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Charlotte Brewer interview for a Wright State University History Course

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Jodie Walker: Charlotte Brewer, right?

Charlotte Brewer: It was a long time ago.

Ian Buchholz: That's what it is, God. [laughs]

Carolyn Abernathy: I hope you don't this recording, do you?

J.W: Ah, yeah.

C.A: Oh, Jesus. [laughs]

J.W: Ok, there.

C.B: What's that for now?

J.W: That's just a recorder. It's just gonna record your answers. And...

C.B: Oh, really?

J.W: Yeah, 'cause I have to tape this stuff.

C.B: You do?

J.W: And um, yeah, it's for a class project. We're doing oral history, and um, I had to find somebody that, in Dayton, to talk with, to kind of share information with me. And then, um, yeah the teacher listens to the tapes and I write up the transcripts of it.

C.B: Well that's something.

J.W: Yeah, but I appreciate your time.

C.B: Well, if I know everything you ask. [laughs]

J.W: Um, it's just pretty much like your it would be just like your life story. Experiences that you've had things that you've seen.

C.B: My life story?

J.W: Yeah, kind of yeah.

C.B: Oh brother. Carolyn you start it out. Oh dear. I have so many, I wouldn't know which one to start on.

J.W: You were born in Dayton?

C.B: Mmmhmm

J.W: Were ya?

C.B: Yeah. I was born in Dayton, Montgomery County, Dayton, Ohio, Nineteen, what? Eleven. Yeah.

So, and I had those two brats.

C.A: Before the flood.

C.B: Before the flood. [laughs] That's right Dayton flood was the year I was born really.

J.W: Oh, really?

C.B: Mmhm, we lived on Xenia Avenue. I remember standing out on the street, with my, my father, watching the water come up Dayton Avenue. So, that was something. I remembered that. I was only about 5 years old.

J.W: Wow.

C.B: So, [laughs]

J.W: Um, so you were born in Dayton. You went to school in Dayton?

C.B: Yeah, McKinley High School, or McKinley school. And then uh, my dad bought a farm out in Xenia, Ohio. And I went to school out there. So, I graduated from high school out there. So, it was quite exciting places to go to all the time.

C.A: You raised silver foxes.

C.B: Hmmm?

J.W: You raised silver foxes?

C.B: What?

J.W: Raised silver foxes?

C.B: Yeah, my, my brother, uh, brought two silver foxes to the farm. Mom put'em in a cage, started raising them. And we had silver foxes to sell, and they was beautiful. She hated to get rid of them when they, when they were little. They were just darling. So, we got rid of them. It was always one thing after another. So, that's it.

J.W: Did you like living on a farm?

C.B: Yeah, I did. Boys didn't care much about it, because they had to do the work.

J.W: [laughs] How many brothers and sisters did you have?

C.B: Uh, let's see, four brothers, five brothers, and four sisters.

J.W: Wow.

C.B: It was quite a family.

J.W: Yeah, that's like ten of you.

C.B: So, we lived in an old farm, in the farmhouse. My mother did all the cooking, and baking, she was good at it. Until Carolyn came along and then she started.

J.W: Did you um, get married right after high school, or did you?

C.B: Not really. Forget how old I was. I was about nineteen or twenty.

J.W: Oh, really?

C.B: Mmmhm, I graduated early. Hmmm?

J.W: That is, that is waiting awhile for back isn't it? ...Nineteen-twenties, that's waiting awhile.

C.B: So, remember the old high school?

J.W: I'm sorry.

C.B: I was asking Carol if she remembers the old high school.

J.W: Oh really, you guys had a one room schoolhouse?

C.B: Yeah, that's where we, in a one room schoolhouse up to seventh, eighth and grade, and that's the way they went up, in different sections.

J.W: Oh, yeah?

C.B: So, I remember that.

C.A: They use to ride horses [inaudible 150-154]

Jodie: That is neat.

C.B: It was something. I remember that uh, first year of school, down there at Zimmerman. 'Cause I had a schoolteacher, she was a pretty thing. Her boyfriend dumped her. Now, I'll never forget that. It stuck in my mind all these years. I remember her crying and carrying on. And, I thought to myself, I'll never get married. But, that was, she was something. She was a pretty, pretty teacher, and she finally got another boyfriend, and got married. That was the end of it.

J.W: She quit working, because she got married?

C.B: Hmmm?

J.W: She quit teaching because she got married, or...?

C.B: Do what?

J.W: Did the teacher quit teaching because she got married?

C.B: She didn't do too much. She was a good teacher, but she didn't do too much after that. We all missed her. Anything else you want to know?

J.W: Yeah, what did you do before you got married? When you were young and wild?

C.A: Huh!!

C.B: [laughs] All right. Ah, shoot, well we had a good time. I remember my dad trying to teach me to drive that old, pur.. car, remember what it's called? That's 'fore your time. I'll never forget that. Went around the corner and, there was, a big hill there right at the end of the street. I couldn't get it turned quick enough, and I rammed right into it. I'll never forget that. [laughs] That was when I was in the, fourth grade, I believe.

J.W: Oh really?

C.B: Mmmh. So...

C.A: When you were that young you were driving a car?

C.B: Huh?

C.A: How young were you when you were driving the car?

C.B: That old roadster dad had, remember that old Ford roadster? That's before your time, sure it was. I was only about, fourth grade, I think it was. I was always into something.

C.A: She was the youngest of the whole batch.

J.W: Oh, you were the baby huh?

C.A: They're all gone.

C.B: [laughs] Yeap, they're all gone. All my brothers and sisters. They're all gone. I'm the last of the Mohicans.

J.W: [laughs] Well, that makes you cool.

C.B: I feel like it.

J.W: Did you, did you know the Wright brothers, or meet them, or anything, 'cause, they're big talk here

in Dayton.

C.B: No. We went to, some kind of a, showing or something, my dad, and I, and mom, seen the Wright brothers, but we didn't get a chance to a, talk to them very much. So, but that was their scene. Of course, I was always inquisitive, more so than Carolyn ever was. I was inquisitive into everything.

J.W: So how many children did you have? Just the one?

C.B: Just one.

J.W: You guys be the baby too then, in a way, oldest and baby.

C.B: Yeap. Yeap. We had a lot of good ole times out in the, Xenia Pike. That's where we lived, right on Xenia Pike, remember?

C.B: My uncle Roy bought a, tell them about the lake.500 acres...

C.B: Oh, that a, you mean Roy? My brother Roy, he was a pharmacist in Cincinnati. He bought a, a lake view up at a, what's the name of that town?

C.B: Lanse.

C.B: Lanse. He had a cabin up there and all, it was pretty. So, we got to go up there quite a bit in the summertime. So, fortunately, I didn't fall into the lake. So, you got to see a lot though.

C.A: [inaudible282-283] get a little exercise. Do what horses are to do when they get tired. Went charging down that you know, you had put the gate up because they come right in to trample your garden. Well....the people..... come thundering' down the road, you go, oh, God, here they come again, you better put up the gate. [laughs]

C.B: It was pretty up in Michigan though. I like, I like Michigan. We used to go back every year for, a holiday. Carolyn and them still go up, anytime now. They went up when my mother passed away and, helped put her away so. She always enjoyed it up there. So, we had a lot of, fun, a lot of fun.

C.A: The car ferry. It was the only way you could get across the [inaudible 317-324]

J.W: No, I go, I go south and west.

C.A: Huh, well up north it's pretty.

J.W: Yeah, I would love to go up there, but....

C.A: [inaudible 326-331]

Jodie: Farthest, farthest we've ever made it north was a, Put-N-Bay.

C.A: Oh, I [inaudible 333-334]

J.W: Me and my sister, went up there a couple of years ago. That's as far as we got, it's like, kind of stuck in Ohio.

C.B: There's a lot of things to see up in Michigan though. You wouldn't realize how much, beauty there is in Michigan. Especially the northern part, where we lived. Or where my brother lived rather. He was a fisherman. He used to love to fish. Told, I told Carolyn's dad, "If he don't drown himself, it will be a wonder." So, never did thank God, but pull in the fish. That's where fish tastes good, out in the open, and a good long fire, and brown. So, those were the good old days. [laughs] Huh?

C.A: [inaudible 352-364]

C.B: Oh well, he had a drugstore in Lanse. He was a pharmacist. Everybody came in to him for medicines they needed, you know. He was special, special one in the family. The rest all turned their nose up at him, so.

C.A: [374-376]

C.B: Yeah.

J.W: What, was, your brother?

C.B: Yeah, he was a sailor.

J.W: In the Navy? Now was that during any of the wars, or?

C.B: No, he was, he was on that boat, remember? He never gave to the, hmmm?

C.A: First World War or the second?

C.B: Something like that, but, he didn't get too much of it really. He was a sailor. He loved the water. So,

C.A: Had one had bars in Covington.

C.B: HmMMM?

J.W: Sure, that one's not related to me?

C.A: [inaudible 392-393]

J. W: Oh, really? Oh, that would be all right.

C.B: Bob was my favorite though, my brother Bob.

J.W: How was, how would he have fallen into the....

C.B: Hmmm?

J.W: How would he have fallen into the line up of the kids?

C.B: He was, how old was he? He was uh, ...

C.A: Third wasn't he?

C.B: Huh?

C.A: He was third and.....

C.B: Yeah.

J.W: So, Bob was the third oldest?

C.B: Yeah. I always liked Bob. Anytime I wanted something I'd holler, "Bob! Can I get this?" "Yeah, go ahead." He was good.

C.A: [inaudible 412-416]

Jodie: Oh, really?

C.A: [inaudible 416-419]

J.W: Times sure have changed. Look at the cars nowadays.

C.B: Now, what else do you want to hear about?

J.W: Um, anything that you can....

C.B: Yeah, I'd have you here all night if I had to.

J.W: Well that's all right with me. Um,

C.A: Tell her about Maine, when I got married and had my first kid, on the train, all by yourself.

C.B: Yeap.

J.W: You had your first child in Maine?

C.B: Maine.

J.W: Oh, really?

C.A: [inaudible 429-432] called a base alert when I was in the hospital. Couldn't get out [inaudible 434-434]

C.B: Yeah, they got married and moved up to Maine.

C.A: [inaudible 437-440].

J.W: Oh, what was it...

C.A: Cost me all of seven dollars, to have the kid. [laughs]

J.W: Wow.

C.A: [inaudible 443-444]

J.W: Was your husband in town, or was he off

C.A: Yes. He was [inaudible 445-447]

J.W: Right.

C.B: He was there, right?

C.A: [inaudible 448-451]

J.W: No. I know what a Caribou is though. I know the animal.

C.A: Yeah. It was something though.

J.W: Yeah. You kind of have a different lifestyle there.

C.B: Mhm.

J.W: Maine, bunch of fishermen.

C.A: you had snow.have a mailbox that would stand on the corner, snow would be about six, seven feet. Your totally buried.first snow, it was spring it was thawin, had to be the first of May. Unless you were real lucky than it would melt sooner. They just kept piling it up, you know. It was something else. You couldn't go anywhere up there. You stayed on base basically. If you went ... you had to carry certain supplies. they'd check you at the gate going in and out, make sure you had everything.

C.B: Those Michigan people could cook. I loved their cooking. Everyplace you went, they had to give you something to eat, and that suited me. Remember? They'd bake, they'd bake, done all their own baking, bread, and rolls, and everything. And man were they good. They don't have nothing like that now.

C.A: [inaudible 483-487]

J.W: So, when she got married and left for Maine, how did you feel about that?

C.B: Did I what?

J.W: How did you feel about her leaving and going to live in Maine?

C.B: That's what she wanted to do nothing I could about it. Just open the door, and say, "Goodbye." No, we liked it. She brought home the baby, and of course we enjoyed the baby all the time.

C.A: We drove back and forth.

C.B: Yeap.

J.W: What was the baby, a boy or a girl?

C.A: A girl.

C.B: Yeah, Sherry.

C.A:pulled the trailer..... Maine, down through the mountains with her, about six months old. He got transferred, at the last minute. We cleaned out the apartment, packed up the trailer, got rid of all the food, they called base alert. Quickly,back end of the other base. You couldn't leave. So, we ended up sitting in a cold apartment on the floor. [laughs] And, it was right before Thanksgiving, we ate Thanksgiving dinner over a heater in our apartment. [laughs]

J.W: Did they send him back here?

C.A: He brought me home and Massachusetts. he jack knifed go down....couldn't hardly breathe or something let all the air out of your tires... You couldn't get up . then we got down, there was a filling station in between one huge hill and another. Well, we couldn't stop,air back in the tires, so we'd just slide all the way down, and slide up the other side. [laughs]

C.B: And the snow up there in Michigan was something. You don't have that kind of snows down here, it's a good thing.

J.W: Yeah. When, we do get a snow like that every great once in awhile, we, we're done for a few days.

C.B: Mhm that's right. So, what else do we know interesting? [laughs] Oh, then we had Ian. He was, he was my little boy.

J.W: Now, he's your daughter's (Carolyn) son?

C.A: He's my grandson, her great-grandson. Zachy is my great-grandson, her great-great grandson.

C.B: Yeap, we got so many greats, I don't know what to do with them. It's a good thing we don't have [laughs]....

J.W: [laughs]

C.A: Now, we still got five generations going.

C.B: Hmmm?

C.A: Told her, I said we still got five generations going.

C.B: I can't hear ya.

J.W: You guys have five generations still here.

C.B: Oh yeah.

J.W: There's not too many people that can say that at all.

C.B: Yeah. My oldest sister

C.A: We come close to ending it a couple of times

C.B: Yeah, I know. My oldest sister was Laura, she was good, I always liked Laura. She made a big fuss over me all the time. She done more, fussin over me than anything else, but uh, Martha was my other one.

C.A: They all played musical instruments in her family.

C.B: Huh?

C.A: I said all of you guys had musical instruments.

J.W: You played musical instruments?

C.B: Oh yeah, Art plays the saxophone, Laura play, played the piano, Dorothy played the piano, so. Come on in Ian.

C.A: That's Keith!

C.B: That's another great. I said that's another great. [laughs] He's the painter and the artist of the family. He's good. He can paint, and he can draw, you wouldn't believe what he can do. It's a darn shame he's not got a better job than he has, but he loves it.

J.W: Now, do you, so you had a lot, not only your children, but you got a lot of grandchildren and great-grandchildren that live with you.

C.A: We all lived together.

C.B:bored. [laughs] We didn't do

C.A: We all live together for years. Mom, dad, Mel and I, my kids, my daughter got a divorce and Ian, when he got ... She got pregnant...

J.W: Do you guys feel overwhelmed sometimes with that, though, I mean, do you feel overwhelmed, like, like your turn is done.

C.A: Yeah. [laughs] It's done.

J.W: I mean, I'm not trying to be rude,

C.A: Oh no, that's fine. I know what you mean.

J.W: But I mean, don't you just get tired, like ok,

C.B: Sometimes.

J.W: I've taken care of mine and, there's way too many of everybody else's, do you feel that way?

C.B: Mmhm, true. She does she gets she does all the picking up, carrying around now. It gets monotonous, sometimes, but uh, we love them. [laughs]

C.A: [Inaudible 610-613 tape counter]

J.W: Oh wow that's good. I think I've seen two.

C.A: [Inaudible 615-628 tape counter]

J.W: Just for me to go to Cherokee, I go down to Cherokee North Carolina. Just to go there for a weekend, I'm, I drop six hundred bucks. No, but it's fun. I enjoy it. I love it there.

C.A: I like it down by Gattlinburg too. [inaudible 633-640]

J.W: Yeah. [inaudible 641-643]

C.B: She got around quite a bit when her and Mel got married. It was first one state, then another. So, she didn't stay too long, though did ya?

C.A: Sometimes, I wonder why we didn't. [laughs] Definitely, much more attractive.

C.B: Well, them little um, gray foxes were the cutest things, when my mother raised them. The silver foxes? They were the cutest, their hair was just a silver color, and their tail was long and bushy. We used to make the most over them. My mother used to pick them up and love them, and huh, [laughs]. They didn't usually do that to, to the people, they was, shy.

J.W: Yeah.

C.B: But, uh, my mother can get around them any which way. She loves those animals.

J.W: What made her stop raising them?

C.B: What?

J.W: What made her stop raising them?

C.B: Well, my brother wanted to sell them. He had a chance to sell them, make some money on them. They were good size then. A lot of people bought them and made something out of them, coats or whatever.

J.W: Right.

C.B: Remember that coat, that Lobby had, that, that was a beautiful thing.

C.A: [inaudible 668-674] We got rid of that thing. [laughs] It's because [inaudible 674-677]

C.B: [laughs] She couldn't stand to see them killed. It was a shame, because they were beautiful.

J.W: Well, you were probably used to that though, weren't you? Seeing things, I mean, living on a farm you were probably used to that weren't you?

C.B: Yeah, I, I liked it on the farm. Carolyn didn't care too much about it.

C.A: Oh, crap, you had all these stupid animals.

C.B: Yeah, the animals, she loved the animals. She'd take the animals, and take them in the house and raise them.

C.A: [inaudible 686-693] No, no, no, no. Then I had one that I adored. Black and white, feisty little torn cat, [inaudible 696-697] I forgot the little devil was not, probably in his box. I tried to cross the field. The next thing I know, here comes a little bullet crawling through the field. He saw me coming. And, he was going to get me coming. And I, I was screaming across that grass....

C.B: You, you could hear her from one end of the county to the next.

C.A: [Inaudible 705-709]

J.W: Ok so, you were here in 1911, was the Air Force Base here in 1911?

C.B: It was starting' wasn't it? The base, Dayton, the Wright Patterson, yeah, they started it then. They didn't do too much at the time. The Wright brothers, they didn't do too much then. We were too little to

go, we weren't aloud to go to the Air Force Base, or anything.

C.A: They wouldn't let you on there for a long time.

C.B: No, they wouldn't let you on it.

CA: But, they started the Air Show there, and I got.to meet Robert Lansing which [inaudible 736-737]

Remember he played on that, that series, [738-766]

C.B: We raised him from a pup. Did you know that? We're still raising him. [laughs] Can't get rid of him.

J.W: That's all right, I got a 25 year-old brother I'm still raising.

C.B: Are ya?

J.W: Yeah. He's all right though. [inaudible and unproductive 777-837]

Ian Buchholz: So, how did you meet Grandpa Bob?

C.B: Huh?

I.B: How did you meet Grandpa Bob?

C.B: How, did I what?

J.W: How did you meet Grandpa Bob?

C.B: Oh, I went to school with him. We went to school together.

J.W: And, you liked him? [laughs]

C.B: Huh?

J.W: And you liked him after you went to school?

C.B: Yeah. He was a football player. He played football. Bob was a rock. Everybody fell in love with him. Yeah, they hated me for...

J.W: 'Cause you got him?

C.B: Yeah. That was the truth. Well, we had a lot of fun together though.

J.W: How long were you guys married?

C.A: [inaudible 861-861]

C.B: That's Grandma Brewer, my...

C.A: That's Grandma [inaudible 863-868]

C.B: Ian asked me one day, says, "What's she got all them flowers on her head for?" I said that's because, that's for her hat. "Oh, he said, that looks dumb."

C.A: That wasn't Ian that was Zach. She got her child mixed up again.

C.B: Yeah.

C.A: Zach turns into Ian all the time. Ian don't care.

C.B: Did you dust that picture off, before you handed it to her? I bet it's dusty.

J.W: What kind of work did he do?

C.B: Hmm?

J.W: What kind of work did Bob do?

C.B: My Bob, oh, he was a salesmen.

J.W: Salesmen?

C.B: Worked for his brother-in-law. Had a cheese truck. He sold cheese, and, all that good things connected with cheese. He was good at it, so... [unproductive 892-922]

J.W: Now was it like, he said a.....?.... market. Would it be like Findley Market, in Cincinnati?

C.A: Probably, I haven't been down there..

J.W: I mean it's like a big open, some of, most of it is open, some of it's closed, when you walk in there's like little, people bring their stuff in from their homes, whatever, and sell it.

C.A: [inaudible 929-939] My uncle, they had big barrels pickles. They were huge. You could drop a body in them they were so huge. And, the freezers had cheese, lunch meat, [inaudible 943-949]

J.W: That's neat.

C.B: Pickles remember the pickles down in that one factory we went to? First thing they done was, they got out was a table. They put bread and butter and stuff on it and, you could get all the pickles you wanted to eat. Oh Lord, that was good. I can remember that yet. I love sweet pickles. Everybody else liked the, the other ones.

J.W: So, do you think a lot has changed in Dayton? Since, you've been here?

C.B: What?

J.W: Have you seen a lot of changing in Dayton?

C.B: Oh, Lord yes, plenty of changes, my God.

J.W: I was going to say good or bad, what do you think?

C.B: Well, some are good, some are bad. My fa, dad was City Commissioner, Dayton for a long time.

Jodie: Oh, really?

C.B: Uh-huh, when I was a kid. I remember that. He used to talk about it. How some of them needed to be turned over the knee, and given a damn good swat. [laughs] He didn't get a chance to do that though. That was something.

J.W: Now, what years would he have been a City Commissioner for Dayton, do you know?

C.B: Uh, I forget what year it was really. That was when I was just a kid. I don't remember the exact date of it or anything, but I can remember going to the, affairs with him. My mother and I, and Dorothy, she was [inaudible 286-287], a long, but a, that was all we could do on that. And then, when was it? The year dad sold the farm, wasn't, or the house in Dayton? Yeah, then we moved out to the farm. He bought a farm out there where we lived.

C.A: Must have been after the flood.

C.B: Huh?

C.A: Must have been after the flood, when you moved out.

C.B: Oh yeah, that was, 'cause I remember the flood. I remember standing on the street corner with mom and dad and them, and watched the water down at the end of the street. He said, "Oh Lord, if it comes up the street, we're done for." But it didn't, it stopped right there, and that was the end of the, end of the flood there. But uh, it had us all worried. I can remember when it was all over with, we got things straightened around and, that's when the poor people started coming in. Everyone that came to that door, mom would have something to give them, to feed them. So, that was something, I'll tell ya. People didn't know what, what it was to be without food.

C.A: [inaudible 318-319]

C.B: Huh?

C.A: Then they'd come to the house, and want something to eat.

C.B: Yeah.

C.A.: Mom would fix them a plate of food. They'd sit out there and eat it, then they'd leave. A lot of beggars....

C.B.: That was terrible. Half those people, was really starving to death. I'll never forget that, that stuck in my mind for years. I thought to myself, "Lord, if my kids had to do that, I don't know what I'd do."

That's you (looking at Carolyn Abernathy)

C.A.: Her sister was a, legal secretary for years. [inaudible 330-332]

J.W.: Oh, yeah?

C.A.: The Second War, he had shrapnel in his back. They said he'd never walk again. Finally, after so many years of doing his own therapy, he got back on his feet, was able to walk. [inaudible 440-449]

J.W.: Did you guys have to do the rationing and stuff, up here in the war?

C.A.: When the war was going on?

J.W.: Yeah.

C.A.: Stamps. We used to go to school and we'd, we'd count them, and put the little [inaudible 354-356] They'd do something with them. I don't remember. [inaudible 356-357] Gas rations, couldn't go anywhere. Boy, we saved our stamps, and save them, and save them so we could go somewhere, you know. [inaudible 360-362]

C.A.: You don't know how old we are do you?

C.B.: She's fifty years old. [laughs] [inaudible 366-373]

J.W.: Did you guys have a lot of trouble up here in Dayton with the, like in the sixties with Martin Luther King getting killed, was there a lot of riots and stuff up here?

C.B.: Do what now?

J.W.: Was there a lot of riots, like race riots up here when like Martin Luther King got killed?

C.B.: Oh, yeah. We had'em, we had'em quite a bit around Dayton.

J.W.: Did ya?

C.B.: And uh, all the people, we gathered for meetings and all. It was pretty scary for awhile. Of course, I didn't take too much of it in. Huh?

C.A.: Shot at fire trucks.

J.W: Now Mel that's your husband?

CA: Yeah.

J.W: So, he was a fireman and they were shooting at him?

CA: [389-402]

J.W: On the west side? I not from, never been to Dayton, but I hear a lot about, oh, stay away from the west side, don't go to the west side of Dayton. And I'm like, "I don't even know what the west side is."
But, ok.

C.B: West Side.

CA: [inaudible 395-396]

J.W: Huh? Really? See I have no idea.

CA: Don't go alone. Lock your doors. It wasn't too bad...

C.B: That's where a lot of trouble started on the west side.

CA: Well, Howard had a grocery over there for years, her older brother, had a grocery store. He never had any trouble. That was years and years ago.

C.B: Yeah. Howard didn't have no trouble, because they all respected him. He had big fists, and brother, he could use them.

CA: They'd come in there and they'd want their greens, and meat...

C.B: Those colored people came in to buy from him, and they'd just load up with everything.

CA: We'd always go over there on weekends and did our grocery shopping. Then all of a sudden they'd turned around in the other direction. Well, it's not bad as it used to be I guess.

C.B: Howard was a character. He was this broad. Man, could he eat. He'd put you under the sun.

[laughs]

J.W: So did the neighbor, the west side go bad after he sold, sold his store, or..

CA: Yeah.

C.B: Yeah, it went down hill. The ones that bought it, didn't take care of it like Howard did. They just uh, left it go to pot.

J.W: Do you think having Wright State up here, 'cause I know that college is only like what, 30 years old

or something? Think that uh, boomed your guys, well I don't know, you guys got the Air Force, but did it boom like your economy, having the college come up here? 'Cause, now you got like a bunch of college kids running around, and they have like, spending money from mommy and daddy, and....

CA: [inaudible 436-438] There was a time when we had problems over there. They'd get on their spring breaks, come flyin down through there, lose control of their car, and ended up in the yard a few times. Smashed out a light. We got a pole through the window.

J.W: Geez, huh?

C.A.: That was before you were born.

C.B: That was before you was born, boy.

C.A: Spring break, they were pretty wild over in there. College kids never got caught. There was a lot of break-ins, robberies, and things like that.

C.B: Yeap. [inaudible 452-459]

C.A: You would have thought we lived on the west side then. [459-463]

J.W: You had a mental institution?

C.A: Well, they were, they were wheelchair patients. [inaudible 465-481] He was out there preaching, talking about God. He stood out in the rain for a half an hour, so I went upstairs in my bathroom window, pushed it up, my big mouth would carry right across the road. [laughs] He was talking about God, and I hollered down. I said, "This is God speaking, go back in the house your getting wet." He turned around, it was so funny, and he never came out again to preach on Sunday morning. I don't know whether God got to him or what.

C.B: He scared the devil out of her.

C.A: [laughs] We had some weird experiences.

C.B: That was a scary time.

Ian Buchholz: Then there was my dad, what was his main vocabulary?

C.A: They walked into the house. My daughter, she said, "Here's my new boyfriend." And I looked at him, and I said, "Yeah, there's hairy Larry." And he looked at me, "How did you know my name?"

[laughs] His name was Harry Lawrence. And, he had long hair, down to his shoulders. I wasn't referring

to his name. I was HAIRY LARRY. Oh, Jesus, I don't know.

C.B: You don't remember all that, Ian.

Ian Buchholz: We used to go visit Aunt Dorothy, everytime Grandma Brewer would try to keep me from her because she would sit there, "Try this." She would order everything. Remember that?

C.A: Yeah, she had a house full of books. Every magazine, they would send her something through the mail, bless her heart, she thought she had to buy it. She would go ahead and order it. [inaudible 521-523] When she died, we had bags and bags of things we toted out to the truck. Strange lady, she had canned goods for thirty years. They had little animals that grew out of the stuff, you know? "Well, we can't rid of that, that's still good." Oh, she would go down and bring up something for us. "I got some jelly, peaches, down here." Everybody looks at that and, be like, "Oh, oh no." When she wasn't looking we would, out the back door with it.

C.B: We went out the back door.

I.B: The girl from 'Golden Girls' the ditzy one.

C.A: You mean the skinny one?

I.B: The ditzy one.

J.W: Rose.

I.B: Rose, that's, that's Aunt Dorothy. That's a good...

J.W: Oh, is it? I love that show.

C.A: It is funny. I like the little skinny one. The one that plays grandma, to me she's the epitome of everybody that we've ever known.

J.W: I like Blanche, aging with style.

C.A: Nah.

J.W: I like her [laughs]

C.A: I am more the category of the big tall one.

J.W: Dorothy?

C.A: It was funny.

I.B: What did you used to do growing up Grandma?

C.B: What?

I.B: Growing up, what did you like to do?

C.B: What did I like to do? I liked to play ball, with the boys. That's what I done. I got socked in the head a couple of times. That's what's the matter with me now I think. I got socked in the head so many times. I enjoyed it. We had that little red schoolhouse down there. We couldn't wait to, to get out of school at noon, and we'd go play baseball.

J.W: They got out of school at noon?

C.B: Hmm?

J. W: You got out of school at noon?

C.B: Well, it was after noon when we got out. We thought we had something, get that baseball. She hit the devil out of that one baseball. Hit, I think I hit every boy in the school. [laughs]

I.B: Who was your best friend?

C.B: Hmm?

I.B: Who was your best friend?

C.B: Who was my best friend?

I.B: In school?

C.B: Oh, she's still living, the one that I knew so well. She lives up in, Huber Heights, there. Grace Kugler. She's still living. She's same age as I am.

C.A: Kugler mother, Kugler.

C.B: Hmm?

C.A: Kugler was her name

C.B: Kugler. She was nice. Remember when she had a, clutsy girlfriend, half of them. Some didn't know their but they was there.

J.W: So, where did you go out for hot dates at?

C.B: Hmm?

J.W: Where did you go out for hot dates at?

C.B: Where did we go? [laughs]

C.A: There was no McDonalds...

C.B: Couldn't have been very much, 'cause there wasn't too much to go to. There was a, Rest Haven, that was a eating place. Oh, he always took me to the eating place. Boy, that was, they had the best food in, in the whole country.

C.A: Yeah man, we thought we was really something. I thought it was interesting. Best fried chicken. Big old round restaurant. We used to go up there and eat all the time.

C.B: I can still taste her uh, fried chicken. She was the best cook that the whole county had.

C.A: A bunch of trees, and the whole woods would, just stink of fried chicken, you know, when you pulled into the parking lot. [inaudible 596-598]

I.B: Remember when we were all, whenused to go on vacation with us? This is what stands...

C.B: Do what?

I.B: Remember when we used to go on vacation in the big green camper? Me, you, Meam..

C.A: No that was a big brown camper.

I.B: Was it? Oh well, the brown trash truck. It was me, you, uh, Grandpa, and Chris, and we all went down to, where was it?

C.A: Michigan.

I.B: Michigan and Chris said something came out. And, I was sitting at the table like this, like just sitting at the little table and everything, and Chris comes out. "Hey, grandma look at this." Grandma's sitting there, and Grandpa turned into the parking lot or something. And, everything falls out, because he had to turn. Grandma turned around real fast and rolled out of the chair. [laughs]

C.A: She was in one of those little chairs that twirl. You know, in the camper, and she went rrrup. [laughs]

C.B: That was funny. We had a lot of crazy things happen in that camper.

C.A: Once we were coming down the road, looking at the other house to get food. Dad and mom was driving. I was in the backseat. We stopped at the light, and some drunk rear ended us real hard. [laughs] Mom was in the front seat, down on the floor, between the dash, you know, and the seat? And, she had her wig on that day. She used to wear a wig back then, when they first came out. They were pretty cool, and, it hit us so hard, and jerked her real good, she actually had whiplash. But, her hair had come off, and I

thought, "Oh my God, he's decapitated her!" [laughs] I never will forget that. 'Cause she went down and her hair went.

J.W: Oh, no!

C.B: Threw my hat out the window.

C.A: It wasn't funny though. She had whiplash, she had a horrible...

C.B: That's when they wore wigs. Now they wear wigs and don't do nothing.

C.A: Maybe now, we outta get you a wig.

C.B: Hmm?

C.A: We should go back the other way, you wouldn't have to go to the barbershop. We just give ya, Don Eagle and get rid of it.

C.B: Yeah that's what I might do. I'll have something. My hair is getting so thin, I don't know whether it's hair or what the heck it's gonna be. You know I'm 91?

J. W: Are ya? [inaudible and unproductive 641-656] Now whose son is he, your son or your son?

I.B: Who, me?

J. W: I know it ain't your son! No that man?

I.B: Oh, her son. [inaudible 659-661]

C.B: He gets up early in the morning and goes to bed early. [inaudible 662-667]

J. W: No, I've never heard that phrase. 'Break their plate at eighteen.' Well, I was just gonna, for their eighteenth birthday, I was just gonna pack their bags, and have them setting' by the front door.

C.A: Grab their plate, put it on top of there. Say here take it with you.

J. W: Ok, I'll have to make sure I do that.

C.A: [laughs] It don't work. They just keep coming.

J. W: I know, I've got that brother, I still can't get rid of. [laughs]

C.A: Probably never will.

J. W: Probably not. I love him though, he's all right he can stay. The rest of them, has gotta go.

C.A: He's a lot of fun though. We've had a lot of fun with him.

J.W: Who Ian?

C.B: Dingbat. We call him dingbat. [laughs]

I.B: Bean, Bob, Bert, Bennie.

C.A: Actually, we don't know who were talking about most of the time. Just call a name.

I.B: First my name was going to be Richard. Right, my uncle wanted to name me Richard?

C.A: Yeah, after Richard in the ARMY.

C.B: As long as we call you for dinner, that's enough isn't it?

I.B: You'd find me in the tree. Break something in the house, I'd climb the tree. Old people can't climb trees. Grandma Brewer would be sitting there, I thought she was Meam. She'd sit there and go, "Dinners done." At six in the morning, I'd run down out of the tree and get whipped with a coat hanger, or with a freaking, whatever the hell you all had handy.

C.A: Flyswatter.

I.B: It was a freaking flyswatter, which was the same freaking thing.....

C.A: Well, I had a metal flyswatter when I was a kid.

I.B: Add a coat hanger to that.

J.W: House shoe is my, my weapon of choice.

C.B: Hmm?

J.W: House shoe.

C.A: That's a good deal too. [laughs] 'Cause you can smack that you know, and scare'em to death.

Didn't work anyway.

C.B: They never got hurt. They just got a tap and that was it.

I.B: I always knew the worse the beating, the better the store. Every time I got beat, they'd take me to the store. I always knew the worst beatings I'd get that would be better ...

J.W: Ok, so now we'll finish up this interview, so Ian can go eat, or something.

C.B: Eat, him?

J.W: Look at him, sitting there with his coat on, "Let's go!" I found some new best friends Ian, I'm staying. Ok, so I guess what we should do is talk to you a little bit longer about working at Rikes.

C.B: Oh, Lord that's been a long time.

I.B: You waited on Martin Sheen didn't ya?

C.B: Hmm?

I.B: You saw Martin Sheen there didn't ya?

C.B: Yeah. He was cute. He come to the counter and talked to me. I will never forget that.

C.A: Well, honey that was, he was cute. Now, he's just a fat old man, with funky ideas. [laughs]

J.W: What was Martin Sheen doing in Dayton?

I.B: He lives here.

C.B: He was, he lived in Dayton.

C.A: He was born in Dayton.

C.B: He was born in Dayton, yeah, he was born in Dayton.

J.W: Oh really?

C.B: Mmhm.

C.A: He came back to sleep on the grates, once. [laughs]

J.W: Oh, really? You're lying. They're lying aren't they?

I.B: No, they're serious.

Mel Abernathy: He took his coat off on a heated grate, and, and then, he laid his sleeping bag on it.

J.W: What?

C.A: He was ... the cause of the poor, sleeping on the streets.

J.W: Oh, ok.

C.A: Grandma saw him when he was a nice child. [inaudible 57-62] The only thing he did nice, was he played General Robert E. Lee [inaudible 63-70]

J.W: What did you do at Rikes?

C.B: Hmm?

J.W: What did you do at Rikes?

C.B: Oh, a little bit of everything. I worked behind the counter, done the computers, and things. And, cash registers, took care of the trade. There was a tearoom upstairs we ate lunch at.

C.A: Well you worked up there a couple of times a week. She worked at Elders, old Elders, the old Elders

store.

J.W: Is that Elder Beerman?

C.A: Yeah.

J.W: Is that Elder Beerman?

C.B: Used to be Elder Johnson's, yeah, it was. I liked old Rikes that was a nice store. Old man Rike, was a lovely person to work for, he was real nice. He'd come around at Christmas time and shake your hand and wish you a merry Christmas, and he was real nice.

J.W: Did they pay you fairly?

C.B: Hmm?

J.W: Did you get fair pay? Was it good?

C.B: Oh, yeah. Not, nothing, nothing like the ...get paid today, but, it pulled us through, didn't it?

C.A: Yeah.

C.B: Kept food on the table. [inaudible 105-116]

J.W: Wouldn't let her wear nothing but dresses huh?

C.A: You look at all the old pictures, of people on the street. You never saw them wearing a pair of pants.
[inaudible 122-123]

C.B: You didn't know what restaurant's was.

C.A: Downtown you'd go shopping. In the winter you'd have a skirt on.

J.W: Jeez, good thing I wasn't alive back then. I would have been in a whole lot of trouble.

C.A: When you went to school, you'd wear snow pants under your slacks, under your dress..[inaudible 138-148]

C.B: At Christmas time, that Rike store was beautiful. The way they decorated it, you know, for Christmas. It was gorgeous.

J.W: Did they have window front, window front displays?

C.A: [inaudible 153-156]

C.B: I used to love to take the kids down. Let them walk through Rikes and feed them lunch, and they thought that was marvelous. So,

C.A: Go buy gifts in the gift shop.

C.B: You don't have anything like that anymore. [inaudible 163-177]

J.W: Now is Rikes still around, or is that out of business?

C.A: The Schuster Center is where Rikes used to be. The Schuster Art Center. Hasn't she ever seen downtown Dayton?

J.W: No. [inaudible 185-190]

C.B: I've seen a lot in my day, and I've seen a lot, before my day. That's good wasn't it?

I.B: Think things are better now then they were back then?

C.B: Hmm?

I.B: You think things are better now, then they were back then when you were younger?

C.B: Not really.

I.B: What do you miss the most?

C.B: 'Cause theirs things you do then, that we can't do now. And there's things to see, that they don't pay any attention to now, 'cause it's old stuff with everybody.

I.B: Like what?

C.B: Like all the other old stuff, like old-fashioned stuff, you know. People don't want nothing to do with that. They think differently.

C.A: People were different. More talkative, and friendly, and helpful, and that kind of thing. In the old days you knew everybody..

CB: You could uh, lay in the street and nobody would help ya. Back then, by dern, you just have an accident and they was right there to help. That's the difference between people.

C.A: Well, your afraid to help anybody today. Crazy people.

I.B: What do you miss the most about back when you were younger?

C.B: What do I miss the most? Oh Lord, that would take an hour to tell ya. I miss a lot of things that I miss then.

C.A: Oh, we had lots of fun. There was reunions and all that kind of stuff.

C.B: Nah, we used to have big reunions at the house. My mother would have a table spread from here to,

to the end of the room.

C.A: Well, we used to go out to the parks.

C.B: Yeah.

C.A: There'd be probably 50 or 60 of us, and we'd all eat, and spend the whole day just eating and blabbin..

C.B: We don't do that anymore. [inaudible 237-240] Just a different generation, I feel like I'm lost when I go downtown or something. [laughs] Everybody's different.

C.A: Well, we used to go for rides in the country. That was a big treat. We used to ride, what did they call it, Zimmerman push on, the name they gave it. When I was a kid, we used to tell the trains "push on". We used to ride over to Xenia, man that was a trip. I mean it wasn't that far, we can get over there in minutes. Then it was a nice country ride, through the farms you know. We'd go over there and eat ice-cream, sit on the street and watch the people go by. My dad did that, he would get a big kick out of it. He'd go in the store and he'd have ice-cream, buy homemade candy, and it was really cool back then. You'd go home, and you know, "Well, what did you do on.." "We went to Icleys ice-cream store and we had ice-cream."

C.B: Icleys', that was the name of the ice-cream store. Icleys'.

C.A: [inaudible 265-268]

C.B: They made the best sundaes there ever was.

C.A: I never will forget one Saturday night, dad and I had three sundaes apiece. He was sicker than a dog, didn't bother me at all. He could've killed me, he got so sick. Oh, I don't, that was good then. Now your ice-cream tastes like...

C.B: Yuck! Half of it ain't no good.

I.B: Can you look back and say you were happy that things turned out the way they did?

C.B: Hmm?

I.B: Are you happy the way things turned out for everybody, looking back on everything?

C.B: Well, for some of them yes, the family and all. I'm glad we turned out. I miss a lot of them, but, I don't know. All my folks are gone, and I really don't have anyone to call Geisler anymore.

J.W: Giesler? What's that?

C.B: That's my, my maiden name, Giesler.

J.W: Oh, ok.

C.B: So, the boys used to tease me called me Geisler. So, but I don't miss a lot of anything. I get too much entertainment here. Between the kids, and, living here, trying to get along. [laughs] I only got, let's see, I was counting this morning. How much time do I got? I'm 91, I don't know, have too much time. Time I get done. I can come back and torment you. So, if I have any more falls, I won't need to come back, I swear. I was counting the falls I had today. I had 20, falls already.

C.A: I know it, you look like somebody's been beating on you with a club.

C.B: Yeap, I look like it.

CA: Now, you remember when Grandpa died, don't you?

I.B: I remember Grandpa Bob.

C.A: But uh, that was a scary experience. We were coming back from the Mall. Coming around the curb.....and we drove up to the light and, dad wasn't saying too much. Turns the corner, we start on up the hill, didn't he mom? In that old gray, little gray Sunbird we had. And, he started going off the road, like this, and, I said, "Dad, you're going to kill us, there's a car coming." He pulls it back on the road and, I thought what's wrong. And..

C.B: By that, by that time I grabbed the handle.

C.A: Well, yeah. But you try fighting the wheel when you can't get your knee over that, over that uh, gear box in the middle to put the brakes on. Uh, actually I don't think he had a stroke.

CB: He didn't.

C.A: But uh, we were going about 35-40 mile an hour, coming around that bend. And, he hit the ditch, missed the phone pole by a hair missed the fence by a hair. We'rethis ditch, in this little tiny car. And, it was school bus time. I was trying to get home before the kids. And, their school bus is coming around.....I'm in the back seat, can't do a damn thing anyway. I told mom, I said, she couldn't get his foot off the brake, accelerator pedal, and I, all we could do was try to get the wheel from getting him in his throat you know. So, I said, "Turn the key off." That's the only thing I could think of you know. Kill the motor. And, we headed into the curb and still we turned it out a little bit, and, it was still coasting. Finally we got the thing stopped. Scared the living shit out of us. Missed cars by a hair. [inaudible 357-359]

C.B: That was scary. That was one thing I don't, I remember.

C.A: Never want to do that again.

J.W: No. I wouldn't want to do that.

C.A: Nobody relieves ya. Then some guy stops in front of us. He said, "You got problems?" I said, "Yeap, I need an ambulance." We was only about a half a block from home. I raced back to the house called the ambulance, called Mel. Then, by that time, got a hold of Odie, the other, the other grandmother. Her and Harry came up then to the school bus for the kids, but Chris had seen it all. [inaudible 371-375]

C.B: It was a pretty scary deal for the kids.

C.A: Hell, it was scary with me in the backseat. There wasn't anything I could do. Set there and pray.

C.B: We did a lot of praying that time. Thank God, we did.

C.A: But, I'll tell you something those cars, we got the same thing out here in this car, it's got that, that gear thing it runs clear across it. You can't get your feet, you try lifting your foot up to get it down there by the brake, and it's impossible. Can't get your foot over that.

C.B: I had a hard time.

C.A: They talk about your hands freezing to the wheel. It happens, couldn't get his hands off the wheel.

C.B: It was like he was frozen to that wheel. [inaudible 388-391] It was a long time before I had nerve to get back into that car and drive. I wasn't driving when we hit. I wished afterwards that I had a been, because maybe I could have served him. Used to lay awake at night, a lot of times at night I couldn't sleep, for thinking about it.

J.W: Man.

C.A: It ain't like a horse and buggy, you know, you can stop them. [laughs]

