

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Women's Herstory Project

Personal Experiences

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RUTH SIEBENALLER

Interviewed

by

Sally Carter

on

August 24, 1987

and

August 31, 1987

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: RUTH SIEBENALLER

INTERVIEWER: Sally Carter

SUBJECT: employment history, background information

DATE: August 24, 1987

C: This is an interview with Ruth Siebenaller on Women's Herstory, for the Women's Resource Center in conjunction with the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, by Sally Carter. This interview is being conducted at 910th Tactical Air Group on August 24, 1987 and August 31, 1987 at 4:45 p.m.

Ruth, what do you remember about your parents and family?

S: The thing that I remember, of course, most about my family is that both of my parents worked. My father was a barber by trade. My mother had a confectionery store. I had an older brother. In spite of the fact that they both worked they had a good track of what I was doing all of the time because the barbershop and the store and the house were all connected together.

C: So your childhood was spent back and forth between . . .

S: No. I was right there by where my father and mother worked. I grew up learning how to use the cash register in the store; I think from the time I was nine years old and on I helped out. I was expected to help out.

C: Do you have brothers and sisters?

S: I have one older brother. He now lives in Florida and is a retired college professor. He also retired from the Air Force Reserve with a rank of Lt Col. I see him several times a year.

C: Did you all have a close relationship when you were growing up?

- S: I would say when I was growing up and was younger, no, because I was always the thorn in his side tattling on him. There is actually about four and a half years difference in our ages. He is that much older. As I grew older and started dating, I appreciated having him because he would know the fellows I dated and made it a point to find out what they were like. He would advise me whether I should go out with a fellow or not go out with that one because he does not have that good of a reputation and so on and so forth. Yes, we became close and to this day are close in spite of the fact that he is in Florida and I am in Ohio.
- C: So he made good choices to help you out as you were growing up.
- S: Yes. He was a good influence in my life.
- C: What was it like when you were going to school?
- S: I always enjoyed school. My mother had been a school-teacher. My mother has been dead some years. She graduated from the Baltimore State Teachers College. In going back to that year that was really an accomplishment because at that time a lot of the women only had an education up to the sixth grade and maybe the eighth grade. My mother always put an emphasis on education. I remember her helping me when I needed help with homework. I was outgoing socially too. In the 10th grade I was on the National Honor Society. However, in the 11th and 12th grade I just "bombed out". I was really too busy in all of the social affairs which did not please my mother too much, but I had a good time and a lot of friends. I played in the high school band. I enjoyed it and loved it. I really did. I played in the high school band at Warren Harding from the time I was in ninth grade, which was junior high school, all through tenth and twelfth grade. I love music.
- C: What instruments did you play?
- S: I played the alto horn and the baritone horn.
- C: Do you still play?
- S: No. I probably could not even manage that. I still can play halfway decent, but that is it.
- C: So reading music has helped you then throughout the whole time?
- S: Yes.
- C: Do you play for church or social activities or anything?
- S: When I was in high school I had a job after school playing

for a dance studio in Warren. Three days a week, directly from school I went to the studio which was about three blocks from my home. She paid me fifty cents an hour to play the piano. I thought that I was really making good money. That was in 1940 or 1941. That was not bad. Music, as I said before, has always been an important part of my life and has helped me make a little extra money.

C: Did you go to college after bombing out the last three years of high school?

S: No. I really did not bomb out. I bombed out in the Honor's Society. I would like to clarify that. I did not make National Honor Society the last two grades. My mother had hoped for me to go to college. My brother went on to college. The Second World War came along. He did graduate. He went into Officers Candidate School. When I was in the tenth grade my father died of a heart attack. Financially my mother was not able to help me go to school. At that time there were no student loans and that type of thing. I did not go on to school. That is one thing that I feel badly about, although I do and I do not. I possibly could have done it on my own later on in life, but I married and started having a family. Raising a family was uppermost in my mind. I had no college education.

C: Besides playing the piano at the dance studio did you have work experience prior to your marriage?

S: Yes. After I graduated from high school I got a job down at Strouss in downtown Warren. I worked there about ten months. I was dating the fellow that I married and that was my husband. He went into the Navy. We decided before he went away to war we wanted to get married. We did get married. I remained down at Strouss for another three or four months until he completed boot training at Great Lakes Naval Station. At that time I went with him and stayed with him.

C: So you were able to stay with him while he was stationed in the Great Lakes?

S: Yes. We had a room. At that time I was able to go to work for the Department of the Navy. Fortunately I was hired as a GS1 clerk. That was my first government job. I worked in office personnel. Basically all we did was filing. They did not give any responsibilities to temporary GS1 clerks. One amusing thing was that there was another girl in the office with the name of Ruth Schmidt, the same initials as mine. Everything that we had to file, we had to initial. The chief in the office had a desk way in the front of the room. The room that I worked in was a very large sized room. If he found any error in the filing he would just yell your

name out and say "Get up here." He kept calling Ruth. Everyone would look and the sailors would laugh and say, "Are you goofing up again?" I would run up to his desk and say real nice, "Gee, those are Rosanne's initials. Those are not mine." It got embarrassing. On the average he would call me twice a day and no one knew what he was saying. I finally said, "Chief, how about we use our middle initial too?" At that time I was using RAS. That solved the problem very nicely because he soon quit calling my name and embarrassing me. That is one thing that I will never forget.

C: I can imagine. They were getting you used to the system of you take the blame until you prove otherwise. So you worked for the Department of the Navy at Great Lakes for that time span, August 1942 to June 1943?

S: Yes. The middle of 1943 my husband was transferred out to Ames, Iowa at the college out there. He was not going to college, but he was part of the Navy V-12 program. He was a yeoman in the Navy. I followed him out there. We were only there two months when our first child was born, a girl. So naturally, I was out of the work force at that time. I was staying with him, of course.

C: So while your children were small you were not really active in the work force?

S: Well, that is true. I was out of the work force until my children were in grade school. By the time we had our third and last child, the other two were self-sufficient. At that time I went to work for the Department of the Army at Lordstown Military Reservation.

C: So you really did not have any trouble with maternity benefits when you were having your children because your husband was military and you had all of the benefits there?

S: That is correct.

C: When you were out of the work force raising your children did you do anything to keep skills going while remaining with your music and raising your family?

S: I did some piano playing again at the dance studio. I also got into ballroom dance teaching. I was a member of the Dance Masters of America which is accredited. It is a society for dance teachers. It is still an active organization. I passed the examination in the state of Ohio. You had to pass in two different dance categories. I passed in tap and I passed in ballroom dancing. I can do a time step today, but I would be a poor tap dancer. I can still ballroom dance quite well. I enjoyed teaching. I may have done

that a couple evenings a week or sometimes I would make an afternoon appointment. It worked out very well for me raising the children. We were just buying our first home. We could use the money.

C: It gave you an outlet to be with people.

S: Right, it did. I enjoyed that and I liked it. I may add one amusing incident. I also taught for the YMCA for a year. I was teaching a class one evening when a blond lady came in. She was quite attractive. She was joining the class. She had not signed up. I was taking part of the class down at one end of a large room during the instruction. I turned around and low and behold there was that lovely blond lady teaching dance steps to the other half of my class. I really did not know at first how to handle it. I finally went over and said, "You are apparently a very good dancer." I did not say "dance instructor." I said, "I was hired by the YMCA to instruct this class. I would prefer to do the teaching myself." I learned later that she was an Arthur Murray dance teacher. That was interesting.

C: She came in to probably see what was going on and wound up helping to teach.

S: Right. It was funny.

C: So you did ballroom and tap. Were there anyother types of dancing?

S: No.

C: When you were making a transition back from being a parent and part-time dance teacher, what were your preparations and how did you go about it?

S: Do you mean after I was not teaching dance anymore?

C: You said you were out of the federal government work force.

S: Right.

C: You were just teaching part-time at the dance studio and at the Y and you had the two children. You went back into federal employment. What made you decide to go back into federal employment?

S: I had a friend who insisted that I should take the civil service test. Back then that was exactly what you did. I said, "Well, maybe I will do that." I did go take the civil service test. I do not know what my grade was or what grade point I got on that. They were hiring out at

Lordstown military reservations. I went out there. I had an interview from a former classmate who was a manpower officer. I do not really know whether it was my great qualifications alone or the fact that I knew the man who was doing the hiring. He said, "Ruth, your records look great." He had interviewed other people. He said, "As far as I'm concerned the job is your's. It is very interesting." I was delighted because I think it was a GS3. I was making more money. It was more dependable than teaching dance. When you are in the dance teaching profession if someone does not show up, you do not make any money. I did work in the manpower office the whole time that I was at Lordstown. The job was not rewarding in the respect that I did not really care for the manpower career field. To me it had too many technicalities. I was just grateful to have a job. So naturally I stayed until they closed that Lordstown military reservation which they did in 1963. They were reassigning people, some to Cleveland and other government agencies. Then I learned that I was pregnant with my last child. Again I did not want to commute. They offered me a job in Cleveland. I just resigned.

I was home with my youngster until she was going on two, which was rather young. Then I went back to work for a mortgage company in downtown Warren. From there I went to work for an electrical contractor. I loved both of the jobs because I was the one woman in the office. I had a lot of exposure to people and a lot of different experiences. Being with an electrical contractor I was used to bidding procedures. I got to know a little bit about blueprints, specks, and drawings. Of course, they did not pay at that time a great amount of money. I think when I started at the mortgage company I was making twenty-five dollars a week. Then when I went on to Carlson Electric, I think they started me with fifty dollars a week. I must have worked for Carlson Electric for two and a half years. Business was not going too well. There was a Carlson Electric main office in Youngstown. They decided that it was not paying them to keep the Warren office open. They gave us all a severance pay and let us go. I kind of enjoyed that because I had my summer at home. Then I thought--this is really stupid. I should try and get back into federal service, which I did. I was hired on with the Air Force.

C: When you went to work for the Department of the Army how old was your youngest child at that time?

S: I know Sharon, my oldest girl, was old enough. She was probably about fourteen. She could look after her younger brother when he got home from school. I had a very nice neighbor on the one side of me who always checked on them. She made sure that she was home and Jeff was home and everything was going the way that it should. I did not have any

problems with that. I really didn't.

C: When you came back to work for the Department of the Army, how long had you been back in the Warren area? Did you travel with your husband?

S: Yes. Actually we were only out of Warren, Ohio at the tops almost four years.

C: So he did not make the military a career?

S: No, he did not. He worked at Republic Steel before he went into the service. When he got out of the service he went into the Navy Reserves. He was with them about a year. He had a call from someone out here at the air base who knew him. They said that they were looking for a first sergeant in the commander's office, who happened to be Colonel Hendricks at that time. He went out there. He was interviewed. He got an ART [Air Reserve Technician] position. He finished his military career as a reserve serving in the ART position.

C: So he was working here while you were at Lordstown?

S: Right. We talk about it. It is interesting because we were buying a home. We thought that it was better. I even said something to him one time about coming to the air base to work. It was not that he didn't want me out here. He said, "There is a possibility they can always close one of the facilities down. Maybe for security it would be better as long as you are at Lorstown and stayed there and I will stay at the air base." He was so right. They did close Lordstown. I had no choice. I did come home.

C: After your youngest was born in 1963?

S: Yes.

C: Who did your baby sitting? You said she was much younger than . . .

S: She was. We had an older lady. She was a widow. She had no car, but she did not live that far from us. We would go every morning and pick her up. We would bring her to the house. She just loved Lesa. She stayed with her all day. She even asked if she could take her downtown on the bus. We had buses running then in the city. She was so good to her. There were no problems. I do not think that I resented working and leaving my child. Maybe that is not a healthy feeling and maybe it is. I think the main reason for that is I spent so much time with the other two when they were younger. I think after I worked maybe I selfishly did not feel that I wanted to give up my work career and stay home and raise this child. I would have never left her unless



I knew she was in good care.

C: Right. You did. The woman that took care of her was a good surrogate type mother.

S: Yes, she was very good.

C: Your coming back into the work force was not necessarily or primarily money although . . .

S: We could use it.

C: But it was not critical at that point?

S: No, it was not critical.

C: So you did derive some enjoyment out of the work that you were doing.

S: Definitely.

C: We have not really discussed the types of work. When you worked in the office you said that it was a one-woman office. Does that mean that you did things like bookkeeping . . .

S: Payroll, typing their bids, some of the bids for electrical work.

C: When you came out to the Youngstown Air Base, what type of work did you do when you started out there?

S: They had a temporary position open for six weeks in the finance office. A lady by the name of Antionette Raschel was the finance officer. I worked for Tony for six weeks. While I was still out here they had an opening in operations for a flight records clerk. I applied for the job. Basically, in flight records, you kept track of their flight records. I applied. I did not think that I had a chance of getting the position. I worked hard when I was out there in finance in those six weeks. I tried to apply myself. I think that impressed them. I was a good worker. That is probably why I got hired in the flight records. I was a GS3 when I went to the temporary. I think flight records was a GS4. That was in operations. I spent more time at the air base in the operations career field than I had in the contracting division.

C: Did you stay at a GS4 grade operations or was there progression?

S: There was progression. There was just wonderful progression. I made a GS5. I think that I was in operations about fifteen years. That is very poor progression for a person that is trying to improve themselves. I was in a dead-

end position. I loved the work. I really did. The flight records, the flight management finally became computerized. That was a big challenge. They would have conferences for flight management. I got to go to them a couple of times.

C: What was that for?

S: These were training conferences. The people that I worked with there were fine. I have never known a group as nice to work with as your operations people. I think that they are basically friendly and I think that they are helpful. I really enjoyed working there. I worked independent of everyone else in operations. If I needed a day off, I could schedule my own work. I could work ahead or whatever I wanted to do in order to be able to take that time off.

C: What kind of things did they do in operations at an air base?

S: I am speaking now when I first came in there. They were carrier groups, and they had C119 mission. Strictly almost like a C130 type of mission, they would airlift. They would airlift like out in the midwest when they had those bad snowstorms. People could not get out. They would go over and drop food to the people. They went on rescue missions. You just felt that you were supporting a very worthwhile mission. You felt more involved in the mission because you were at the hub of it all. We all are here to support our flying and to support the mission. They were a C119 group and basically the air crews at that time, pilots and navigators, were probably more my age. They used to call me the den mother. That was really nice because I had a sewing kit in my desk and if they were going out on a mission and a button came off or anything, I would sew the button on. I would do all of those little, nice things for those guys. They really treated me great. I had a lot of respect for them and I enjoyed their company. Then in due time we got fighter missions, the A37's. I did not look forward to that change at all because I thought--These are the younger fighter jocks. They are going to be a bunch of young kids who think that they are hotshots. I was proven wrong. When they got here, I found them all to be nice, young men. Some of them could have been my son, the age of my own son. It was a whole new learning experience for me working with them because we had a different type of mission. Their flying requirements, of course, had changed. In the flight records you had to track all of their standardization evaluation which is tracking all training, making certain all training and flight requisites were met. It was just interesting and amazing, the difference in the missions.

C: With flight records you had to see to it that the training to keep them proficient as flyers and navigators was done in a timely manner, and properly recorded?

S: You had to do that. I scheduled their training when they went down for their orientation when they went into the compression chamber. I have been away from it so long, Sally. They were required so many landings a month, so many night flights, and so many daytime flights. The instructor pilots had to have so many IP flights. There are so many things that the average person does not know. They think a reserve unit is out there flying around spending the government's money. Always they are here for a purpose and it is to protect. For them to stay proficient if they were ever called to war or out on a mission, those guys are trained; they are up-to-date on all of their proficiency requirements; they are ready to go.

C: Was there a big personnel population change between the 119's and the A37's?

S: We lost air crew members because in the A37's, you strictly just have pilots. Of course, when the C119. . . For people who don't understand it, we had navigators, loadmasters, and flight engineers. So your air crews were much greater on the C119.

C: Because it was a larger aircraft . . .

S: Right and a different mission.

C: I can understand how they can do without all the rest of the air crew, but they are still without a navigator. Does that mean that the navigational duty was performed also by the pilot? We are talking about the navigational duties on the A37's?

S: On the A37's the pilots have to do their own navigation. The pilots do all of their preliminary flight plan in the flight planning room. When you have a navigator on a carrier like a C130 or a C119, a navigator does a lot of that for you. In a fighter aircraft the pilot has to do his own navigations and the whole bit. He has more responsibility because not only does he fly the plane, he has to chart where he is going . . .

C: And make any corrections too.

S: That is right.

C: When you first came out here it was a 119 carrier, then you went to the fighters . . .

- S: I would like to add in there that it did not go exactly that way. I omitted the one part after the C119's. We lost the mission. We knew that we were getting fighters, but we were not getting them for maybe a period of six to eight months. In an interim of time we had a U3A which is like a Cessna airplane. Our fellows who had flown the C119's wanted to stay in the unit until the transition was made to the fighters. They flew the little U3A's. I knew at that time there was a lot of talk about--Well this is nice. They have a nice plaything airplane out there that they are flying around, not so! They still had their flying requirements that they had to meet in that aircraft. We did not have the U3A aircraft maybe ten months. At that time we got the fighters. I just wanted to put that in there because it would not have been correct to say we went right from the C119's to the 837's. There was a interim there of the U3A's.
- C: I understand that there was a time when this installation was closed down and then they reopened it. Were you a part of the installation at that time?
- S: No. They actually never closed it down. We had a closure order. That had to be at least fifteen years ago or better. We were all given letters for reassignment.
- C: Which mission were you in then?
- S: We were in the C119. My husband and I were to go to Brook Air Force Base in Louisiana. He has an assignment, I believe in military personnel. He would stay the same grade. They had a flight management job at the same grade for me. We were going to put our house on the market. It is a good thing we did not. They retracted it. Everyone was getting orders that they had to find a job for everybody. They retracted it. The base did stay open. We never did leave. We were grateful for that.
- C: But you were all prepared?
- S: Yes.
- C: Did you have the children at home?
- S: Sure. It was our bread and butter around the home.
- C: Were any of the children grown by then?
- S: No. They were not grown by then. We did not even have our third child at that time. The other two were getting to be self-sufficient. I know they would have adjusted to move if it had been necessary. In fact some of these kids like to move. I do not know. When we told them about it

they did not seem upset. They wanted to know what Louisiana was like.

C: They must have had a pretty secure situation. I notice the relationship that you had with your parents with them both working seemed like that had carried forth in the relationship that you had with your children with both of you working. You were working when Lesa was little. You had that good person to stay there. Did you have any difficulties whenever they got sick?

S: I was pretty fortunate. If she was sick, I usually stayed home, but there again, knock on wood, she was not a sick child. The days that she was sick were very few and far between. She had something like chicken pox and was not real sick. That is normal for little children to pick that up. I would say a sickness when they are really running a temperature and you do not know what is wrong, then I would be home. That was the most important, of course. I did not have any problems when I wasn't home and was working.

C: The lady that you said watched her, did she watch her the whole time that she was young enough to need baby-sitting care or did you change sitters?

S: No. We were very fortunate. We had her for a number of years until Lesa started school. We had a neighbor who took her to school and picked her up until she was old enough to walk on her own to school. My son was at least in ninth grade. He was home to look after her. She was only home an hour and a half when he got home from school. We did not have any problem there. It worked out quite well. I do not know if I would ever do it any differently. If I could do it all over again the chances are I would probably do the same thing.

C: It sounds like it worked out real well for you because you spent a lot of critical time with your first children. You were there the whole time. There was no real financial burden with you being home. When you went back into the work force you were able to find things that were stimulating to you and continue working. You said that you were fifteen years in operations. So you were there also when they made the transitions from the A37's to the C130's?

S: Yes.

C: Here again, you are ready for a transition.

S: Shortly after that is when I came up to contracting.

C: What led to your changing from operations to contracting?

- S: I was in what they call a dead-end position. You knew that you could never get promoted any higher. I was a GS5. They had a position open for a contract specialist under an Upward Mobility Program. To qualify for the Upward Mobility Program you had to be in a dead-end position. It is not just qualifications. Being in a dead-end position I had a shot at that job. I was interviewed. I was hired for it. That was in December of 1980. Before I went into that my husband kept asking me, "Are you sure this is what you want? I know you are happy in operations. I know it is potential seven, but money is not everything." I said, "No. I think that I need something more challenging right now." I want to elaborate not on any great length about this, but it was unfortunate because I had only been in contracting three or four months and I was scheduled for my first school when my husband became ill. He was finally diagnosed with leukemia. He lived two years with it and then he passed away. That really shot my schools down. I would not go. I could not go to school at night like over here at the university. On their Upward Mobility Program unless you have formal training which was a two year period . . . In other words, I could not go to the seven for two years. Had I gone over to Youngstown and picked up some courses in conjunction with contracting, then I could have made my seven in a year, but with his illness I was not able to do that. I do not regret it. I made it on my feet alone to get the seven. Then when he did pass away I was very grateful that I had a job. My children were grown and gone, except for Lesa. She left about a year before her father died. I was left alone. I was very grateful that I had that job to go to, to keep me occupied, and to keep me busy.
- C: How about talking a little bit more about your experiences in base contracting?
- S: My experiences in base contracting . . . Of course, you have a lot of variety even though you are just handling a job problem. Mine was contract specialist, which basically I was a buyer of all types of items. On an air base the size of the one here at Youngstown, you were buying tires, you were buying office supplies, you were buying ever so many number of things.
- C: Including services?
- S: Yes. We administered contracts for the various services that we needed like carpet cleaning, janitorial service, servicing on some of the equipment, and the motor pull trucks and cars. It was never boring. It was very challenging, especially when you were buying supply items. Some of them are very difficult to find. You are constantly always searching for sources because those type of things were not on the

GSA contract. I believe I explained that earlier. We had our sources of supply, and the Federal Prison Industries is your first source of supply. The government trains the prisoners in making furniture, brooms, shoes and all types of commodities. The FPI sells to the government, and as buyers, we have to support them.

C: I noticed an interesting book in your office. It was Ohio Businesses Owned by Women. Did you have a lot of dealing with them?

S: We have had and they still do. In fact, we get an extra credit if we encourage all of these small business. They are especially encouraging women to get into business for themselves. They are coded in a four letter code that goes into our computer system. The women are coded with a W. When headquarters sees that, you get a little extra credit for supporting the women who are in business for themselves.

C: What is the extra credit? What are you talking about?

S: I do not mean extra credit. I mean you get a credit for your buys that you make. Of course, we have a certain number of purchases that you are supposed to make a day. For example, just to get away from the women bit, if we deal with just large businesses, that is a big no. These computer reports go down to our headquarters which is down at Robins AFB, Georgia. If they see this type of thing from the buyer, you would be told about it. When they see that we are trying to encourage and place orders with women and small businesses they know that we are trying to comply with our regulations.

C: So it looks good as far as your record of following the rules that are set up and the guidelines that are set up. It is also advantageous for the small businesses in the area. This helps to keep the economy going for the small businesses.

S: Right. Absolutely. Women have been trying too because they were discouraged when women started getting into business for themselves. Women in any field . . . You have to give them a lot of credit. They are intelligent; they are ambitious. I think that is great. I really do. I would like to see more women getting into that.

C: With you being a woman, we use the term ambitious and how great it is. Have you run across in your work men who had a bad impression of women being aggressive or being forward-thinking?

- S: I do not think so. I base that on the fact that I am naturally a woman and I was the buyer. I know a majority of vendors I dealt with were men. I know that they wanted to get the business from the government. But on the other hand, they were very courteous and very helpful. If they could not supply the item that we were asking them for, many times they would recommend another vendor. I do not think that they--the ones I dealt with--resented women being in business.
- C: That is good to hear.
- S: It is good to hear.
- C: As we go along we are still throwing out that stigma that a man is aggressive and a woman is unfeminine.
- S: Right. I guess that is a good word for it.
- C: I am glad to know that at least in the world of commerce that it is improving.
- S: It is anymore. Men do not care anymore. If you notice sometimes when you are out on a luncheon, you will see businessmen and businesswomen together having lunch and exchanging ideas. I think that is healthy, and I think that is good.
- C: Did you all have that type of relationship in your own work area that you could have business lunches together as well as working within the office?
- S: No. One thing for the government when you are a buyer, we are not to accept gratuities. It is interesting, Sally, that you mentioned that because we were always under the impression that lunch was a gratuity because it would put the buyer in the position--Well, you had lunch with me. It would be nice if you would give him some orders. So we never accepted lunch offers. Then the men would come around and say, "Can I take you girls to lunch?" We would just say, "No, thank you." Very recently a letter came up from our headquarters stating that they will not consider a lunch a gratuity. So now that I am retired I find out that I could have gone to some nice lunches. It is a little late now.
- C: That is always the way, after the fact. That it is good to know that this will be helpful to some other people as we go along. We talked about what made you decide to go into this contracting area and some of the things that you have done along the way within your working career. You had the various sides from being full-time mother and being a working mother. So when you were working, you had



- a family at home. Do you want to talk a little bit about how you handled the chores in the house for one thing?
- S: When I first went back to work as I said earlier, it was only a few years. My oldest girl was old enough to look after her brother when he got home from school. At that time she accepted it very well. There were times that she complained. Then there were times if there was something that she had to do after school, fortunately, I had a neighbor who would watch the young boy. It really worked out well. I did not worry because I did not get home that late. I was working I think at that time until four-thirty. They did not get home from school until three. So actually it was just an hour and a half time lapse. The amusing thing is years have gone by and they are all grown now and married and are not living at home. My older daughter will say, "I can remember mother when I had to come right home from school to watch Jeffrey." So maybe there was some resentment that I was not aware of at the time. The transition worked well because they were older. As I stated it was much easier for me--this transition of going back to work with children--because the children were older; they were not preschool age. I think had they have been at such a young age, it would have been more difficult for me. I noted that in the years that I have worked, frequently, and I am not saying this in fault-forming manner, when I worked with women who had young children, you would find that they had a higher rate of absenteeism from their jobs due to the fact that their children were very small. If they were ill, the mother naturally wanted to stay home because they did not want to leave the sick youngster to the baby-sitter. I think that would be the biggest disadvantage to a younger mother working with young children.
- C: That has been my observation also. It has happened. Traditionally, you feel more responsible the younger they are. When they get a little bit older, you feel just a little better. You give them their instructions and have somebody check in on them. You do not worry as much.
- S: The more older they get, the more responsibility you give them.
- C: Right. That helps them to adjust quite well. You mentioned your oldest daughter complaining about having to go home right after school. How is her life as far as doing things productively.
- S: She was married and unfortunately divorced. She has two sons of her own. She was put in a position when she was divorced. Her boys were four and six. She found herself having to put them in a day school type of a thing because she had no older children of course that could watch them.

She had to go back out into the work force herself. Everything worked out fine. I do not believe that her children suffered from that. In fact it might have been to their advantage. They had some schooling before they were at the age to go to the public schools.

C: What kind of work is she doing now?

S: Right now she is a flight attendant with US Air flying out of Pittsburgh. She lives in Coraopolis. She did not do that her entire career. She remarried and lived in Hawaii for ten years. There again, unfortunately, was another divorce. This seems to happen with people frequently today. Divorce is not like it used to be. There used to be a stigma attached with a divorce. Her boys were older. The one boy just graduated from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical School. Her oldest boy recently got out of the Navy. When she came back from Hawaii after the divorce . . . She had been at that time a professional model. In fact, she had done quite a number of commercials that are on television. She said modeling was not consistent of course. You cannot depend on that for your livelihood. She is attractive--not that she is my daughter. She is intelligent. She applied for the airlines and was accepted for training. She has been with US Air now around three years. She likes it. It is hard work, but she really enjoys it.

C: I think that is it encouraging too to note that the older woman, I am not saying that she is old, but older than in her twenties can be a flight attendant. There was a time when if you were over twenty-five you did not even consider going into it.

S: That is true. And another thing Sally, there was a time when if you got married you had to leave that profession. That is interesting. Everything just seems to improve in a way. That is what I am saying. Women have more opportunities, and not only with my daughter, I have to admire any woman who has had a setback. A divorce certainly is a setback. They can pick up their life and go on and find a profession.

C: Did all of your children go to college or did any of them go?

S: My son is a college graduate. Sharon, the older daughter, has an equivalent of about two years. She does not have an associate's degree. She had some college at Youngstown State and I cannot think of the college that she attended in Hawaii. My younger daughter, Lesa, is presently going to a business school now in Houston, Texas.

C: All of those count, education of all the areas.

S: Absolutely.

- C: I think that the trade school is becoming more and more effective, especially in this computer age. You can study computer programming and things of that nature without having a four year degree.
- S: That is true.
- C: Your husband was in the military. You mentioned that your grandson was in the Navy. Did your children . . .
- S: My son was in the Air Force Reserves. The program was a nonpilot program. They had to be in college and be in the reserves. Sometime before graduation he had to serve six months active duty.
- C: He was probably in an ROTC program.
- S: I am not sure, Sally. It was a newer program at that time. I am sure that was before you came out here to the air base yourself.
- C: So all of your family has had work experience and are currently involved in some type of productive salary earning.
- S: Yes, that is correct.
- C: When you were working so readily how did you get into labor saving devices, and what changes in labor saving devices have you noticed during your career from the time you first started working? What things were you able to use to help you out at home, and what do you have available now?
- S: Of course, like most working women when I first started back to work I think all I had at that time was naturally a refrigerator and kitchen appliances and a washer and a dryer. I did not even at one point have a dryer when I went back to work. I used to love when I was at home hanging clothes out. I still do that. They always smelled so nice. In the winter you had the heat on. When I look back on hanging clothes in the basement, they dried stiff. It was just terrible. We did get a dryer. After I had a clothes dryer I thought that I would never be without one again. Then in due time I thought a microwave would be nice. Mine is not a fancy microwave with all of those gadgets on it. I do not cook in it. I use it basically to warm things and heat leftovers in it. After my husband passed away, it has been a godsend to me. During the week when I was going to work, I would usually come home and have TV Dinners or some of these nice frozen foods today. I would cook on the weekend and manage to have some leftovers that I could warm up. So I think to women who work a microwave is a big boost and is really helpful.

C: Right. The transition that you will find I think is people who are your age and mine are more apt to use it to warm things up rather than cook in it.

I noticed the changes in the frozen foods. It used to be everything was in a metal container for the conventional oven. Now I have noticed in the market that they have some that you can use in either place, either in the microwave or in the conventional oven.

S: Right. That is true. Oh I imagine, Sally, down the road five years even from now they will have more things to help the women who do work and keep the home going to simplify things.

C: Right. Why do you work a job or a career? Sometimes there is a fine line between them. A woman starts out at a job and winds up leading a career.

S: To be very honest when I went back to work it was for a job because we knew there would be college expenses down the road. We could not handle that with just my husband's income. I think that once a woman is in the work force, and as your job progresses, you become more and more interested in your job. You learn that through any schools offered to you, through the government, or by taking night courses at a local university you certainly better yourself in your career field, and open up the door for promotion. I especially found this to be true in the contracting field. Training schools are not only offered, they are a requisite.

C: Do you want to talk about adjustments in your social life and church activities and personal time? What types of things have you noticed that have been different because you have been working.

S: I believe the main thing when I went back to work I found out that I could not keep up with social obligation. I have always enjoyed playing bridge. It is my favorite card game. I have been active in my church. I belong to the Warren Emblem Club which is an auxiliary of the Warren Elks Lodge. At one time I held office in the Emblem Club as the organist. I am really not an organist. I play the piano. I kept that up for two years. It got to be a drag. The biggest drag was that the meetings or organizations were never over early. They had their business meetings, then their social hour with dessert or whatever. I found that getting home at eleven o'clock at night was just too demanding on me for the next day. By the time I got myself organized for the next day with the clothes laid out--which I always did or at least had in mind what I was going to wear--it would make it so late that I really did not enjoy the organization anymore. I went inactive. I am still inactive in that group. Of course

now that I am retired I will probably be getting back into it. I was not singing in the choir. I cannot call myself . . . Well, within the last five years I have not been a choir member. They probably do not miss me. I do not know if my voice is that great. You do sacrifice your personal time because you find that you do not have that time anymore to devote. Now granted, there are some women who just seem to be goers. They can go to bed at midnight or twelve-thirty and get up and go to work. I am not just one of them. I never was even when I was younger. You do make sacrifices more on that line. That was a big adjustment. I did not play bridge at all. Maybe once in awhile I would go to a card party where they were having a style show. Now that I am retired I am looking forward to getting more involved with the things that I like to do.

- C: But you do not really regret the things that you had to put into an inactive status?
- S: No, not at all do I regret it. I feel that through my working over the years I benefited myself. I did not stagnate. I kept myself mentally active. Not only that, I feel that I was able to help my husband give our children a little better education, which we did. It just was not that important. I am happy. I think if I had to do that all over again, I would probably go the same route.
- C: That sounds encouraging. So you would not change anything as far as working. Within the different areas that you worked over the years--we have discussed that you have seen a lot of positive changes--have you noticed any areas in looking back, people that you know, that you see that still need to have some changes set forth?
- S: I suppose if you delved into it deep enough, naturally there is no doubt. Although being honest, I cannot put my finger on any one area that I would say would need improvement, especially in this last career field that I have just retired from. They are constantly raising the standards for the quality and type of purchasing. I think these restrictions of keeping you in a certain dollar threshold, making you go out and compete and get competitive pricing, has all been for the best. I can remember when I first started, and that was only seven years ago in the contracting field, we had our regulations. We weren't competing as much. As I am saying, I have seen the different areas improve. I really could not put my finger on anything and say, "Well I still think . . ." I am sure that there are areas that do need improved on. Maybe some of the forms can be updated and save some of the paper work. Maybe some of them can be completely deleted. Some of this we possibly do not need, but these are not critical areas. It is just part of the paper mail that in the government you are going to have to

contend with.

C: How do you feel about having not gone to college?

S: Now that I am older I really regret that. I feel that I might have done something entirely different with my life. Education is important. It is one thing that they never can take from you, never. If I had not have married at a young age, which I did, eighteen years old, and rolling right into a war, the availability of college wasn't there for me. Then I started raising a family. We all read in the papers about a sixty-nine year old lady getting her college degree. It is being done. I suppose in all honesty if I had wanted it that bad I could have done it, but I did not. To me, I like my home. I like my family. I did not feel like I wanted to work all day and then drive to Youngstown or Kent and go to school at night. I wish now as I look back at it that when I was young I had a college education.

C: Do you have a choice of careers that you would have majored in at that time? Did some field of study interest you?

S: I do not know of anything right off the top of my head. Probably I would have liked the journalism. I always liked writing. I was in a drama club in high school. I liked play acting. All of that kind of fits in. Publicity work has always interested me. I think if I would have gone on to college, I probably would have went for that area, journalism.

C: It is a real interesting field. Do you think that you might at this point in time do something that works along those lines?

S: I do not know. I have not been retired long enough. I have thought, though, that one thing I maybe would do is go back to either Kent or Youngstown. To be very honest I have not studied the curriculum as to what is offered. I think it would be great to do that, not for any job purposes now because I did retire, just to keep my mind active, just to keep learning. If you do not, you stagnate. You get stagnant. You sit there looking at the boob tube. This is entertaining you, with the exception of the news. You are not thinking. You are just sitting there being entertained. I do not want to fall into that bordom and just stagnate.

C: That is good to hear. That way you will also be able to do a lot of good and be an example for others pulling along. Can you think of something, maybe three different things, over the course of your whole life, just some primary events that might have been turning points for you? You mentioned the war and what went on during that time.

S: I have heard so many people my age who were involved in World War II. They all just felt that they lost four years out of their life. A lot of them, my husband, my brother, and my brother-in-law, were all in different branches of the service at approximately the same period of time when the war ended. We all lost four years out of our lives because we were not able to start getting a home. We were going city to city or state to state or wherever they were stationed. I did go with my husband as long as I could. I think that in a way was a detriment. We got a slow start. Back then you could not even . . . When the Second World War ended, you could not touch a house. We did not have the money for it. You could not call that a turning point in my career, but it certainly affected my life and many other people in the same age bracket. As I said earlier in our interview, when I was in school I was more into dancing and playing the piano type of thing. All of a sudden you realize where, as you enjoy it, it does not test your mentality and it is not a field that you can really make a lot of money in; at least back then you could not. This was when I pulled on my skills that I was taught in high school, I guess the typing and basic office work. That turned my career field around. I got into office work. I worked for two, small, individual companies. There again I guess that we all have turning points in our life. I cannot say that anything major turned my career around. I did not have anyone pushing me to go take this course or take that course or anything like that. I do not regret what I have done with my life. I think that I worked reasonably well. I think that I was reasonably successful and reasonably intelligent.

C: Do you consider yourself self-motivated then?

S: I think so. Definitely.

C: This cultural revolution that we have been going through that affected women . . . One of the Comments that I have heard about you is that you are very much a lady. I think that this is epic. Can you talk just a little bit about how you felt when you heard about the revolutions that were going on that put women into a totally different outlook for themselves and to be looked upon by society?

S: I guess like everyone else it made you feel good to be a woman. We all know that years ago women were just to be homemakers, raise children, and be there when their husband came home. The dinner had to be on the table at a certain time. He expected you to clean up the kitchen by yourself. It was the mother's responsibility to bathe the children and put them to bed. The father worked all day. He was tired. He deserved to sit down, read his paper, smoke his pipe, and do nothing. Of course, that turned itself around.

I think that is fantastic. I met some young people; I admire some women so much because they are determined to go on and get better educations. They are determined that they can qualify for top paying positions as equally as well as men. I am all for it. I think that your more intelligent man is accepting this. He does not feel that a woman is inferior. He is not intimidated by them. You will find that they are working hand in hand together in a lot of our top corporations. It is fantastic what women do. It really is. They are self-motivating women. Amazingly a lot of them have good marriages and their children are turning out well. They are working together like in a family when you have a husband and a wife working. They are sharing the responsibilities of those chores at home. It is not like the old days. Now it is very acceptable and very commendable when women are out in the work force. A lot of them are mothers and wives. It is just so improved. As I grew up, I could see my home . . . My father and my mother worked. My father was very demanding. My mother worked in that little store all day. He was a barber by trade. It would come evening and mother would be trying to get a meal in the kitchen. The house, barbershop, and store were all in one building. There was the store and then you went up the steps and you were in our house. Mother would hear that little bell ringing in the store. She would have to run. I am surprised that more of the meals did not burn. Dad expected her to do that. I am not faulting my father.

C: It was a sign of the time.

S: That is correct.

C: That is the best way that I can explain it.

S: I think that it was very well explained. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW