

THE DWP TELEPHONE ROOM

LOUISE E. HOFFMIRE

Interviewed by Dick Nelson

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

Produced by

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CONTENTS

Biographical Notes ..... ii

TAPE NUMBER: 1, Side One (March 30, 1992) ..... 1

Louise's Early Years ... Moving To California ... Their  
First Home On 55th Street ... Working For The Telephone  
Company ... Southern California Telephone Company ...  
Talking To Famous People ... E. L. Doheny ... Streetcars ...  
Going To Work For The Bureau Of Power And Light ... Salisbury  
... 207 South Broadway ... Burdette Moody ... Working For  
Commercial Division ... The Shriner's Parade - 1926 ... Louise  
Models For Keystone Photo Service ... Lee Mosell ... William  
Mulholland ... Ezra Scattergood ... The 10# Hat ... Arthur  
Elliott ... Electric Appliance Ads ... Business Agent's  
Division ... "Selling" Los Angeles Voters ... Los Angeles Gas  
& Electric Company ... Holdup of 1928/29 ... Edgar Hamilton ...  
Dress Code ... Louise Resigns During WW 2 ... Working For The Navy  
... T. B. Russell ... Louise Returns To DWP ... Samuel Morris ...  
William Mulholland ... Ezra Scattergood ... Back To The Telephone  
Room ... Burton Currie ...

TAPE NUMBER: 1. Side Two (March 30, 1992) ..... 26

T. A. Panter ... Roy Martindale ... Telephone Room Supervisor  
At Hill Street Building ... William Peterson ... Louise Retires.  
Mable Arneke ... Hildegard Heller ... December 7, 1941 ...

## Biographical Notes

Louise Elizabeth Hoffmire

Born in Enid, Oklahoma on January 26, 1902.

Parents: William H. and Mary Jane (Moran) Dolan

Sister: Willa June Dolan.

Married: Ross W. Ferguson, March 4, 1931 in Los Angeles, California. Second marriage was to Joe P. Shedlow, September 18, 1949 at Las Vegas, Nevada. Third marriage was to Arthur A. Hoffmire, September 18, 1972 at Las Vegas, Nevada. There were no children.

Louise began work with the Department of Water and Power May 15, 1924. She retired on September 1, 1959 as a Senior Telephone Operator.

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

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**TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE ONE**

**LOUISE ELIZABETH HOFFMIRE**

**GIVEN TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 1992**

**AT**

**HER HOME IN VAN NUYS, CALIFORNIA**

**THE INTERVIEWER IS DICK NELSON**

**NELSON:** Louise, why don't you tell us where you were born and some of the growing up that you did and where.

**HOFFMIRE:** I was born in Enid, Oklahoma on January 26, 1902 and I lived there until I was about six. Then we moved to Witchita Falls, Texas and I lived there for five years and then 1914 we came to California and we have been here ever since. I went to

grade school at the Holy Cross Convent at 47th and Main. I graduated from grammar school there and then I went to Main Street School and then I also went to Manual Arts High School. When I finished there, I went to work for the telephone company.

**NELSON:** What did your father do?

**HOFFMIRE:** My father owned a saloon in Oklahoma. He owned it for six or seven years and then the state went dry so he took all of his money and went to Wichita Falls, Texas. Then he opened up a nice furniture store. From there he sold it and we came to California. Then he went to work painting houses for the Pacific Ready-Cut Company and he worked there for a long time. Then he went to work for the Graham Cage - they painted automobiles. He painted automobiles for all kinds of famous people - Nelson Eddie and people like that and it was so exciting. He used to tell me all about the things, he'd take the car to their home and they were so nice to him and, of course, that made me feel good about the moving picture people.

**NELSON:** What caused your family to come to California from Texas?

**HOFFMIRE:** Well because we just wanted to see California. My aunt was living here - my father's sister and we heard so much about California and we thought, well then that would be the place to come because it was new and it was growing up and so we came to California.

**NELSON:** Where did you live when you first moved to California?

**HOFFMIRE:** I lived at 616 West 55th Street in Los Angeles.

**NELSON:** Were there streets out there and sewers?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, there was everything, but we were close to a great big Western Farms dairy. There wasn't so very many places out there and we had street cars and the street cars were run on Hoover Street and that's the street car we used to take to go to town.

**NELSON:** When you went into high school, did you have a particular major or have a career in mind?

**HOFFMIRE:** I took a business course and I took shorthand and typing and things that would help me with my work further on.

**NELSON:** When you graduated from high school then, did you go right in to take a job?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes. For the telephone company.

**NELSON:** As an operator?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, an operator.

**NELSON:** How did a telephone operator operate in those days? Was that with a switchboard?

**HOFFMIRE:** Oh yes, a switchboard. You said, "Number please," and you plugged it in and rung it right from the board.

**NELSON:** How many numbers did you have control of?

**HOFFMIRE:** Oh, I don't know. About 3,500 I could reach from one side or the other. A girl sits on one side and one on the other and then you could reach clear across - stand up on the top of the belittle board that's in front of you and you could tap and see if they were busy and then you could plug in and ring it from your board.

**NELSON:** Did it require much training?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, they had to go to school for a month. They had an operator's training school.

**NELSON:** What was the name of the company? Was it Bell Telephone?

**HOFFMIRE:** It was the Southern California Telephone Company.

**NELSON:** Where was the office?

**HOFFMIRE:** 22nd and Vermont.

**NELSON:** Did that just cover a part of Los Angeles?

**HOFFMIRE:** Oh no, that was just for one station. It was called the "west side numbers." They had them all over the city. I guess about 15 of these offices.

**NELSON:** Fifteen boards?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes.

**NELSON:** What was the number in those days? Now we have seven digits. What was the number length in those days? Was it just two or three numbers?

**HOFFMIRE:** No, we had four numbers.

**NELSON:** How was long distance handled?

**HOFFMIRE:** It was a different place in the operating room. I used to work there too part of the time. It is kind of hard to tell you about it now. It's so long ago, that was in 1917 and I was working there during the first world war, 1918. I can't tell you too much about the long distance operator - only the part that I worked on mostly.

**NELSON:** Did you have some interesting experiences? You got to talk to each person calling, didn't you?

**HOFFMIRE:** Oh yes, and you know the ones that I used to have was E. L. DOHENY. E. L. DOHENY came in on my board. They had four lines and they were so nice and they would always give me a beautiful Christmas present, but you couldn't give your name, you know. My number was 1690 and they only knew me by that name. You couldn't tell them your name. They used to send beautiful gifts to me on Christmas and special days to the chief operator and it was addressed to 1690 and they told me who it came from. There was a little card.

**NELSON:** How did you get to and from work?

**HOFFMIRE:** I took the streetcar. I took two cars. I took one on Moneta Avenue and then I took a transfer to a Vernon car and it let me off right in front of the 22nd and Vermont office. I used to work 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. all the time for about a year when I went to work and it was kind of hard. But you know, we didn't have any crime then and we didn't worry about things. I'd get on the car and go home at 10:30 p.m. and there was nothing to it and I would have to walk a block to get to my house and it was really nice.

On Saturday night my father used to come in his automobile and pick me up because that was the only day he could come because he had to go to work early and he had to get up early and he used to come after me on Saturday night.

**NELSON:** You worked for the telephone company for..?

**HOFFMIRE:** Six years.

**NELSON:** What caused you to leave?

**HOFFMIER:** Well, my father saw an ad in the paper that telephone operators were needed at the Bureau of Power and Light and he said, "Why don't you take this job because it pays more than you are getting now and you have Saturday afternoons and Sunday off." I looked at the paper and I read it and it sounded good to me so I took the examination on my first day off and passed first on the list and we had a nice man, his name was Salisbury, and I called him up and told him that I couldn't come to work because it was my first job was a temporary job for 90 days and I can't leave this job for that because I've been here too long and I have worked up too much promotion here. He said, "Well you come down to see me anyhow. I'd like to talk to you." I said, "I'll go in and see you." So I went in and saw him and he said he'd like to have me. I said, "I'd like to work here, but I couldn't come on just a temporary appointment, 90 days. It had to be a full time."

So he told me he was pretty sure that it would be over 90 days that I'd get the job really. So I took it anyhow and I liked it and it was only four positions and we were at 207 S. Broadway and that was the only building that we owned then. So I went to work and I worked a year there in the telephone room and then I went to the business office and Burdett Moody was the chief there and a little switchboard. I worked there for quite a while and one day a man came in and he said, "Do you intend to sit here all

your time and does this board?" I said, "No I'd like to do something else." So he told me there was a good job coming up in his department. So I said, "What kind of a job?" He said It would be on the main floor and we take people's address and their number and then we look up their bill and we call on a tellautograph to bookkeeping and it would be easy to do and I would be able to do that.

It was the first time they had an examination for that. It was called the "Information Assistant." So I took it and passed first on the list and I got the job. So I worked there for quite a while and first I did was work in every department of the commercial division. I worked in all the billing, address-o-graph, and the bookkeeping. I had to know all about this place that I had to write for the information that I needed for the people. So I did that and I worked there for about one year and a half and after I worked there one year and a half, then I got a chance to go to work in one of the branch offices at 58th and Vermont. Then I did everything. I waited on the people that wanted to have their service turned on and off and I signed up people for new light meters, and water meters, and power meters, and anything that you had to do with the department, I took care of. I worked there for 13 years for the same man.

**NELSON:** What was his name?

**HOFFMIRE:** Let me think a moment. Don't tell me I forgot that name. And he was such a wonderful man. I can't think of it now.

**NELSON:** What type of an examination did you take for the first job, for the telephone operator?

**HOFFMIRE:** A telephone operator's examination.

**NELSON:** What did that mean?

**HOFFMIRE:** I had to work on the board that they had and I had to have a written and oral test. Three people asked me questions. They were chief operators from the telephone company that they had at civil service.

**NELSON:** What year was that that you came in to the Department?

**HOFFMIRE:** May 15, 1924.

**NELSON:** Tell me about the Shriner's Parade.

**HOFFMIRE:** Oh that was interesting. When I worked in the Business Agent's office, I did a model job for the Keystone Photo Service. They didn't have any models and they didn't have money enough for that. So I used to do modeling on Sunday afternoon for the Keystone Photo Service for different things. They had all kinds of pictures. They had changing the name of the Bureau of Power and Light to the Department of Public Service, so I had a picture made and all kinds of pictures. In the appliance room, the different things.

**NELSON:** Your modeling was in connection with the Department of Water and Power.

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, I did it for free. I just did that on Sundays. Then I had a nice Chief Clerk. His name was Lee Mosell and he was the one that made the modeling experience for me and it was nice of him to do that. Then they were having the float so he said it would be well if I took the job as the.....well I rode on the float and they had a big float and I rode all down Figueroa Street and in to the Coliseum and around and back out again and I did that on the 6th of June, 1926. It was funny because we lined up on the side street, we were all lined up and then right in front of me was the Packard that William Mulholland and Scattergood rode in and every so often he'd turn around and take his hat off and tip me and wave at me and here I was so high up in the sky and I used to have to push the things away to keep them from knocking me off. Like the banners they had across the street. It was really funny.

**NELSON:** You were the only one on the float?

**HOFFMIRE:** The only one on the float. It was really exciting.

**NELSON:** How was it powered?

**HOFFMIRE:** It was an automobile. It was a car underneath everything.

**NELSON:** They'd build a framework?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes.

**NELSON:** What was the purpose of the Department being in this parade?

**HOFFMIRE:** The Shrine Parade? Well it was the City of Los Angeles. It was everything. It was all the different things in the city of Los Angeles. They all had floats.

**NELSON:** But the parade was sponsored by the Shriners?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes. They had their national Conclave here - all over the United States and it was exciting.

**NELSON:** How were you dressed? What was your role on the float?

**HOFFMIRE:** I had a beautiful silver flame. It was made by the Western Decorating Company and it had sequins all over the hip and no sleeves and really long and beautiful and then I had a beautiful thing that I wore on my head that weighed 12 pounds and they had it in the Department's window for the first week before the parade. Showing it on black velvet. It was beautiful. It was great big steel and rhinestones and fit just my head. It was made to fit my head, it didn't move. I had that on for 12 hours and it was really heavy too. But it was exciting. It was

beautiful and I have all kinds of pictures to show you from that that I have in the electrical magazines and everything and all kinds of beautiful pictures in the paper I have.

**NELSON:** How long did you model?

**HOFFMIRE:** About a year. Mr. Arthur Elliott used to own - was in charge of the appliance room and I had a picture in the paper of me in a black dress with a white apron on and I was running a vacuum cleaner. Oh we had so much fun!

**NELSON:** These pictures were in conjunction with advertisements to encourage people to make more sure of electrical appliances?

**HOFFMIRE:** Oh yes. I had a picture of a beautiful washing machine. In those days they were round and they are not like they are today. In 1926 they were very funny and I was sitting on this washing machine on the top of it with my feet crossed and that was one of the things that they put in the paper. Advertised to use washing machines.

**NELSON:** So you were working in the commercial division then and you say....

**HOFFMIRE:** No, I wasn't working in the commercial division. I was working in the Business Agent's office when I was in the parade.

**NELSON:** Were the business agents the ones that promoted the use and advertised the use of electricity?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes.

**NELSON:** And how did they do that? Just by the advertising in the paper?

**HOFFMIRE:** Well no, they had a lot of power and electric salesmen that worked out of there that went around the places and the big companies and signed them up because we used to have to get their business away from the L.A. Gas Company. The L.A. Gas Company was here then and they had electric too so we had to go out at night and work from door to door and give people pamphlets to be sure to vote on the bonds at that time after we'd get through work.

**NELSON:** Did you do that?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes.

**NELSON:** How was that organized? How did you pick an area?

**HOFFMIRE:** Where I lived. I walked three or four blocks around where I lived and go out and give these pamphlets out to people and said, "Be sure to vote on the bonds and not vote no because that's what the gas company wanted us to do."

**NELSON:** Who would tell you to do this?

**HOFFMIRE:** Business Agent's office.

**NELSON:** Would they have employees in and give them a briefing and explain to them?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, everybody in the whole department had to do that.

**NELSON:** Then you'd take these pamphlets home and distribute them in your neighborhood?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes. That's right. We did that for two or three bond elections.

**NELSON:** And most of the employees did that?

**HOFFMIRE:** Oh yes, but we never got paid for it. We didn't want pay, we were just so thrilled that we could do that for the Department. We'd do it when we got home from work.

**NELSON:** Now in the Business Agent's Division you were strictly a telephone operator?

**HOFFMIRE:** I was still a telephone operator there, yes, but I worked on a small switchboard. They would ring the main office, and then they would put the call for the people for that

department on my switchboard, the people that were in that department and there were a lot of people there.

**NELSON:** How many?

**HOFFMIRE:** Oh gosh, I don't know - about 100.

**NELSON:** Did you have a replacement when you had to leave?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes. When I had to go for my lunch, somebody used to come and take my place and they would come from the telephone room.

**NELSON:** And what was that work location? Where were you working?

**HOFFMIRE:** On the fourth floor of the 207 So. Broadway building.

**NELSON:** Then you went to Commercial Division?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes.

**NELSON:** And that's where you worked in what offices there?

**HOFFMIRE:** I worked in the 207 So. Broadway, that's where the main office was and that's where the first floor was all Commercial Division. We waited on people, they'd come in to sign up for lights and water and anything that had to do with the Department,

and cashier, when they paid their bills, they did it there and when they wanted a bill and they had left it at home, they came to me and there was a cashier's office right next door, right next to me and that's where they had the bad \$85,000 hold up.

**NELSON:** When was that?

**HOFFMIRE:** I think it was about 1928, 1929.

**NELSON:** There was that kind of money in that office?

**HOFFMIRE:** \$85,000, yes. You know they used to pay the people by money.

**NELSON:** So that was the payroll?

**HOFFMIRE:** The construction all had to be paid, yes. They took all the money and paid the men from the basement and they paid them in gold, that's when they had gold. They paid them \$20 and things like that. It's kind of hard for me to remember, but they had all the money there and they came in and held them all up and took all the money and just as I went in, the head cashier came screaming out, "We've been held up," and had a ball tied in his mouth and everything else and he got it out and the other fellows that were with him and then I sat down at my desk right outside of the cashier's office and I said, "Oh my gosh, what an awful thing to have happened."

Then I thought about...they used to have the doors open in the morning and they'd put a big chain across the door and anybody could come in under the chain and one morning I came and there were two men sitting out in front and they had little seats that people sat on and waited and two men were sitting there and they were looking at every thing and I thought, "Now that's funny those men out there what they're doing here," and I didn't say anything about it then, but I thought they were waiting for somebody, but they stayed there for quite a while and then they left.

So there were two men that had come in there to see how everything was run and they were the ones that did it. I told the police officers all about it and what the men looked like and everything and then it was some time, a little bit after that, that they found out that one of the men had worked for the Department. He had worked at 1630 N. Main and saw how they did that and it would be a swell time for him to hold them up. So he put an ad in the paper and asked for two men that weren't afraid to do anything and later they found that in the paper, they found it -- the police can find anything. They looked up the Times or the Examiner or whatever it was then, and they said this person had said, "You can do anything and everything and no questions will be asked." So these two men that came in, they were the men that were sitting there looking everything over and there were three of them together and they found them when they were looking for a forger in this hotel and they ran across all this money that had.... no, they buried this money in Verdugo Hills or something and it had mildewed because it was buried. It got steamy .

or something and they put it all over the room and they had it all lined up and then the cops that went into this room saw all this money and they said, "Well that's the money that was stolen." So they waited for the guy to come and they got him. It was so exciting.

**NELSON:** They apprehended all of them?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, all three of them.

**NELSON:** Was that your only experience with robbers?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, that was enough! Everything was very nice in those days. There wasn't any crime or anything.

**NELSON:** Were you still living at home at that time?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, I was still living at home until I got married in 1931.

**NELSON:** And you were still commuting by streetcar?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes.

**NELSON:** Then what happened? How long did you stay in Commercial or at that job?

**HOFFMIRE:** 13 years.

**NELSON:** In the same location?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, 50th. Well I first started out on 1008 West Slauson Avenue and then they built the building a couple of blocks away at 58th and Vermont and then we moved down there.

**NELSON:** The Commercial Unit moved down?

**HOFFMIRE:** The Commercial Division moved down there. In this building, we had a big kitchen with a lady that used to give classes to the women that had bought a lot of electric things and they had to sign up.

I remember the man's name that I worked for 13 years, it was Edgar A. Hamilton. He was such a wonderful man. It was so nice to work for him and he didn't believe in smoking either and I didn't smoke, but a lot of the men did that I worked with. I was the only girl and all the rest were men so they had to go out and smoke, but he always thought it was so nice because I never smoked and I used to train all the people that came there.

So many people came there that I trained for other persons for branch office work. I trained them and he felt that was nice too.

**NELSON:** What was the dress code back in those days? What did the men wear and what did the women wear?

**HOFFMIRE:** The men had to wear suits with jackets and the only time they could take them off was in the summer time when P.B. Russell, who was the man in charge of all the branch offices told them if it was hot enough that day you could take your coat off, but you must have a nice white shirt and a tie on. They wore ties and shirts and that's the only time. We didn't wear slacks or anything like that. We wore dresses or suits. I wore a suit because it always looked nice with a nice blouse on.

**NELSON:** What about hats?

**HOFFMIRE:** Well you wore hats to work, but you didn't bring them to work.

**NELSON:** Did you normally wear a hat?

**HOFFMIRE:** A hat, yes.

**NELSON:** Okay, the Commercial office has moved now and what did you do next?

**HOFFMIRE:** I worked there until I was married to a man that went into the service, the Navy, and so I asked for a leave so I could go to the station where he was and I could stay for a while and then when I came back I told them I didn't want to work any more. Now I had worked 19 years and 7 months and that was a terrible thing to do, but I did it anyhow. So I just resigned, but I

didn't take my money out of the retirement plan, I left it in and they told me that I couldn't have any longer than a month off because there was so many people that were leaving the Department then to go into the service, but I just said I had to do it any how. I went to work and I worked for the Navy in one of their ship's stores at the Corona Naval Hospital at Corona and then I worked in the telephone room and they had mostly Wave's working, but I was the only civilian employee.

I worked there until my husband got transferred to San Diego and I went down there and I had a wonderful job with them. I had a material order clerk. I had five girls working for me and I had the nice things that T.B. Russell had written for me saying what a good person I was so I worked there until he got out of the service.

Then I came back and I thought, "Why am I sitting here? I may as well work for the Department instead of just sitting here." So I went back to T.B. Russell and I said, "I'd like to get my job back." And he said, "Well do you want to go to work?" I said, "Yes." The war wasn't really over then, he sent somebody up to Samuel B. Morris and he okayed my thing that said I could go to work again and I went right back to work. Then I worked there 12 1/2 years after that.

**NELSON:** Going back quite a ways, did you remember or have recollection of when Mr. Mullholland died?

**HOFFMIRE:** I can't remember when he died now.

**NELSON:** 1934.

**HOFFMIRE:** Was that when he died? I can't remember, but I know it was a terrible thing because he lived quite a few years and I guess it was time for him to die. He was 85 or 90 or so.

**NELSON:** In his 70's to 80;s.

**HOFFMIRE:** I used to go to see him in his office when I worked.

**NELSON:** For what purpose?

**HOFFMIRE:** Just go up to say "hello" that's all. I met him one time in the elevator and he said, "Did you get your shot for the smallpox?" We had a very bad smallpox epidemic at that time and everybody had to get smallpox. He said, "Did you get your smallpox shot yet?" The reason I said, "No I haven't done it yet." He said, "Well you'd better do it or you can't ride on any more caravans for the Department." He figured I'd be dead by then. I think that was so cute. He called that big float that I rode on a "caravan."

**NELSON:** When did you first meet Mr. Mullholland?

**HOFFMIRE:** They had a big reclamation and irrigation committee that came from Washington that came for the Swing-Johnson Bill that was pending right then. To build the Boulder Dam and all

these men were here from all the different places and they came to the Biltmore Hotel and he was there and I was pinning all the badges on the people that came and he was there and he introduced me to some man and he gave me a big box of Pig and Whistle candy when the thing was over. He sent it to me because I did such a nice job giving all these men their badges.

I met Congressman Swing and I met Hirim Johnson and some of the state senators from here. Senator Bill Swing and Senator -- what was his name. They were brothers. One was a state senator and one was a congressman. But anyhow Bill Swing and HIRIM Johnson were the two people that did the whole thing for the Water and Power for Boulder Dam.

**NELSON:** How often did you see Mr. Mullholland then over the years?

**HOFFMIRE:** Just a couple of times.

**NELSON:** How did he impress you?

**HOFFMIRE:** He was a nice man. He was so nice and he used to come upstairs and have lunch in the cafeteria and it was on the 13th floor of the Second Street building. We took over that building. We had three buildings there, the Hill Street, Second Street, and 207 - three buildings altogether. He used to go and I used to sit down and have lunch with him sometimes. He was a nice man.

**NELSON:** Did the other people stay away from him because he was "the boss?"

**HOFFMIRE:** No. He was just a regular man. He was really nice and so was Mr. Scattergood.

**NELSON:** How would you describe Mr. Scattergood?

**HOFFMIRE:** He was not uptight, but more serious.

**NELSON:** More reserved?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes. He was a nice man too and he used to come in to see my boss, Burdett Moody. He was the man in charge of the Business office.

**NELSON:** Then what happened? You've come back to the Department.

**HOFFMIRE:** Come back to the Department and then I went to work in the telephone room and all the commercial offices and I went from one place to the other and relieved the people on vacation and their days off - all the different branch offices - and then I got to thinking, "This is just too much, I can't get a good branch office." Where I had worked at for 13 years, they couldn't ask those people to go to another place because they loved that place. So I thought, "Now why don't I just take a telephone operator, I can get like a supervisor's job or something like that."

So I took an examination for the Department of Water and Power Telephone Room and I passed first on the list and I got the job and after I worked there, I went to the Harbor Steam plant and was a receptionist at that place while it was being built, in Wilmington. For two years I worked there and then my chief operator told me that there was going to be an examination for supervisor and I should take the examination.

So I took it and I passed first on the list and B.A. Currie gave me the job. He said I was new and had so much experience with the telephone company and all of the Department and that I was new to the girls there and it would be nice to have somebody there that they didn't know. Then I got the job and I was there for 12 years.

**TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE TWO**

**LOUISE ELIZABETH HOFFMIRE**

**NELSON:** Did you know Burton Currie very well?

**HOFFMIRE:** Oh yes I should say so! He was my boss. He was the boss of the Communications. He was the big boss. I had another boss, Eugene Atwater, he was next boss, I mean he was really great. He was so nice. He was a wonderful man.

**NELSON:** Burton?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes. All the people that I worked for were nice people. When I went to work in the Department the first time, there was T.A. Panter. He was in charge of everything, the Operating Division. Then Martindale was his assistant. He was our big boss too. Both of those men are both dead now.

**NELSON:** How would you describe both of those?

**HOFFMIRE:** Martindale and Panter? They were nice men. Very nice men. Mr. Panter was older than Martindale. He had grey hair and

he was nice and Mr. Martindale had black hair and he was nice too. They were both nice men.

**NELSON:** You came back from Harbor Steam Plant and went back into the telephone room at that time and spent twelve more years?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes as a supervisor. I walked up and down behind the girls, twelve of them.

**NELSON:** Had the telephone room grown?

**HOFFMIRE:** Well it had grown since I'd been there. There was only four positions when we were on the fourth floor and it was in this Hill Street building and it was next to the Legal Department and it was twelve positions and it was quite a big thing. It was bigger than I'd worked at before, but it was nice.

**NELSON:** Did you come in contact with the Department bosses through the telephone office -- the general managers and their offices and their secretaries?

**HOFFMIRE:** Well no, when I retired it was William S. Peterson that was the General Manager and Chief Engineer. He was a nice man too.

**NELSON:** Did you have any personal dealings with him?

**HOFFMIRE:** Well I'd just go by his office and say, "Hello" once in a while when I went by, went down the hall. It was on the seventh floor.

**NELSON:** Who was before Mr. Peterson. Was that Samuel Morris?

**HOFFMIRE:** Samuel Morris, yes.

**NELSON:** Did you have any impressions of him?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, a lot because he's the man that signed the thing that said I could come back to work. I had great feelings for him. I didn't know him so very well, but I think it was wonderful that he was such a good man and treated me so right.

**NELSON:** Were you able to recoup those years lost at all? You said you kept your money in the retirement. Did you ever get credit for those years.

**HOFFMIRE:** The time I was off, I didn't lose anything but just that I didn't put any money in, but when I went back to work, I started putting money in - \$48 a month we used to put in too. That's quite a bit for that time. Over the years the little 3% raise that we got, I'm up to \$938 now and I only got \$171 when I retired. That was 32 years ago.

**NELSON:** Did you retire at the mandatory age?

**HOFFMIRE:** No, I retired at age 57 1/2. You could work until you were 55 if you had 30 years, but I was 57 1/2 and I retired September 1, 1959,

**NELSON:** Was there a reason you retired at 57?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, my mother and father were not very well. My father was very sick and two weeks after I retired, he passed away. Then I brought my mother home to live with me. We lived out here in the valley and she stayed with me until she passed away in 1965. So I took care of my parents that way.

**NELSON:** You didn't go on and work after you retired?

**HOFFMIRE:** No.

**NELSON:** You've stayed and lived in the Valley since when?

**HOFFMIRE:** Since 1959. Bought a home in March, 1959 and I retired in September, 1959 and I lived there until 1968 and I sold the home and went to Lawrence Welk's Retirement Village and bought a mobile home and had it delivered there and I lived there for about 14 months and I sold it and made quite a bit of money and then we still had an apartment here. We rented an apartment here and I would come back and forth to see my sister now and then every ten days and it just got too much. There was so much living and I learned to play golf from a professional. You had to do that in

order to be able to do anything. You had to belong to the golf club or you couldn't do anything. So I learned to play golf and then we sold the place and then we went on trip to South America. I traveled all over the world from 1965 on when my husband retired.

**NELSON:** Was he a Department employee?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes, they all were.

**NELSON:** Go back quite a while, here. Do you remember or have any recollection of when the Saint Frances Dam failure.

**HOFFMIRE:** Oh I remember that. It was a terrible thing. I was working in Mr. Moody's office on that little switchboard and that was about 1928 and I went in and they told me and the place was alive with reporters and everything. They came in and asked questions and things. It was a terrible thing. It just ruined Power Plant No. 1 and 2 and all the people that got killed. It was just terrible. I think there were 500 people that were killed. It was such an awful thing.

I had been there before it happened two or three times on a picnic that we went on. It was nice up there and then it was all washed away.

**NELSON:** Did you know Mable Arneke?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes. I knew her really well and I knew Hildegard Heller. Remember Hildegard Heller? I think she was our boss. I'm not sure.  
sure.

**NELSON:** Mary Rose?

**HOFFMIRE:** Yes. I know all those girls real well.

**NELSON:** What about December 7, 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor? Where were you and how did you hear of that?

**HOFFMIRE:** I was up the coast at Camarillo at that time and I heard somebody talking about it and I didn't even know about it until that happened. That was about 3:00 p.m. and we were coming home. That's how I knew about it, somebody told me. That was a horrible thing.

**NELSON:** Do you have anything you'd like to add on your experiences?

**HOFFMIRE:** Well it's been wonderful working for the Department and I feel so young and so good about things and the people were so wonderful and I think that's why I feel so good and people say that I have so much pep because I worked with young people and old people and I just love all of them and it was a wonderful place to work.

**NELSON:** Louise, I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me.

**HOFFMIRE:** I am so glad I did it. I am glad I did this for you and for the people that come after me.

