

# Scotts Valley years with Mister Hitchcock

## Ann Moyer / a cast member

It's almost an Hitchcockian twist — in a plush office, on the second floor of County Bank and Trust's administrative office, an attractive, pleasant businesswoman greets you. Her name is Ann Moyer and she's the official Assistant to bank President Melvin Switzer Jr. She was recently promoted from a job as an administrative coordinator. Her rise caps a 10-year career with the bank she started as a teller in Felton.

And she's married to Tom Moyer and has three grown children and she lives in Santa Cruz.

Our twist? Perhaps you've seen some of the late director Alfred Hitchcock's films — "Frenzy," "Vertigo," "Rear Window" or "North by Northwest" among others. In them, no one is who they seem to be.

The scene dissolves into a flashback. Moyer is living on Hitchcock's estate in Scotts Valley, where she and her family are employed as caretakers ... and that face you see popping up on the outside of one of this movie's frames belongs to the Sentinel's Don Miller.

**O**NE SUNDAY, 1940 or '41, a black limousine pulled up to the estate where my family lived as caretakers. This huge man climbed out. He tried to walk up the hill but he couldn't make it because he was so heavy. He waved at us. Then he got back in the limousine and drove off.

That was my first look-see at Alfred Hitchcock.

I moved onto the property in 1935, when I was 5 years old. I was born in Genoa, Italy. We moved to San Francisco when I was a year old. My father, Giuseppe Chiesa, was a janitor. It happened that the caretakers at this 200-acre estate in Scotts Valley — near Glenwood — were cousins. They wanted to move to Oakland. We wanted to move to the country.

We lived in a little farmhouse. It wasn't glamorous — cute, but cold. No telephone. No refrigerator. Things started popping when Mr. Hitchcock bought the place from the owner, a San Francisco lawyer named Bruce Cornwall.

This gentleman came to the door one day and said, "I want to tell you this property has been sold and the new owner is Alfred Hitchcock. Have you ever heard of him?"

We hadn't. We never went to the movies. We'd only go to town to buy food.

We were part of the inventory, though. Three cows. One horse. Thirty chickens. One family.

**H**E BOUGHT the place sight unseen. Quietly. He and Mrs. Hitchcock, Alma, spent most of the time remodeling and redecorating the house so it would be liveable for them.

My parents didn't speak English so I became a liaison. Momma used to call him "Mister Hitchy-cocka."

He didn't pay me, but he gave me a car. Sent me to Hawaii once. To Las Vegas. We went to nice restaurants in San Francisco. I had so many opportunities with the Hitchcocks. I got to be good friends with their daughter, Patricia. We'd go horseback riding together. I got to go to Los Angeles for her 18th and 19th birthdays.

I met many movie stars at the estate. Ingrid Bergman and her husband Peter Lindstrom and their daughter, Pia. Ingrid Bergman was so pretty, such a beautiful woman.

I met Jimmy Stewart and his wife, Gloria. Kim Novak. I got to meet Grace Kelly and Prince Ranier and their children. I actually met her before she became princess when she'd come up as a guest. Nice. Rather quiet. All I can remember about her is that she'd gone to finishing school and that's where she'd developed a lovely accent. I think she became more beautiful when she became princess.

I lived on the estate until I got married in 1953. After that, I still went there every day, until it was sold in 1974. My father died in 1958, but momma is still going strong at 86.

You know, I always had the feeling when I talked to the Hitchcocks ... that they wouldn't get sick, wouldn't

die. Mr. Hitchcock had arthritis very bad in his knees — his weight didn't do that any good. He was always so concerned about Mrs. Hitchcock. She was 4-foot-9 inches tall and wore a size three shoe. A tiny, beautiful woman. Very English.

The property was sold after she had a stroke. We had four acres landscaped around the house. Rose gardens. Patios. She couldn't cope with it. It was a very sad time in his life. We held on for two or three years. The place was closed up for a while and then was sold.

The Hitchcocks didn't come back after 1972. That was the last time I saw him. He died before her. It was disappointing to me — they died and yet they still had so much life to live ...

**M**Y PROMOTION was an objective I set when I went to work in 1975 as a bank teller. In 1976 I was offered a position as a secretary. I decided I wouldn't be able to stand up all day for the rest of my life. I became a marketing director.

But still, this objective — to work for the bank president — was in mind. I went to work for Mel Switzer three years ago not knowing he would become president. This latest promotion is with his. And that was the goal.

What's so important about the title Assistant to the President? It tells what I do. I feel I'm his right hand. He lets me be very creative — a lot of writing, correspondence, he lets me take it and run with it.

But you know, I've never been able to go back to the Hitchcock estate. It was so much a part of me. So beautiful, so pretty ...

They were very precise people. Mr. Hitchcock always had what we called the "yearly remodeling." I'd bring contractors in, keep him informed by phone, pick him up at the airport so he could inspect the work. The home was Spanish-style. Adobe. About 5,000 square feet. Tile floors. Tile roof. A lot of decorative Spanish tile work.

The gardens had to be immaculate. I saw to it. We used to go through so many brooms just to keep the paths clean. And the house had to be absolutely immaculate. No dust anywhere. I used to see Mrs. Hitchcock run her finger along the louvered window blinds to check for dust.

We called him *padrone*. We had this respect — they were the bosses. They treated us well — doubled my dad's salary from \$25 to \$50 a month when they bought the property and gave mom a salary of \$25 a month for cleaning.

We never had Mr. Hitchcock down to our house for dinner. But we had Mrs. Hitchcock and Pat over for minestrone and the red wine my dad made. Let me tell you — that wine beat anything you get from France.

We'd play the player piano. I remember one night, Mrs. Hitchcock and my daddy dancing in the kitchen. No, they didn't treat us like hired help.

They had a phenomenal appetite for good food — to the point where they'd fly fish in from England, from the cold water. Veal and ham pie. Steak and kidney pie. They had a German cook and of course they had to have wines — the whole works.

You can imagine what I thought about food like that after having only minestrone and spaghetti — and spaghetti only on Sundays.

My favorite Hitchcock movie? "Rear Window." I got to watch the shooting of "Psycho" and "The Birds," which was in Bodega Bay. I met Tippi Hedren. I got to watch the filming of the wonderful scene where the car comes down the hill in front of the restaurant and crashes be-

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cause there's gasoline all over the pavement.

I don't think he always cast the same kind of woman in his movies. Tippi Hedren reminded me of Mrs. Hitchcock — but look at Kim Novak. Extremely tall. Ingrid Bergman wasn't blonde — she was brown-haired.

Oh he was a cool director. He didn't talk a lot, but people performed. He used to read constantly. I always felt it was for possible stories for his movies.

He had an extremely dry sense of humor. English people seem to do this — "Why did Artie strangle?" We'd look at Mr. Hitchcock and he'd say, "Artie choked." This was all the time ...

My children were invited up for special occasions — but never for too long. They were told — "You sit right there. Don't move." The house wasn't set up for children.

But he adored his daughter. She lives at Tahoe now, by the lake. She's married and she does a lot of charity work. I went to visit her a few months ago. She keeps so many things from the estate — oil paintings, photographs ... It's nostalgic to walk through and see all these things again.

I was like his daughter. We had long talks. I think he confided in me. He was a fantastic man.

But it wasn't hard to go to work after all the glamour. You take all that, take the life cycle ... and it was ended. I have all the memories. Not too many people could experience what I did. It was once-in-a-lifetime.

## Conversations



Ann Moyer was liason to 'Mister Hitchy-cocka.'



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Recollections carry Ann back over the years: 'I've never been able to go back to the Hitchcock estate ... It was so much a part of me.'