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Susan Bailey interview for a Wright State University History Course

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Susan Bailey

C.S. Where did you go to high school?

S.B. Barnersville, Ohio.

C. S. What kind of neighborhood did you grow up in?

S.B. I don't know how to explain that, its you know, small town. It's all one neighborhood. You know it's not, we were kind of up on a hill west of town. Small town, Five thousand.

C.S. Thinking of your high school years and your early twenties, what did you do for fun back then?

S.B. (Laughs) Well, in high school, we cruised around in cars, looking for guys to talk to. We sat in the local restaurant and drank cokes and ate French fries or potato chips, I don't remember which, probably potato chips. Uh, we square danced. Square dancing on weekends was big, everybody, that was the social thing to do in this town. Early twenties, sailed, especially in Cleveland, you mean when I was out of college? I did a lot of sailing. Went to movies, picnics, drive-ins. Always took picnics to the drive-ins. We did clam bakes and cook outs, as soon as I was out of college. There was a lot of partying centered around eating, cooking out, sailing, and drinking. Yeah, you know that's, and I went to concerts and plays with groups of people and with dates. That's when I was living in Cleveland at the time. And there was lots going on culturally in Cleveland at that time.

C.S. This may be the same question, what did you do on dates?

S.B. What did we do on dates? Movies and concerts, out to eat, same things I do now, if I had a date (laughs). Went for drives, we used to go for drives and park and neck when I was in high school. Drive on all the country dirt roads around town,

C.S. Where did you go to see movies?

S.B. Oh, little theaters, we had two in my hometown. One that only had movies on Friday and Saturday nights. And the other one always had a Western on Saturday afternoons so you could go see a Western on Saturday afternoon and then you go to another movie on Saturday night and then you'd go to the other movie on Friday night. So you went to three movies on the weekend. If it was something you wanted to see. Or drive-ins. The theaters were really small, nice, cheap, ten cents. The movie in my college town was a small movie and there was a drive-in, in fact there were two drive-ins not far from college. We went to drive-ins a lot. In the late spring and in the fall.

C.S. Who were some of your favorite actors and actresses?

S.B. Estèr Williams, uh, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Howard Keel. I'm thinking maybe, Rory Calhoun. Bergman was really later, maybe. I don't remember. All the western stars, and I mean Lash Larue, Gene Autry, Roy

Rogers, Richard Widmark, oh yeah, big on Richard Widmark, John Wayne, Tom Mix, I can't remember. Usually we saw musicals on weekends and a western ...

C.S. Where did you like to shop?

S.B. Department stores in Wheeling West Virginia, and in Columbus, Lazarus. We'd make a big trip to Columbus just to go to Lazarus. We'd shop at Coffman's in Pittsburgh and Horne's in Pittsburgh. And Stone and Thomas in Wheeling. And then a couple of little women's specialty stores and then there were a couple of really nice women's specialty stores, in of all places, Cambridge, Ohio. We had probable three little women's stores in our little town. You know you could buy blouses and skirts and dresses and underwear. But if you wanted anything special, something everybody else wouldn't have, you'd go out of town.

C.S. What fashions were popular?

S.B. Peter Pan collar blouses, blue jeans, long white shirts, circular shirts, skirts were like a full circle and were long and we wore saddles and bobby socks, straight up, usually not rolled down, wore them straight up. Wore penny loafers. Plaid, plaid skirts, plaid pants. The dresses we wore, nearly all the dresses had flared skirts or some were just flared out, they weren't gathered at the waist or anything. I'm trying to remember all those dresses. I think probably I had one black sheath dress, a black silk dressy sheath for funerals and things. And it was sophisticated!

C.S. What kind of music did you listen to?

S.B. Really early rock and roll, Elvis, You know I can hear the music, but I can't think of who all the people singing it were. I don't know who else was singing when Elvis was singing. You know I would go to dances, we had dances and they were like record hops and I remember listening to all that stuff but I never bought that stuff because the only music I ever bought was classical music. I still have my 45's record collection from high school. Somebody ought to find that interesting. Chubby Checker was more like in my early twenties, maybe mid twenties. I remember doing the twist maybe two or three years after I got out of college, was when we started doing that. Before that was jitterbugging.

C.S. Did you listen to any of the Big Bands? Was that still popular?

S.B. Yeah, you know I think it was. And my mother really loved it. She liked Guy Lombardo, Benny Goodman, Harry James, Lawrence Welk, but I wasn't crazy about that that music.

C.S. What did you do for entertainment at home?

S.B. Read, played cards, played board games. Almost, what do you do on a rainy day? Because our whole neighborhood on the hill played together. We had a range of about seven or eight years and we played cards together and we played Parcheesi, Monopoly and Canasta. We played kick the can. We played Hid and Seek when we were still in high school. Our whole big gang of kids.

You know it was just fun. Mostly, I read. I don't remember watching very much television. It was there, but I don't remember watching very much of it.

C.S. Do you remember when you got your television?

S.B. I was in junior high. It didn't have a round screen. It had a square screen. The first TV I ever saw had a round screen. But I was in grade school and my aunt and uncle had one.

C.S. What did you do on summer breaks and vacations?

S.B. I went to summer camp. I went away to camp. Usually, sometimes for one camp. I'd go to 4H camp; I'd go to a church camp. I'd go to band camp. You know in August. This was when school used to start after Labor Day, so we'd have a band camp the last week in August. Most the time in summer, I was away. Quite a few of us in the crowd I ran around with went to camp also. First you got ready for camp and then you got unpacked and you were getting ready to go to camp or you were at camp.

C.S. Who were your role models?

S.B. Older kids in the high school. Kids who were four or five years older. Kids who were seniors when we were freshmen. Kids who were away at college. The big kids were always our role models. We, didn't do... Some of my counselors at camp were role models. A couple of the teachers were role models. I don't ever remember doing celebrity movie star, singer, entertainer, sports figure, sports figure? I didn't know from diddly, I couldn't have told you who was playing tennis or anything. I wasn't interested. Just older kids, counselors, teachers, yep.

C.S. Is there anything I didn't ask you that you could add?

S.B. There were ten girls in my clique and it was a controlling clique because we ran the high school organizations and the 4-H club, you know, all the way up, it had been this group of ten girls in my class that had run things. We still stay in touch and we still see each other. At least once a year, we go back at Pumpkin Festival time or in the middle of the summer if it's a year we have a class reunion. And we're just like we were then, I mean all chiefs, no Indians. And four of the girls still live in that little town and are married and raised their kids there. They kind of take charge of the stuff that has to be done if we are all going to get together.