San Francisco Seals and the Oakland Oaks. And the Coast League, I'm talking about baseball, was very much the same as it is now with the season. The interest was fantastic, excepting we had no radio. The way you got the scores was by newspaper which brings up the subject of newspapers those days. As I told you, I lived on a farm and my father was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and he had played baseball on the Wisconsin team. He was an avid baseball fan, and the first thing he'd do when he got the San Francisco Examiner, we took the Examiner in those days, not the Chronicle, was to read the baseball scores. But that was in my high school days before he died in my junior year in high school. So when I came to the Bay Area I was very keen on seeing

Patton interview -14-14

the Oaks and the Seals.

Now as far as college sports were concerned I think gladly I would have given my right hand. Really, honestly, cut it off, for a victory over Stanford. The rivalry was that keen, even in those days. But we never won a game. In fact we severed relations with Stanford and we went from regular American football to rugby in my junior year because Stanford had, we thought, had violated some of the rules of recruiting and had a much superior team than we had.

I might tell you a little story about football. As I mentioned earlier my friend Charlie Grant from Cloverdale, another country boy, discovered that, he and I being poor boys that we were, could get into the football games by being ushers. For one of the Big Games, I think it was our sophomore year, we got ourselves to be ushers to get in free to see the Big Game. It wasn't in the stadium it is now. It was a wooden stadium with two by fours that held up the seats. Being country boys and very conscientious we went down early at 10:30 like they had told us to do. And the head usher said "Go under the stadium and see if you can find anyone who has crashed the gate." We did, and sure enough under the stadium was a fellow, all we could see were his shoes, he was covered up by sacks. Actually he had been sleeping under the stadium all night long. So Charlie woke him up and we got him by the shoulders and I got him by the arm and we grabbed and we fought. He was bigger than we were. I remember I tore my shirt which was a tragedy as the cost of a shirt was a major loss. We got him all the way to the gate and he cried

Patton interview -15-15

"I never seen a Big Game. You're throwing me out and I'm only a high schooler." And Charlie looked at me and I looked at Charlie — we took him back and covered him up again, The moral of the story is; if you're going to cry, cry early. I've often wondered who that poor fellow was and what happened to him.

We were unfortunate in our football schedule during my days at college But I have this to say about football. I think it has never been properly valued as to its purpose as a memory tie. After I left the university, many years later when I was living and working in Europe and far far from home, working for a newspaper in Paris I'd get the football scores — California 32 - Oregon 3 — or whatever. It was such a thrill and I would think about my days on the campus. It was a link with the campus, your happy days when you went to college. I think it is a good thing to just remember your university, the happy days, the campus and what it had been, the academic side, and the cultural values they tried to teach you. It all comes back to you just listening to a football score.

Parker: With all that social activity and those big expensive dinners at the "Poodle Dog" at 25 cents for steak, where did you get all the money?

Patton: The summers were long. We'd get out in May and not get back until September. I'd go back on the farm and we had horses on the farm. We had two kinds, we had horses used for buggy horses and saddle horses, and we had work horses and the harness that went with them. I had an older brother who also worked on the farm. I would hire myself out with

Patton interview -16-16

a team of horses, and the harness was very important; six horses, harness, a wagon, and myself as driver. There was a supervisor of Monterey County named Paul Talbot. He would hire me and pay me to come and work for him at the end of the summer season to haul hay. By the way, barley, the crop of barley, making the crop of hay was the most important crop in the Salinas Valley in those days, in the foothill area. In the valley it was alfalfa and dairies, it was not like now, with its vegetable crops, lettuce and sugar beets. Barley was not only important in the Salinas Valley, but in most of California. Remember this was before the advent of the automobile when hay took the place of gasoline. It fed the horses that did the work. I would work for Paul Talbot hauling barley during the harvest season. It griped me and my pride. I got \$3 a day for the horses and only \$2 a day for my own services as driver. The horses made more money than I did. It sort of hurt my pride but I got a total of \$5 a day which in those days was a considerable sum. Of course we got our keep, we brought our own blankets, a blanket roll, and you lived in a bunk house and they fed you very well. I don't suppose I'd spend \$3 a month on myself. I didn't smoke and I didn't drink. I was just a boy only 18, 19 years old, 20 years old at the last one. I would come back at the end of the summer and would have a couple of hundred dollars which was a lot of money, more than a thousand dollars would be now. And I would come back to Berkeley and my mother and my family would help when I was in need. I was frugal. That is how I got my spending money.

Patton interview -17-17

Books were only a dollar or two a piece, not like they are now. My God, my granddaughter bought a book the other day, she's going to San Francisco State, and I was shocked, it was \$20 for a textbook. We used to pay \$2 and thought it was a lot. Oh by the way. Everybody knows what a bluebook is, the examination books. We had just the same to take our examinations. Only we didn't have ball point pens. We took our examinations with a bluebook and we had fountain pens that had an inner tube like an automobile tire. A little tube you would squeeze to fill it up with ink. They were messy things. The examinations were very much the same as they are now. The academic life was very much the same as it is now. I often go to the campus and I'm surprised how little difference there is in the methods of education we used in those days. Only the subjects are different.

You were asking about places to go. The famous place in Berkeley for students to carouse, I didn't belong to a fraternity, so I couldn't afford it. The fraternity boys, the ones more affluent than we country boys, would go to "Gus Browe's" beer hall. I think it was on College Avenue down in Oakland. In those days you couldn't sell alcohol within a mile of the campus. It was very very straight here. There was no place you could buy liquor of any sort near the campus.

Parker: During your period in Berkeley there was a big event in San Francisco, the Panama-Pacific Fair. Did you ever get to the fair and if you did, did you get to see Stella?

Patton interview -18-18

Patton: Oh Stella. Oh-ho-ho! Did we get to see Stella! She was oh so — I may be confused about this. She was also called "September Morn." Or if she wasn't she — I can see her now — a nude figure of a woman with her hands crossed very delicately, coyly — her hands took the place of the fig leaf, and she was completely nude, whether she was known as Stella or September Morn. Oh what a thrill!

You won't believe believe this story but it's true. I was telling you that 25 cents in those days was like \$2 now or \$5. How did I see the fair first? We're now in 1915, one year into the war. Remember the war was declared in 1914 in Europe. And we were just starting to prepare the United States arsenal. Sympathies were all, not all, but heavily with the Allies. The ROTC was very prominent at the University. The entire ROTC in uniform was taken for the opening of the 1915 fair. We marched with our guns from the Ferry Building. We had to buy our own uniforms in those days and I bought new shoes for the occassion, and oh did they ever hurt by the time we had marched to the fair. Everyone knows where the fair was because one building is still there, the Palace of Fine Arts in the Marina. It was a long hike and we got in free and we stayed until evening and the Tower of Jewels was spectacular and the entrance to the fair grounds and the Zone. But the two things I remember most about the 1915 fair — impressed me the most — it shows how naive we were.

One was an exhibit where they had Hawaiian music, a Hawaiian band playing ukuleles and girls singing. The Dole Pineapple people gave you

Patton interview -19-19

a free drink of pineapple juice, which I never had before. And you'd sit there for free and you would listen to this music. Now why would you listen to this music so intently and enjoy it so much? Remember, there was no radio, no TV in those days, no music at all that was really live, unless you went to a concert. Ordinary people didn't go to concerts. Kids like us didn't have the money to go to concerts. The first live music I remember enjoying so much was this daily concert they had. Oh that Hawaiian girl, can you imagine, a beautiful young girl doing the hula and singing. What it meant for a hick from the country, drinking pineapple juice to the tune of Hawaiian music. It'll drive you mad.

And the other thing I remember about the fair. This is the one I said I don't think you'll believe. It took five days for the newspapers from New York to get to Berkeley or San Francisco. New York was as far away from San Francisco as London or Moscow are now in our thoughts. It was so far away, long before communications made it just an instant away. Somebody had the bright idea of having a man in New York read the headlines of New York papers of that morning over a long distance telephone. You paid 25 cents to have earphones. You put them on and he would read you the morning headlines. You would be five days ahead of everybody else. And when the papers finally arrived, you'd say "I heard that at the fair five days ago." Can you imagine spending 25 cents to put on earphones to hear somebody read the headlines of the New York

Patton interview -20-20

Times. That is probably one of the greatest changes we've had. The speed of communications which didn't exist then. The whole world is tied together instantly now. In those days New York was five long days away.

Parker: When you were at Cal, Benjamin Ide Wheeler was president. Did you ever see him?

Patton: Oh yes. Benjamin Ide Wheeler was president when I got there, for the first three years, then General David Barrows took over when Benjamin Ide Wheeler retired. I have several stories I could tell about Benjamin Ide Wheeler.

You were kind enough to show me a book the other day which answered a question that has been argued among my friends. What color was the horse that he used to ride around the campus. And strangely enough if you asked at my class reunion, the class of 17, you'd ask the oldtimer "What color of horse did Benny — Benjamin Wheeler ride?" And some would say white and an equal number would say black. I wasn't sure. I must admit, I ~~was~~ was on the white side. But judging from the picture in that book it was a black horse, unless he had two horses, and I don't think he did. The reason I think so many of us thought he rode a white horse is, when he was riding around the campus, in a dramatic style, he always wore a white cape over his shoulder. He would ride very pompously through the campus and sort of wave at the peons. He was a clergyman too, as well as teacher. A very serious and devout man, I'm sure.

The story of my personal encounter with him is — I knew his son Benny Ide Junior. Benny Ide Junior had a donkey or a jackass, you might

Patton interview -21-21

call them. I was too poor and too busy washing dishes and making a living to participate in athletics. But I was very keen on it. The Big C Society had a circus to raise money for an athletic program. And they asked me to be a barker outside one of their exhibits on the football field. It was an honor. The exhibit consisted — Benny Ide Junior as I told you used to ride around on this little jackass --- so we had a sign over the tent in red "25 CENTS TO KICK THE PRESIDENT'S" — and then there was a picture of this jackass. Oh that was very naughty in those days. And I shouted and I screamed "25 cents to kick the president's ass." And I made a lot of money for the Big C Society. About four or five days later I got a notice^{to} appear at the president's office. Benjamin Ide Wheeler himself wanted to see poor little me from Gonzales, California. I think I was either a late sophomore or an early junior then. Well anyway, I go into his office thinking he is going to praise me for raising so much money for the Big C Society. Instead he pulled out a picture of me and this sign, and he said "Do you think this is funny?" I had been playing around with the Pelican editor and a friend of mine, Marsh Maslin, who many people know as an editor. He's still a good friend of mine, I talked last night to him on the phone. They were all wits so I thought of a pretty funny pun and said "Yes, it is a bit asinine." Well that it did it. He was furious and I deserved it. He changed from being pompous. Oh my God. I saw myself back in Gonzales. In those days they expelled people from the university for less than that. Fortunately for me I was

Patton interview -22-22

so overcome I dissolved into tears when I saw what a terrible ass I had made of myself. I was about to sob and dear old Benny Ide Wheeler put his arm around me and said "Patton, how are your grades?" I said "They could be better." And he said "Well that's all I ask -- just improve your grades." And he very calmly escorted me to the door and patted me on the back. I've loved that man ever since. He was a great man.

He really was a great man though he did have a little tarnish at the end of his career. Because -- remember we are coming to the war period -- he went to Germany and the Kaiser received him and made a big fuss over him. This was still in the early part of the war. And he came back very much on the neutral side. The United States, particularly at the University, I speak particularly of the University, that's all I knew about, was then divided into three factions. There was the violent pro-Allies of which I was one, there was a minority pro-German, silent, sullen, but very very active, and there were the neutrals. Well he came back from Germany wanting to be neutral. In the Pelican, I only had a small part in this. I remember it well. I was never accused of participating in it. We ran a picture of a cathedral with the Kaiser, with his arm on the cathedral with Benjamin Ide Wheeler with his arm on the Kaiser and the caption was "Me and Bill and Bill and God." It was a very effective cartoon on the college paper and it was taken up by other papers. I think it hurt him, really. He didn't deserve the unpopularity he had at the end. At least unpopular with people who were pro-Allies. Remember we were just approaching the war era.

Patton interview -23-23

Parker: With these different of opinion, did the students go out and demonstrate like they did in the sixties?

Patton: There were no demonstrations as such, none whatsoever. One reason I think there wasn't is because demonstrations only survive in the atmosphere of the media. By that I mean, if there wasn't TV, remember there wasn't any TV or any radio in those days. Without TV there to take pictures of the demonstrators, or the radio to pick it up, or the media to play it up, there wouldn't be much point in demonstrating.

I'll give you a little example. We had ROTC on the campus in my day. It was popular and I enjoyed it. Because the war was coming, we could see the war coming, we thought that way we'd become officers. We were at ease one day near California Hall and it was springtime and the grass was growing in that particular place where we were sitting, it was foxtail I guess. You could pull up a clump of grass like this with your hand. The commanding officer of the ROTC at that time was a man named Colonel Vance, a decent sort of officer, a very military type. And he came marching by. We were just at ease, the company that I was in, just laying on the bench. We had been drilling for an hour, and he walked by and somebody pulled up a piece of grass and threw it at him. Well to protect the guy who threw the grass everybody, by word of mouth, or somehow, grabbed a piece of grass and threw it. So the whole company threw a piece of grass at Colonel Vance. Nothing was ever printed about it, nothing, it was a prank. If that had happened now with the TV picking it up it would have been a big issue. There was no protesting as such.

Patton interview -24-24

But that doesn't mean positions weren't taken. The campus was violently divided, not violent, intensely is a better word, intensely divided into the ones that were pro-French, pro-English, pro-Allies, and the neutrality people, and the pro-German. One of the leaders of the pro-Allies was Charles Mills Gayley. He was the head of the English Department and author of classic myths. He was a marvelous fellow, beloved by every one of his students. He started, with a committee of many fine men on campus, and outside of the campus too, the American Field Service Ambulance ^{Unit} at the University of California. Forty-two men were recruited to drive ambulances in France. This was prior to our getting into the war and I was lucky enough to be chosen as one of the 42.

Tape 2, Side A - continuation from Tape No. 1, Side B

Patton: The American Field Service Ambulance Unit was organized by a marvelous man named Charles Mills Gayley and he and a committee selected 42 of us young seniors, most of us were seniors, from the University to go to France and serve as ambulance drivers. The ambulances in those days were T-Model Fords converted with a special body built in France to carry the wounded. When we got to France, meantime the war had been declared in the United States and we no longer needed to be under the protection of the Red Cross. We were belligerents so our particular group of 42 men didn't actually drive ambulances. We drove just the

Patton interview -25-25

opposite, Pierce Arrow ammunition trucks. For six months we were at the front and it was a very dangerous mission, I must say. But after six months at the front driving ammunition trucks we were demobilized and we could choose whatever service we wanted and I went to Paris and joined up in what was known then as ^{the} Aviation Section of the Signal Corp and became a pilot in World War I. But that is another story.

Parker: The symbol of the Cal Berkeley campus is the Campanile and it was constructed during the period you were there. What are your recollections about it?

Patton: Oh indeed. I remember the Campanile was not quite finished when we came. When it was finished one of our class members, a fabulous fellow, he's still living, climbed up with another chap to the top of the Campanile and hung a banner "Class of 17" over the clock. And that was supposed to be a very reprehensible thing. Poor Wendel Robey nearly got thrown out of college by that prank. The Campanile and bells, they sounded in our final year to call us to class. I can still hear them in the morning if I go out in my garden here. I don't live too far now from the campus. Sixty-three years later they sound just as beautiful as they did when we were on the campus. Yes indeed, the Campanile is a symbol of the University.

Incidentally the Campanile was designed by John Gaylen Howard the famous architect, and his son John Junior, Hank Howard we called him, was a member of the American Field Service Unit, the 42 men that I mentioned, of which I'm sorry to say there are only three of us living now. The rest of them have all died including Hank Howard.

Patton interview -26-26

Parker: What do you consider the greatest changes that took place during those four years you were at Cal?

Patton: That's a rather hard question to answer. I suppose from the physical side the advent of the automobile. From the day of its birth, from about 1908 when Ford started to build automobiles. But the growth of the automobile and the service station and gasoline replacing the horse, barn, and hay probably was one of the biggest changes.

Politically the great change, remember I mentioned the essay "The Reasonableness of International Peace." In the early days in 1913 and 1914 neutrality and isolation was very very much the general mood of the country and it changed to belligerence in those short four years. By the end of my college career we were definitely into the war. I guess those were the two great changes I can think of, the speeding up of transportation by the automobile and becoming involved in world affairs.

Parker: You left Berkeley in 1917 and returned in the mid 30's. In that span of time was there anything about Berkeley, any changes that were noticeable to you?

Patton: Not really because I don't think there was much building going on during that period because it was all war. The change was in the style of life that followed the war. There was a lack of direction. Nobody knew just exactly what they wanted to do. It was very hard to readjust to civilian life. "How are you going to keep them down on the farm after they've seen Patee." That was a very popular song and a very intelligent song. Personally I got a scholarship, a fellowship for three years at a

Patton interview -27-27

university in Paris and I returned to France and lived in Europe for the next 15 years, so I lost touch with what went on in Berkeley and California.

Parker: Any physical changes, like how it had grown up?

Patton: I was only here such a short time. I can't really make any observations of any value.

Parker: In your opinion what are some of the greatest changes or reforms that have taken place in this 20th century?

Patton: I think the greatest change by far has been our attitude toward our fellowmen. At the beginning of the century, a Chinaman was a chink, an Italian was a wop, and a German was a hun. In our colossal Anglo-Saxon conceit we felt superior over everyone else and looked down on them one way or another. The change has been not only in our relationship with the minorities, with the blacks and the Chicanos, but in general I think we are becoming more conscious of human rights, and the dignity of man regardless of race, creed, or color. We have a long way to go but at least it wasn't until this century that it started. In the last century we had slavery.

The other big change has been in communications. It's instant now. Anything that happens in any part of the world, in minutes, almost seconds, it is flashed by radio or TV. Our ears, if not our eyes, are in tune, can be, with everything going on.

One other change is our attitude toward war. I think the great tragedy of Viet Nam was a great blessing in a way because it taught us

Patton interview -28-28

that the youth who rebelled were right. That blindly, our country right or wrong, should go into a war was very wrong. I still believe that from the very beginning when I wrote the essay "The Reasonableness of International Peace." It didn't come about and I participated very actively in two wars. I still believe the day will come, someday, when we will have international peace.