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Oral history interview transcript with Mary Jane Booth

Mary Jane Booth

Norma Smith

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MARY JANE BOOTH
INTERVIEWED BY NORMA SMITH
EWU Women's Oral History Project
EWU 984-0094 #7
November 5, 1982

SMITH: Before I forget the next time around.

BOOTH: I don't know.

SMITH: Okay, this is Norma Smith interviewing Mary Jane Booth for the Cheney Women's Oral History Project and her topics concern the Friendly Town, Campfire, and the date is November the 5th, 1982. So I thought maybe we might begin, Mary Jane, by simply talking about when you first came to Cheney and a little bit about your background before we tackle the other subjects.

BOOTH: Well, my background, I went to school all over the Northwest as my family moved about every year, and then I ended up going to high school most all of the four years in Pasco, Washington, where I met my husband to be, and after he did a stint in the Air Force down in San Antonio, Texas, we came up here and he went to college and that's when we came to Cheney.

SMITH: When was that?

BOOTH: In '52, the spring of '52. We came up from Pasco to look for a place to live, and in Pasco it was springtime and the flowers were blooming and everybody was wearing their white shoes. Everybody wore white shoes in the spring in those days, and came up here and the snow was piled five foot high on most of the corners. They'd had a big winter and there was no snow removal, you know, in those days.

SMITH: Oh, in Cheney?

BOOTH: No, they just piled it up and it stayed there until it melted away.

SMITH: Oh.

BOOTH: So we went slogging around in these white suits and white shoes, and we found a place, and in those days, Cheney's streets weren't named nor numbered, except maybe some of the main middle streets of town were, but we found a place way out on the edge of town that was being remodeled because it had been empty in the winter and its pipes had frozen and it was just a mess and this little old man was remodeling and fixing it up for renting. We hadn't been able to find a thing to live in so we took it hoping it would get better in our absence before we came back with our stuff. We went downtown and had some lunch and came...went back to talk to him about something else and we couldn't find our house because there were no street names and we thought we knew where it was but we couldn't get the right combination of streets so we could get that particular route. We just drove back and forth until finally we found it and then we hoped that we could find it again when we came with our truck, and we did.

SMITH: Is that place still in existence?

BOOTH: Yes. It's out on North 6th Street and it's a duplex and it's right behind Frank Nichols house.

SMITH: So that

BOOTH: Where Frank Nichols house is was the big pine grove kind of you know, and I used to hang my clothesline from tree to tree out back there which is where the house is.

SMITH: So that's now, where is it, 6th?

BOOTH: It's 6th.

SMITH: And Cedar, sort of in that area?

BOOTH: Uh, yeah.

SMITH: So in 1952, that was what you called 'country'?

BOOTH: Yes, there was no...well there were houses on path, there was one block of an early development of houses, White Hill, lived down there. It was on the other side of the street. But, between them and town, you know, there was just not much. A house here or there like there is in a little town along the edge, you know, where each house has a whole lot of several lots.

SMITH: Now, you came to town as students?

BOOTH: Right, my husband was a student.

SMITH: Was there student housing?

BOOTH: Yes, there were trailers. The...those little bitsy old, old trailers.

SMITH: Where were they?

BOOTH: Let me think. Where were they? Where the PUB...

SMITH: Tawanka?

BOOTH: Where Tawanka...yes, in that flat area. Yes, I think so.

SMITH: There was one there when we came to town.

BOOTH: Was there? Oh, they were so small. Such small, little bitsy things, and they were so short. My husband is 6 foot 1, or he was then. He couldn't stand up straight in them. No, and you had to duck your head to go in the doors, they didn't have any water. No, I think they had cold water. They had no bathrooms, and you had to get hot water from spigots down on the, you know, like a central well. Well, you went down to the hot water spigot with your containers for water. You had to go to the wash house to take baths, go to the toilet. Imagine raising children in things like that. We had two baby sized children, and some of them, some arrangements were two trailers put together with a hole...a hatch-hole through kind of like they have in submarines, you know, you kind of hunker down and walk through.

SMITH: Oh yeah.

BOOTH: To get from one trailer to the other, and we looked at those and thought we'd be better off in a tent than to get one of those. So we did find that apartment and then we found out that we were considered to be in the higher class of students because we had an actual real live apartment rather than living in the trailers. You know, the trailers were cheap like 17 dollars a month or something. But then you didn't get much. But anyway, we just didn't think we could live in them, so we had our apartment.

SMITH: Well, when you were going to school, did they at that time have financial aid for students?

BOOTH: I don't know. We didn't qualify because well, my husband's time in the service was during a gap between the GI Bill. There was a space in there between from the World War Two's GI Bill and before they took it up again for the Korean War, and during that time, the people that were in the service were not eligible so he could not have any help like that and his folks helped us and he worked all the time. He always worked, and I did what I could. First I did sewing for people.

SMITH: Yeah.

BOOTH: I remember when I was a seamstress. I...Bobbi Lott and I were the only seamstresses in town for a long time, and then I babysat children. Lots.

SMITH: All right. Well then, how long did you stay in Cheney the first stint?

BOOTH: Well, let's see, 'til he went to Oregon to school well, Janice was in the first grade in Oregon and she was two when we came. So we were here, well, his time to go, no, he did three

years, I take that back. I'm not, guess I'm mixed up. He did his 4 years and 3 years here, then went to Oregon for a year and then we came back and he taught up at the college for a quarter taking someone's place who was gone, you know, temporary. Then we went to Seattle for almost another year while he worked on his doctorate, and then we came back again. So all together it's been 30 years, but we were gone two years at two different times.

SMITH: Could you talk a little bit about Cheney at that time?

BOOTH: Well yes, it was a lot different. Sometimes I think it really hasn't changed much but it really has. Downtown was just about, all just two blocks. The post office was downtown where the ...is it Radcliffe?

SMITH: No.

BOOTH: Ford

SMITH: It's Chevrolet.

BOOTH: The Chevrolet place, well that was the post office downtown and there was no mail delivery. You had to pick up your mail at the box downtown, and we had a movie theatre where the parking place is by the bank, and it ran, too. There were always shows on, and the taverns...all three grocery stores were downtown. One of our first experiences with the volunteer fire department was in the grocery store. We were standing there with two sacks of groceries all ready to pay for them and the fire siren rang, and everybody just cleared out. The whole town cleared out. They either were going to watch the fire or going to fight the fire and everything just stopped until the fire was taken care of. So we stood there wondering, "What do you do? You take your groceries and run? Because there's nobody to take pay for them?" You know, pay them? Well finally a lady came back in who worked in the store, this is Jack Gibson's store there, and she came in and took our money and explained that that's how it was and thanked us for waiting. That the men would be back when the fire was out. So we went home and thought that was very interesting, and I remarked about the snow removal before. The snow in some of the streets were plowed, a lot of the streets weren't. None of the snow was carried away. It was just stacked up and it would be stacked down the middle of Main Street so you couldn't see the other side and little channels would be made through to go across the street if you wanted to go between in the middle of the street. I could take the kids, put them all on a sled, this is when we moved into our house on 6th and A street, put them on our big sled, and we could coast from up on the hill all the way downtown, and that's what we did. It was a wild ride, but it was fun.

SMITH:I can remember other people coasting.

BOOTH: Yes, but this was in the daytime. Oh, dear. So that was a change in Cheney. The street that we...this A street joins Elm there at 6th and that was just a two-rutted road, and then sometime after we moved into town there, we got street names and we got house numbers. I remember when we got house numbers and everybody was notified what number their house was, and the hardware store had to lay in a big supply of numbers because everybody went downtown and bought house numbers, and we just felt so fortunate, you know, big, biggity. Yes, because we actually had a house that had a number. Because, until then, people would say the old so-so house, the old, you didn't ever and to this day there are some people who don't go at all by your address and some areas I don't think of by address. I just think of by whose old house it is, which doesn't tell anybody a thing if they don't know.

SMITH: Right.

BOOTH: The old history.

SMITH: I know. I recall it's singeing.

BOOTH: You lived in somebody's old house.

SMITH: The Showalter house.

BOOTH: Oh, right.

SMITH: Right, the Showalter house.

BOOTH: Right, and the Waddington's lived in the...

SMITH: Wallace house.

BOOTH: That's the one the Andersons live in now.

SMITH: I know the way it went so I guess you can tell the old timers from the new timers.

BOOTH: I guess you're right.

SMITH: By how they do it. You were talking earlier about the Eastern games at Eastern and about businesses

BOOTH: Oh, right. That's right. When Eastern had games at home, the businesses downtown closed up for the afternoon and everybody went to the ballgame and I mean the townspeople participated and you couldn't do any shopping on Saturday afternoon if there was a ballgame. On homecoming days, the parade was downtown and again the businesses would close Saturday morning for the parade to go through town. Everybody went and it was a big, exiting thing. After all, how many parades did Cheney have, you know? I think in those days, the homecoming parade and the Children's Day parade. That was in the spring. There was a celebrated Children's Day and there was a parade then. I think were the only parades I can remember. But anyway, for Homecoming then, the dance was held in town, and there were parties all over town, you know, and the dance. Everything was done in Cheney so between the parade and then the ballgame in the afternoon and the parties and the dance at night, it was all a Cheney thing because that's where Eastern had its home, which was a lot nicer I think than now, where it's all moved to Spokane.

SMITH: Do you see a difference in the way that the college and the townspeople reacted to one another then as opposed to now?

BOOTH: Well, I don't know. There's always the talk about the town and gown differences, but it seemed to me that back in those older days that the townspeople really, at least the business people had more of a warm feeling for the college because the college did it's things here in Cheney where now when they've moved it to Spokane, I think, if anything, it would have broadened any kind of gap. But our family was always more of the townspeople than college because I guess because of all our kids and I did all the town type things, you know, joining the organizations and things rather than the college things.

SMITH: The organizations that you were associated with then?

BOOTH: Well, I joined Tillacum before Ben was born. Ben was born in '59 so I must of joined Tillacum in '58 or so after we came back from Seattle, Cindy was a baby. I was asked to come to Tillacum and I remember that the group I went in to American Home gave me a shower when I was pregnant with Ben. So I've been in Tillacum since then and always enjoyed it. College women would go to Tillacum in the different departments, you know, there's always some, but, mostly it's the townspeople. So I've always felt closer to them.

SMITH: Now, in Tillacum, that's a women's organization, right?

BOOTH: Yes, it's a women's organization, Federated Clubs, the Women's Federated Club. So it's a worldwide organization, actually.

SMITH: Okay. Would you like to talk a little bit about some of the things that you can recall that the Tillacum was instrumental in having happened in Cheney or for Cheney?

BOOTH: Well, the biggest thing I remember and it must have happened really early on before when my children were small and I didn't do a lot of extra things out away from the house, was

the picnic shelter over in Sutton Park. Tillacum put that up. Well, the ladies didn't of course, they got the husbands to work on it but we paid for it, built that shelter, and then Tillacum has put up trees. Let's see, we put trees in over at Moose Field where they play ball over on that way.

SMITH: Oh, yeah.

BOOTH: Later, a bunch of them died and we had to put up more. It didn't work out too well. I remember our American Home Club put the clock in the public library. I don't know.

SMITH: The museum?

BOOTH: Well, yes. We've had the museum, for as long...it was going when I came. I can't remember where it was then and at times it hasn't had a home. Sometimes it's been packed up and stored here and there and gathered up and put into another place but currently now it's in the Wren Pearson building and we hope that that will be its permanent place. It was in the basement of the old junior high building where the fire station is now, and then it was in the basement of the old high school which is the school's administration building there across from city park, and then it was moved out of there and somebody would need the room you know, so out we'd go again, and now it has a permanent home we hope.

SMITH: Backtracking just a little bit about Dames Club. Do you remember your association with Dames Club and.

BOOTH: Well, Dames Club was an organization for the student's wives and I went to it. In those days, yes, my husband would baby-sit the kids. We met once a month. One of the main things we had in conjunction with the faculty wives club was a loaning room where children's materials; cribs, clothes, furniture, and maybe maternity clothes, I'm not sure. Anyway, this was maintained and I believe it was mostly supplied by the faculty wives, but anyone that could borrow things out of that and use it as long as they want and put it back in or not I guess. If you happened to wear it out you couldn't pay it back, but it was really a godsend because it seems to me that the students in those days were a lot poorer than they are these days. I don't know, but it seems. But from my point of view it seems that the students were a lot poorer, and some of the time, that fell out of use. I don't know what happened to it. I think again it ran out of a place to be stored. It's too bad they don't do it but then I don't think there's a Dames Club either now anymore.

SMITH: I haven't heard of one.

BOOTH: No.

SMITH: But then, you know, faculty wives supported that and the faculty wives organization right now

BOOTH: Is almost shot. It's almost gone, is it? I haven't had anything to do with them for so long, but at the time, faculty wives were very, very, busy, very active. The faculty was smaller. When we came here, I think there were only a hundred teachers, if that many, because the school was very small and after we had been here, I think our second year here was a record enrollment of 600 students, and it was just huge. People just couldn't believe that there were that many students on campus. So the faculty was small and everybody knew everyone and the faculty wives was one big organization and you automatically belonged to it if you were a faculty wife you were automatically a member and called upon to pay your dues and do your duty, whatever. There were four big social functions for the year as I recall, and you were assigned one, to be worked on...

SMITH: Committees.

BOOTH: You were on that committee and saw that it happened, and then you paid your dues and then you were supposed to go and that's just the way it was. Just like, in those days, the

teachers all had to wear shirts and ties. You did not go to school in anything but dress clothes, shirts and ties.

SMITH: Well, then during the...that was in 1958, the early '60's. Now, what kind of an impact did anything of the '60's have on you and your family or here in Cheney, that you can recall? This is when the...I know the Korean War and then we were starting to get into Vietnam.

BOOTH: Oh, goodness. Well, I don't know, let's see, in the early '60's we moved out of town again. We must have started getting the foreign students about then, don't you think? Then the black students started coming from the eastern cities, too. That caused quite a to-do in town because Cheney had never... I don't believe Cheney had ever had any black people in town. So it was a whole new thing for Cheney and I know there was one barber downtown who refused to cut black people's hair. I don't know why. I have to honestly say I don't know whether he had a thing about black people or whether he felt he didn't know how to handle their hair. But anyway, they didn't go in there to get their hair cut, that's all there was to it. I, otherwise, I don't know that it affected us so much. There was a little more trouble at school of course and my husband would remark sometimes that the blacks they brought from back east were belligerent. You know, the blacks that we had associated with in our various places we lived, we were always on easy terms with just as friends, but these kids that were coming from back east came with a chip on their shoulder because maybe they hadn't been treated as well and they assumed they would be not treated as well and they were going to prove that they were as good as anybody which made it kind of awkward. Well, yes, I remember one time I was walking down the hill from the college to downtown and I met three black young men on the sidewalk, and they would not move over. Now, anybody, common courtesy, you step aside and let the lady go by, you know. But I had to walk around them because they just looked at me like, "drop dead, lady", and took up the whole sidewalk and I stepped off the sidewalk or I would have been walked right over I guess, but that was the only incident I ever came across because most people, you treat them nice, they treat you nice.

SMITH: What about the so-called 'hippie' era which was

BOOTH: That was during that time. Well, the kids just looked scruddy, that's all. I... they just... well no they had no, it didn't look like they had any personal dignity or self respect and they would just try to look their worst, and they did, and then my husband would say that they would act that way in school. He felt that the ones that looked really scruffy acted pretty much the same way. That it seemed to have the whole...the whole personality and everything wound up with it. You know, that's the way they would act, especially with the girls. If they came all spiffed up and dressed nicely, they acted more, like we say in the old term, like a lady, and they did not act like ladies when they.

SMITH: Do you think anything has changed in Cheney because of these people, one way or the other, good bad or otherwise?

BOOTH: Well, it was an eye opener for a little old town like Cheney to see these different kinds of people, the long hairs, you know, and so on, yes. The ...it's probably good for Cheney because Cheney is not a real kind of community. It's a... I always call it... is a kind of Never-Never land, because it's not like other towns. You know, in a way.

SMITH: Why?

BOOTH: Because of the college. It's just a different kind of atmosphere here, and we don't...It's not like a city like Spokane. If you can call Spokane a city, it's the closest we've got to being a city, anyway, and it's not like other little towns of the same size just out somewhere because of the college. I know in the Tillacum club, for instance in the federation, one of the

things that they always ask us to do is work with the schools to work up reading programs and see that there's a library and all this sort of thing. Well, we have such a good school system in Cheney and we have a public library and we can go to the college library and all the schools have good libraries and they have reading programs. There's not a thing we can do that way because we have all these things already.

SMITH: Right. What you're saying, because I misread that at first, what you're saying is that the federated club are sending this down to all the other organizations around the country?

BOOTH: Yes, and that's one of the things you can do to help your country...to help your community, and that's one of the things that we don't need to do, and another is safety. Making your town safe for the children or, you know, your townspeople, and there again Cheney...I don't know. Now in a town it is different than it used to be of course, but when we first came and when we lived in town until '63, we lived two blocks from the campus. Our children left their bicycles, their wagons, their tricycles, their toys, all over the block. Even sometimes they'd forget them at the city park which was about three blocks from our house, and a couple or three days later, somebody would begin wondering where their bicycle or where their wagon was. Well, it was wherever they left it just exactly. Unless someone had picked up the bicycle and ridden it downtown, then it would be sitting wherever they left it downtown. Things weren't stolen. We didn't lock the house. We'd go away on a two or three week vacation in the summer and come and not lock the house, not think anything of it, nothing was ever bothered. It just wasn't. You didn't worry about your children, you didn't worry about being out at night. Now there are people who say, "Oh, well with a college town, you know, and all those kids, you can't let your...you can't wander around at night." Well that wasn't so. We didn't worry about the college children...college students. The kids, we didn't worry about the children, we didn't worry about the young girls being out, you know. I thought nothing of walking across town in the middle of the night if I had been visiting somebody.

SMITH: Nor I.

BOOTH: No, and now, what I hear from people is that they lock their house. They lock their bicycles to their porches or they put them in the house. If the people lose their bicycles off their porches, even my son-in-law was saying that it's just not smart to walk across the campus by yourself in the middle of the night or the wee hours of the morning, especially women. Because of the...mostly it's the drug problem people. They're not accountable. So, town has changed in that respect. Maybe that happens everywhere, you know. But, it's too bad.

SMITH: I agree, because it is altogether different. I mean, the rural aspect was very strong.

BOOTH: Yeah.

SMITH: In Cheney, in the beginning. So, let's see, I was thinking too about any local women that markedly stand out in your mind as having had things happen in Cheney or made some changes come. We talked about Tillicum, that's an organization, but what about women?

BOOTH: Well, Dede Gammin really did a lot for the town, and one of the things she did, I just now remembered, she started a Sunday School class for these awkward age boys. I don't know, I think they were 6th graders or so. They wouldn't go to Sunday School anymore. Wouldn't be caught dead going to Sunday School. They weren't old enough to go to the youth groups, so they were kind of in between, and she took them up and had Sunday School at her house for just these boys. I don't know, she would have from 6 to a dozen, I think, at a time and one thing she did was feed them, because, what do you do with boys to keep them happy? You feed them. So they always had juice and some kind of rolls, doughnuts or something. Then they would talk a little bit of Sunday School and a little bit about anything that the boys wanted to talk about, and that

way she kept them interested in church and kept them going until they got old enough to feel comfortable in church or a youth fellowship or something. So, that was something that had never been heard of and some people kind of wondered...well... but it worked, it worked beautifully. Then Minnie Radcliffe was very, very active in Campfire when I started and she belonged to...what did we say...she used to go away on national conventions so she was...she had some sort of a position in the district or however Campfire was divided up then, I can't remember.

SMITH: But so that she would be a representative, I think.

BOOTH: Yes, because I remember her going to Washington, D.C. and New York. She was very busy that way as well as being the secretary of our own Campfire Leaders Association. Woody Johnson was another one who adjusted to the times, I kind of think. She had been active in Campfire a long time before I ever started in Campfire, but right shortly after I began, she had a group of Junior High girls and they were in an awkward age and they weren't doing the cute little Campfire Girls things and they didn't seem to be old enough to do the big.

SMITH: Okay now, I think it's probably ready, so

BOOTH: Okay.

SMITH: What you were saying was.

BOOTH: They weren't old enough to do the older girls, Horizon Club things either and so she just met with them and they did very little actual Campfire type things but they talked and she said, "These kids just needed a chance to talk, ask questions about growing up and how to act with each other." She met with them that way and again, kept their interest, kept them interested in something until they got old enough to go into Horizon, and I think most of those girls did go into Horizon then. So she departed from the regular way of doing things but for the good of the kids and it worked out very well. Okay that was Woody. Let's see well, Ernie Hilton, now I didn't ever work with Ernie Hilton but she was active in PTA, and I don't know in what capacity she worked but I know she went to Washington, D.C. on some sort of an educational conference, remember.

SMITH: That's right.

BOOTH: She did all kinds of things for Cheney, so I hope you're talking to her.

SMITH: We already have.

BOOTH: Good.

SMITH: Good. What about business women in town? Do you recall any of them?

BOOTH: Oh, well, let me see, Hannah Stahlman, of course. She used to work down in the Owl Drug from time to time when they needed extra help, Ted Stahlman's wife.

SMITH: Okay.

BOOTH: I can't think of it, Pauline Westerman, yes she worked in their drug store down on main street.

SMITH: As a pharmacist, I think.

BOOTH: Yeah, she was a pharmacist. Yeah, she is a pharmacist. I'd forgotten that. She helped in Campfire, too. Let's see, well, somebody else that was in and out of Cheney business was Eleanor Myers who is now Eleanor MacDonald and lives in Davenport, but when we first came to Cheney, the student union was in the old Radcliffe house which has since been torn down and it was on the corner where the business building is, wasn't it on the corner where the business building is? Isn't it? Yes. Beautiful, big old house. It should have been kept. Great big gorgeous house, and it had been turned over to the college and the student union was in there and Eleanor ran it, and Chuck was her janitor. That was his first job in Cheney.

SMITH: I didn't realize that. 'Cause I knew she had a restaurant.

BOOTH: Well, that was later. Then she went to, you know, the Beehive downtown across from the Lincoln Bank? She started that as a little ice cream place. It was just, you know, like a Dairy Queen or something, but it wasn't a Dairy Queen, but that type of thing. It was just a little ice cream place. Then she enlarged it to its present size and made a beautiful restaurant. It really was a gorgeous high-class restaurant in there.

SMITH: Do you remember about when that was? That would be in the '50s?

BOOTH: Well, let's see, in the '50s, she had the pub.

SMITH: Yeah.

BOOTH: So it would have been probably early '60s then that she had the restaurant downtown. Before we moved out here though, so it was late '50s and early '60s, and it was a nice restaurant. She would come to our house to have home-cooked meals. She loved to come when I was making potato soup. I usually made potato soup on the day I baked bread because it was easy, and so we would have baked bread, fresh bread and potato soup. So she would like to come and have supper with us because that was a home-cooked meal. Then our treat was go down to her, to the restaurant and she would feed all our kids hamburgers. So we thought that was a nice exchange. Oh, now let's see, other downtown, Marion Bair was a downtown businessman for as long as she had the IGA store on the corner where the ice cream parlor is now. She always ran that store.

SMITH: Right.

BOOTH: As long as that store was there. I can't think of other women.

SMITH: Okay, we're talking with Louise Stern who is instrumental in the library, so she's another woman.

BOOTH: Yes.

SMITH: Okay well, nothing else comes to mind. We'll just let that go there.

BOOTH: Okay.

SMITH: Why did you stay in Cheney?

BOOTH: We liked it, and my husband was offered a job here, of course. That helped.

SMITH: Bottom line.

BOOTH: But no, we could have. When he finished with school, he had the option of going with a consultation firm... geography, dealing with the locating businesses and so on. We would have to move to Washington D.C., and he would have started with a salary twice what he started with at Eastern. But we knew we didn't want that kind of lifestyle. We didn't want to live that way, and so we stayed in Cheney because we liked it. It was a good place to raise our children, the schools were good, town was comfortable and we were happy here. When we came back from the places we'd been away to school, like in Oregon or Seattle, everybody was delighted to be back in our family, and it's so nice to go down the street and people would smile and say, "Well, hello! We're glad you're back!" You know and you don't have that in a big place. That's the nice thing about Cheney is going downtown and seeing most everybody you'd see you'd know. Or at least their face is familiar because you see them often enough that you smile and say hello to them whether you know their name or not. At least I do.

SMITH: Okay. Well, I think we'll let go with your growing up and why you're into Cheney.

BOOTH: That ran too far.

SMITH: No, that's fine that's great. Now, let's talk a little bit about two of the areas that we know you've been associated with, one of them being Campfire. So I'll just let you talk about Campfire and maybe when you first started and discuss it then and.

BOOTH: Okay. I started in Campfire the way a lot of women do. I went to a mother's meeting in '63 when my little girl wanted to be in Campfire. We had not let her be in Bluebirds.

SMITH: Why?

BOOTH: Because I had a baby at home I guess, we thought that Bluebirds was too early for little girls...she didn't need to. But this particular little girl was a very joiner type person and she just wanted to be in Campfire so I went to a mother's meeting and I knew I couldn't do anything much for the group, but as a dutiful mother I went. Because I didn't drive, and we lived out of town, and I didn't know anything much about Campfire. I had been a Campfire girl briefly when I was a little girl, but that was a long time ago. So I went and I came home a leader. That's the way it happens. There were 17 little girls in this group so three of us mothers were co-leaders and I said, "Well," I told them at the meeting, "I don't drive, and I live out of town. I would take them if other people will transport them and see to anything that has to do with getting them places or getting things we need." Two of us, and so they took me up on it in a snap so I came home just panic-stricken actually. Kate Hardy and Pauline Westerman and I were the leaders of these 17 wildly enthusiastic little girls, and it took two cars at least to go anywhere with them and we had to have very strict rules about what was and wasn't allowed in the house, like only one to the bathroom at a time and you have... never leave your coats here and you sit there and no punching. No, everything to control them. But it was a lot of fun, it really was, and then in the next years we didn't have as many and I always had good helpers though. The next year, Eileen Touee helped me and she was just great. I would just be stuck for something and I would call her up and say, "Help! Help!" , and she would come and help me right away. So we kept on with these little girls until they were in Junior High and then we lost most of them because that's the age where they go in to other things. They go into Jobe's and they start turning out for sports and as I look back at it, my hind sight was much better...is much better now than my outlook at the time, and I think that I may have been able to keep them if I had approached it differently, but I think I was...I just didn't handle it right. So that was the end of that group, but we had them until they were in the 8th grade, I think. Then in the meantime, I had gone with the Norma Smith here got me going with organizing. So I ended up being the organizer for Cheney and I don't remember how long.

SMITH: What do you mean by being the 'organizer'?

BOOTH: Well, the organizer is the person who gets it going every fall and sees that there are leaders and helping mothers for each group and organizes the groups...gathers the groups together. You have a certain amount of groups that are held over from the year before but practically never a leader that is continuing because too many mothers feel that if they do one year that's it, and it's somebody else's turn. Actually it's best for the groups if they have someone who stays with them for longer periods of time. There's better continuity, but you do what you can, and I believe that it was Norma and I who started getting the college girls to come and help. We would put out posters at school and advertise that we wanted college girls to help, and then they discovered they could get credit for working with youth groups in certain areas of their schooling. So we did get some very good college girls and some not very good college girls. But still, they still do it. They still appeal to the college for girls and there is always a few that come and either work as helpers or in certain areas or just take over a group. So we did that for the organizing. Cheney's Campfire group was a little group as a whole. We were a little different than the way they're run in Spokane because it was awkward for us to go into the meetings for the leaders and so on in Spokane and do the Spokane type things because they always started right after school and by the time we'd get our kids gathered up and into town,

it'd be half over. So we had what we called our own Cheney Campfire Association and we did kind of our own quote unquote 'thing' out here adhering as much as possible to the general Campfire way of doing things but we would bend it when we had to, to adapt our own lifestyles out here.

SMITH: Do you notice any difference between the organization of the groups with leaders now as opposed to earlier when you first came in?

BOOTH: Well, I haven't had anything to do with them for the last couple of years, but I think right now, they're almost swinging back. They're got to the way we had lots of young mothers coming in and being very gung-ho, but say two years ago, they were kind of in a muddle they were in between where the people they had working didn't want to do it anymore, they couldn't find new people. Most of the mothers work nowadays. It's so hard to get mothers to be leaders, and so even if a mother is willing to be a leader, she has to work it around her working hours. They had to go to some Saturday meetings. That makes a problem because in a working family, you know, mothers and fathers, Saturdays and Sundays the only family days so that causes problems. So I don't know, it's very difficult to get the leaders, and I do think they rely on the college kids a lot.

SMITH: Okay. What about the population of the girls in groups. Do you think that has grown or changed at all?

BOOTH: It's gotten less, I remember we had over a hundred girls, always, and they don't have that many now. The last time that...I don't know it was...we had between 70 and 80 the last time I noticed when I was breaking in a new organizer when I was getting ready to quit.

SMITH: Do you think that there is the same need for having the girls be in Campfire?

BOOTH: Oh, if anything I think the need is greater.

SMITH: Why?

BOOTH: Because of all the working mothers. The mothers aren't home to give the girls the direction they need, you know. With Campfire, it's not all camping. But it's a general training really of home crafts and music and outdoors crafts and just general getting along with people, and when both parents are working and they don't come home 'til dinner time, those kids just aren't getting the direction and the personal care I think that they need. I know that even when I was a leader there were always a few girls who just needed somebody to give them a hug and listen to what they did at school that day. You know, and now there's all. I think there's more.

SMITH: Earlier I remember you mentioned about one of your girls taking over a Campfire group and

BOOTH: Oh, yes.

SMITH: The kind of things she saw.

BOOTH: Yes.

SMITH: Would you like to speak to this?

BOOTH: Yes, well yes. My daughter Cindy that...who got me started in Campfire, we used to have lessons on how to be a lady, you know, the old proper behavior, and I'd have them walk around the room with books on their head to stand up straight and sit down properly and all this. Well, when she was in high school, she was a senior or junior in high school, she had her own Bluebird group, and oh, she'd say, "Oh, mom, these girls don't know how to act. They don't know how to be ladies. They say, 'what's that?'. She was just aghast because they didn't...their behavior was poor, their courtesy was just about nil and they just flopped any old which way. Of course, by that time, most all the girls wore jeans all the time. They didn't know how to act in dresses, and so she had her own classes in deportment and would remember what we had done

when she was little and do the same thing and so she hoped she taught a few of them how to be ladies too.

SMITH: All right...let's see...I...is there anything else you wanted to speak to concerning Campfire and women's involvement in Campfire?

BOOTH: Oh, gosh. Well.

SMITH: What was your capacity other than being a leader of a group?

BOOTH: Well, I was leader of the group for those first four or five years and in between time while I was president of the Campfire Leaders Association once or twice or whatever, and then I Norma organize and then I was an organizer for six or seven years. I got my 15 year pin last year.

SMITH: Congratulations.

BOOTH: Thank you, and then I didn't pay my dues last year so I guess I'm not a Campfire Girl anymore now. So yes, that was my capacity. I was a mint chairman once, too, and our house was full of mints for the duration, but my family objected to that. I thought it was kind of fun, but my husband didn't think it was fun at all.

SMITH: Oh, okay.

BOOTH: Okay, I think that's about all, I guess.

SMITH: That pretty well covers it, huh?

BOOTH: Yes

SMITH: Then there was one other area that we wanted to talk about and this is something called Friendly Town. Do you want to tell us what Friendly Town was?

BOOTH: Well, Friendly Town was the name for a happening in Cheney I think you could call it but it happened all over little towns in the Northwest. It started with the churches and I'm not sure just what or who started it, but I believe it was an all church...

SMITH: Organization?

BOOTH: Organization, yeah. The purpose was to get the black children from the ghetto areas of Seattle out into the small towns around in the Northwest. They went clear into Montana, some of these children did, for two weeks in the summertime, and it served a double purpose. It got those children out into a different lifestyle to see how white people lived...other kinds of people, I think we probably all were white people and,

SMITH: In Cheney at least.

BOOTH: Yeah, in Cheney most definitely, and it also gave us a chance to know black people on a people to people basis, you know, and so Cheney, the United Church in Cheney, the United Church of Christ was the one that we worked through because our children were going to the youth fellowship groups and I think that must be how we got started. I don't recall precisely, but the age of the children. They wanted you to have quote "a child of the corresponding age of the child you would get" and the age range was from 8 till 12 I think or maybe 9 to 12 years old. We had three children that fit in that bracket so of course we had to have three Friendly Town children because you couldn't slight one. Each one had to have their own guest, and so we had two boys and a girl for those two weeks that summer.

SMITH: What summer was this? What year?

BOOTH: Summer of ...what did we say? '68. 1968, and our littlest boy was 9 that summer. I think maybe just before those kids came. So we had a little boy who was 8 or 9 when he came to our house. We weren't quite sure because after he had been here, a few days, I think our Ben had just had his birthday so he had these things that he had to show little Curt. Curtis announced that he had a birthday coming up that week, and he was for fact going to be 9 years old on that

birthday. Well, we didn't know and I called the church to see if they had anything on the records of these kids, you know, was he having a birthday or not? Well, they didn't know so we decided what the heck, if he said he had a birthday, well, we'd do a birthday party. So we took all the kids downtown and I had nine children over that space of time because all our kids were still home and we went downtown and everyone bought Curtis some sort of little present and we had a birthday party for him and he was very tickled and we decided we didn't care if he had a birthday or not. If he needed a birthday well he had one, and you could tell he came from a very poor family and so we thought a birthday would be nice. Now, when the Friendly Town children were here this was a new thing for Cheney. Cheney had quite a new swimming pool, and there had never been the question of, were the blacks going to use the swimming pool or not?, because there hadn't been any black children in Cheney, and so that was the question. Do we dare take these kids here or there because it had just never come up. As it turned out, most people in Cheney, townspeople, businesspeople were very nice. There were a few that were a little frosty about the whole thing, you know, they weren't too pleased, but not enough to make any problem at all. The children went to the swimming pool and there was nothing said by anybody that I ever heard...

SMITH: Nor I...

BOOTH: Of...

SMITH: I didn't either.

BOOTH: No, but we did talk to our own children and cautioned them to kind of watch out for their own little guest and see that nobody gave them any trouble too, but I just don't remember there being any problems at all. Our little girl was 10, no, 11. The girls were 11. That little girl, her name was Rachelle, and she said that she tended her own little brothers and sisters and her aunt's little children all day while the mothers worked and they lived with their grandmother in Seattle. So she was having a dandy vacation. One thing she liked to do was get a whole pile of stuff out on the table, either a game with lots of little pieces, or coloring or painting or sewing, you know, things like that because she could never do them at home because the little kids would get into them, you know. So she just loved it. She cried when she had to go. She didn't want to go home. She wanted to stay here. She didn't want to go back home at all, at all. But a lot of people, there were a lot of tears when we took the children to meet the cars, you know, to go back home. Everybody was crying!

SMITH: I think you told me about...you lived in the country at that time and so you had animals and...

BOOTH: Yes. We had a goat named Beauty and a Shetland pony named Misty. Well, we had the big horse, too, I guess, but she didn't figure into things so much, I guess. When our older kids were not busy or home, they would take they little kids out for rides on the big horse or on the Shetland pony, but the one little guest just loved the pony and he would just stand with his arm around her and his head leaning on her. He would just stand there and I would say, "What'chya doing Curtis?" and he'd say, "Oh, I'm just listening to her insides." He'd just, just loved her, and they liked being out in the country. They felt like it was WAY out in the country and it's just a couple miles from town, and one of them was just enthralled with the train. Now we have a railroad track that I suppose is in a space about two or three blocks from here, maybe. You can see it from the house and I guess he had never seen a railroad, been close enough to the tracks to see a train go by, and at that time, I think the train went by about three times a week. It didn't get used much at all. Oh, he was just thrilled to death. He dropped everything to run to the windows or dash outside to watch the train down there. Because he thought that was really interesting.

They had trouble with their skin, these kids. Coming to our super dry climate from Seattle, they all turned kind of powdery looking, and I know the other families had trouble with their guests getting that way, too and they used a lot of lotion and Vaseline that summer keeping these kids' skin from just peeling away altogether. Then my little girl's hair...our little guest girl's hair, she was having a terrible time with it and I didn't know quite what to do for it and she said it needed hot-combing. That's what you had to do to it about once a week or every ten days or something was hot-combing, and well, I sure drew a blank on that. But there was a new family, a new black family that had just moved into the Army housing in town and she had a little girl. That family had a little girl that was just about our little guest girl's age and they met at the swimming pool, and the other little girl volunteered her mother's services to fix up our little girl's hair. So we took her in one day and she got her hair fixed and then she felt much better because, I guess it was just getting kind of wispy and just going all over everything. Oh, gosh. Then one time, all the children went out to the Dobbins' farm which is a really bona-fide farm, way out in the wheat fields and they had a grand time out in the farm. Now a lot of these kids I think were raised in the city, never even got out of town.

SMITH: I know.

BOOTH: They just didn't ever, so it was just all really strange to them. Oh, it was cool as it can be in the end of June. It can suddenly get cool and you have to put a sweater on or something. I was cautioning the kids one day, they were heading off to the swimming pool and it wasn't an awfully good day, so I said, "Take your sweatshirts along, it's going to be chilly when you come home", and this little 9 year-old said, "Chili? With beans, you mean?" I said, "No" Well, chili...the only "chilly" he'd ever heard of was with beans. I said it was going to be chilly when we came home and what did that have to do with wearing a sweatshirt, and I had to explain to him...

SMITH: That that meant cold.

BOOTH: Cold, oh, dear, he was so funny. So it was an eye opener to us, too. So then the next year we had just one little boy because our oldest boy had gotten too old to have a guest...are we out of time? At the same time we had a little boy who came to attend the stutterer's clinic. I think we had him for six weeks or something. This little boy from Sandpoint. Well, Sandpoint at that time I'm sure had never had a black in it ever, ever up there. They are real...was at that time a really, really backwoods kind of town. It has changed a lot now but at that time... so we had to tell our little Tim, our little stuttering fellow to be nice to this little black boy because he was here all by himself, far away from home and he was going to be lonesome and we had to be really nice and not make nasty remarks. You know, about anything to him. Then we told our little black boy, "Now you be real nice to Tim because he's far away from home and he's going to school to learn to talk better and we had to explain to our little black boy how to handle the stuttering and just sit there and let him talk, you know, and don't help them and so on. Those two kids were just so careful of each other and so considerate. They probably had never been so considerate of anybody in their whole lives. But they did. They were, you know, very sympathetic with each other both being in a strange place. Our own little boy, Ben, was just about friendlied to death we used to say. Because he was kind of a loner. He liked to play by himself and these two kids were just with him all the time. He used to go in the bathroom and lock the door and take long baths just to have a little time all by himself because he just wasn't used to just having someone with him to play with all the time.

SMITH: How many years did that Friendly Town take place?

BOOTH: I don't know. I thought we had done it three times but I can only find pictures for two. I think maybe it ran only two or three. It may have gone another year and we didn't participate.

SMITH: Right.

BOOTH: I'm just not sure.

SMITH: Do you think Cheney is any the worse or better off for having had them here?

BOOTH: Oh, I think it could have done only good for the town to see that the black children were just like the white children and that children are children. They were so delighted with everything.