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Oral History interview with Nancy Baumann

Nancy Baumann

Renee Wolf

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**NANCY BAUMANN
INTERVIEWED BY RENEE WOLF
EWU Women's Oral History Project
EWU 984-0094 #5
SEPTEMBER 28, 1982**

[Please note that the quality of this recording is very poor, in places, and as a result, some statements cannot be deciphered. These are represented like this: [()]]

R. WOLF: This is Renee Wolf interviewing Nancy Baumann for the Cheney Women's Oral History Project. Her topics concern the NorthEast Park, the bike path for the Cheney High School, and her artwork. The date is February 23, 1983.

Well first, Nancy, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to do this interview. Not only is it helping me as an interviewer, but it's also helping the Women's Center with their project so that other people can find out just how women in the community have contributed to Cheney. We'll be covering three main topics tonight, mainly your involvement with the Northeast Park, the bike path to the Jr. High School, and your artwork.

N. BAUMANN: Okay.

R. WOLF: We'll be touching on your involvement with the faculty wives and to finish we'll be going over general questions about Cheney. Okay? To start with, I'd like you to briefly tell me about your life prior to coming to Cheney. That doesn't have to be anything very. . .

N. BAUMANN: It's going to be short. Well, I grew up in St. Louis, Missouri. Went to Washington U., and I met my husband there. He's a librarian. We were in New York State for a while and came to Laramie in 1954. We'd been married about three years, then.

R. WOLF: Laramie where?

N. BAUMANN: Laramie, Wyoming. and we were there 14 years and during that time I got a masters degree in art and adopted our daughter, Barbara, and oh, gave birth to a son, Bill, [both laugh] and he got his Ph.D. and then we came to Cheney in 1969.

R. WOLF: Okay.

N. BAUMANN: We've been here ever since, about 13 or 14 years now.

R. WOLF: So you didn't do a lot of major traveling around before you came to Cheney, but . . .

N. BAUMANN: Well, no we'd been on the East Coast and I grew up in the Midwest, and the west and then [wanting to] live as close to the ocean, the Pacific, as we gotten.

R. WOLF: But you haven't gotten to the ocean, yet?

N. BAUMANN: Well, we have, but we haven't lived there.

R. WOLF: Oh, I see. Yeah. Why did you come to Cheney? What were the reasons for coming?

N. BAUMANN: Well, all of the places we've lived, we wanted to be in a small college town as close to the mountains, as possible, and we had succeeded in that all the time. Charlie had his Ph.D. and he was ready for a head librarianship, and so we were very fortunate in finding this job.

R. WOLF: Cheney's a, sort of, ideal location then, for you?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah. For us it's just great.

R. WOLF: Well, good. All right. Did you find Cheney to be an easy place to relocate? Get reestablish?

N. BAUMANN: Yes, yes. Of course being part of the University community really helps. During that time the University was expanding, the Newcomers Club was very active -- the faculty wives were very active and they had a newcomer's part a section of the faculty wives, which had its own offices and own program.

R. WOLF: So that was just for the new people in the . . .

N. BAUMANN: For new faculty wives.

R. WOLF: Oh, I see.

N. BAUMANN: So, we made lots of friends at that time and I feel a little sorry for the women who have come in the last five or so years because they haven't had that opportunity.

R. WOLF: To get involved?

N. BAUMANN: Well, right. This organization was an opportunity to meet people easily and that's one reason I joined the faculty wives organization.

R. WOLF: What were your first impressions, of Cheney, when you got here?

N. BAUMANN: Well, good question. It's a small town. It is not exceptionally beautiful, and I was really bothered by this scab rock country. It really disturbed me and these very sensible streams flow down from the hills and they join bigger streams and you can see where they go and they join to the river and they end up in the ocean and that isn't the way it happens. In the scab rock country and it really bothered me. I didn't like the color of the rocks. But eventually I learned enough about the geology to appreciate what this country is like, and I love it now.

R. WOLF: So Cheney has gotten to be a little prettier than it used to be?

N. BAUMANN: Oh, definitely, definitely and I am crazy about the Palouse hills.

R. WOLF: Yeah, you've got to get into the farming.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, yeah.

R. WOLF: Come to Oaksdale and go farming with us, someday.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah I'm just very enthusiastic about . . .

R. WOLF: Okay, now that we've established your background, how you came to Cheney, let's move on to the Northeast Park. How did you first become interested in the park project?

N. BAUMANN: Well, let's see, all the neighbors moved into this area. Cheney was really expanding. That was in 1969, in the fall of 1969, when we moved into this house. We liked the open space behind our house and we were unaware of how shallow the lots were going to have to be behind us. So it was partly selfish but the closest park to this area was Hagelin Park, which is several blocks away, really, where the swimming pool is. There were trees back here that we felt would be an open, green area and well, a number of our neighbors and we felt that it had real potential as a park and that it would be expensive to develop because of the rock. It would also be expensive to develop as a park because of the closeness of the rock.

R. WOLF: So it seems to be an ideal spot, but. . .

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: Okay, how did you? . . .

N. BAUMANN: Oh, there's something I didn't mention.

R. WOLF: Oh, go ahead.

N. BAUMANN: I forgot, at that time, many of us had small children, and they're all grown up, not all of them, most of them are in college, at least, by now. But at that time, we were hoping to have a place where our children could play, and there was a lot of rental housing in the area down the hill from us where there will always be small children because there's, you know. . .

R. WOLF: Yeah, so the children were probably one of the biggest . . .

N. BAUMANN: Yeah. A play area.

R. WOLF: To keep them closer to home?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: Did you find that other people were eager to help, in the initial...?

N. BAUMANN: Yes. It was very easy. I had a lot of people with me on it.

R. WOLF: So you had a chance to do a lot of promoting?

N. BAUMANN: Not by myself. No. We, as a group, we did some promoting. We were ready for that. I can't remember the exact cause of the, let's see, I know I talked to Sonya Herald across the street () Joanne Shreaves, and Hugh Mills, next door and the Wines, Phil and Sally Wine and they were all very eager to start the park, to try to get it. We found out through Mary Grant, who was head of the Park Board at that time that if we could demonstrate a neighborhood voice, a desire as a group, for the park, that the park board would probably listen to us and that is what happened. We had meetings, and we petitioned the park board, and were asked to do a survey to really see if the population, around here, wanted it. We organized the neighborhood, and we organized by blocks, and we rang doorbells, and got signatures, and presented this to the park board, and I can give you the sequence, and the dates of some of the events right here.

R. WOLF: Okay, so you just basically got a lot of petition signing, and went door to door, and got the neighborhood involved. Were they, the people that got involved; did they have children too?

N. BAUMANN: Yes and at that time there were a lot of faculty members living, and I went through the names, today, and a lot of them have since moved from the rental areas, down below, to their own homes. Many of them were among the new faculty members, at the time they were young, energetic, had small children, and were as interested as we were to seek . . . park.

R. WOLF: So it helped knowing that through the faculty wives and the newcomers. . . ?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, but a lot of town people were involved, too, and students, and we had a lot of cooperation. Then at some point, they asked us to help raise money to put in a sprinkler system, and that never did get put in, but they did hook up water close to the park.

R. WOLF: So, do you have to just hose it in to the park?

N. BAUMANN: Well, we haven't done any, there hasn't been any grass planted there, yet.

R. WOLF: Oh, I see.

N. BAUMANN: There's no development at all.

R. WOLF: You're still working on that.

N. BAUMANN: Well, actually, we've pretty much stopped working on it. That was in 1970, in the spring of 1970 when we started it.

N. BAUMANN: It was less than a year after we came and it was by '71, about a year and a half later, the city had actually agreed to buy the property.

R. WOLF: So the city's currently working on the project after you started it?

N. BAUMANN: Yes.

R. WOLF: Part of it?

N. BAUMANN: Yes. It's been a long time. When the city bought the property, there were matching funds available to develop a park and that was something they were counting on, to develop it. They, meanwhile, went ahead and enlarged and developed Salnave Park, next to the school and by that time, there was a recession. That may have been in '73, I'm not sure, but since then, those funds have dried up, and in the past year, there's been activity again and I read, in the Free Press, periodically, where they're talking about looking for funds again, to develop the park.

R. WOLF: So, has the community gotten involved again with looking into it?

N. BAUMANN: No, no, there have been, well, our organization sold membership cards, and got a little savings account together, of about a hundred and fifty dollars, and Sally Wine has been the treasurer, and she kept track of it all as well, and I think that, fairly recently, she donated that to the park board, because I saw something in the paper, about that. So they're in the process of gathering money of various sources to try and develop the park.

R. WOLF: So hopefully, it will be developed in the next ten years.

N. BAUMANN: Yes eventually. I'm quite confident it will be.

R. WOLF: Well, that's good.

N. BAUMANN: But we've long since not been active as a group. However, there are two members of the park, the Northeast Park Association, who went on to be very active in city politics. Well, Bill Wines was on the city council. I noticed, reading some of the minutes, that somebody suggested that somebody, in the group, ought to run for the city council, and Bill Wines did, and he was on it for a number of years. Then he wasn't elected, one year, and then I had... After I was chairman for a while, I sort of asked Pete Neilson to be chairman, and he went on from that to be on the park board.

R. WOLF: So they became . . .

N. BAUMANN: They became active on the park board. They became active in the city activities.

R. WOLF: So, it's helped out with their careers too?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: So, how do you feel about this, since it hasn't been finished is it kind of a letdown feeling or . . .?

N. BAUMANN: We feel two ways about it. It would be very nice to have it all green, manicured, and see the kids out there. It has been used from time to time by the young leaguers who have played ball out there, year after year, back where it's flat enough to do that and there is a bike trail on the north five acres. Meanwhile, through the years, my husband and I, very selfishly, enjoyed the undeveloped characteristics, and observed the wildflowers, and the birds, and have walked our dogs out there, 3 times a day, for ten

years. So we're happy, you know, with the rustic effect, but we realize that's not our goal, and we do want to see a park.

R. WOLF: So even though you haven't reached your goal, it is somewhat nice, but hopefully it will get finished.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, yeah.

R. WOLF: Okay. Okay, now moving on from the park to your involvement, in the bike path. How did you become interested in the bike path?

N. BAUMANN: Okay, now, all right. The City of Cheney built a new junior high on 6th and Betz road in 1977, and there's this long two, or three block section, of North 6th, that has no cross streets, and that was a raceway, and it was, for years, a raceway; this is what the children had to walk to school if they came from, you know, from the main part of town. A number of our neighbors, and we didn't actually have a meeting, but just in seeing each other and talking . . . we expressed concern about this. So I called, I guess I called Neil Marrs, who's on the school board and he suggested I talk to the parks. He's not the head of the school board. He's the school superintendent and he suggested I talk to the school board and I went to a meeting and they appointed me to a committee with two, let's see, Marilyn Nichols, who was on the school board, and, Jerry White was the other member, who's been very active in bike camp, interested in bike camp. I can't remember if Jerry was on the school board, or not, but anyway, the three of us had a meeting here, a couple times, and made plans and mapped out a strategy.

I ended up calling and speaking to two county engineers. I had quite a time. It took several calls, because convincing the first to slow the traffic down, and there are state regulations that govern how far a slow sign can be put and what it amounted to was that they could slow down the traffic for half the length of that raceway, but not the whole thing, because of state regulations. Finally, somehow, they managed to get around that, and find that it was reasonable to put the slow sign at the beginning, of the road on 6th, where it was narrow, and the cars tended, and eventually we got the city police in the habit of checking on it, and giving tickets [laughs] and then meanwhile, after we accomplished that, then we started kind of a messy discussion about what to do. We wanted a fence up there, or to widen the pavement, substantially, so that the kids would really be separated from the traffic, and what is there now, I think it's a ten foot sidewalk; it's at least eight feet, because it has to be that wide for the city tractor, the snow plow tractor blade to handle it. If it's any narrower than that, they can't plow the snow off the walkway, and the walk is separated, from the traffic, by a very small ridge of dark blacktop. So it's like a curb, along there. But it has worked fine, to my knowledge there's been no accidents. . .

R. WOLF: Mishaps?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah. There was one, soon after the junior high was built. A high school student, he was in a car, showing off for his girlfriend, and he forced a biker off into the weeds. But that was the only accident, that I've heard of.

R. WOLF: So basically, once again, your children played a big part in getting. . .

N. BAUMANN: Definitely. Yes, because, at that time, my son was starting Junior High and several little children walked along there.

R. WOLF: Your involvement automatically. . .

N. BAUMANN: In both cases, my involvement was selfish.

R. WOLF: It automatically brought you to be the head of the program?

N. BAUMANN: Well, yeah, I just wasn't about to sit back. I mean, nothing had happened; I was kind of, thoroughly puzzled, that this hadn't been figured out. I mean, what they did was fairly logical. I couldn't understand why the city hadn't gone ahead, and done this. But it was a county road, at that time. It was later that the property was brought into the city, and is now a city road; but that was part of the problem.

R. WOLF: So with that, this added addition, so the bikers can have a place, of their own to go. Are you happy with the results, now?

N. BAUMANN: Yes. What necessarily, yeah, fairly. In real practice the people the kids who walk use that path and the bikers find it very frustrating to try to pass the walkers so they use the road, or the section on the other side that is separated by the white line, so they're not completely safe from traffic. But it's worked, and having the traffic slow down so much, for them is. . .

R. WOLF: So that the police helping out, too.

N. BAUMANN: So, yeah, the police, the slow traffic and the walkway. It's worked quite well. I realize now, we were being pretty demanding, insisting on a fence or something, a more ridged barrier. Also, the road had a high crown on it and it tended to be very slippery and they fixed a lot of that.

R. WOLF: If there was a fence there, there could be a lot of dented fenders.

N. BAUMANN: Well, I don't know. No, I could visualize people going, flying right over that flat top barrier.

R. WOLF: Oh, I see.

N. BAUMANN: It's only about six inches.

R. WOLF: That's great. It's been finished, now, for five years?

N. BAUMANN: Well, junior high school has been for five years, but the walkway hasn't been. It was a good year, or more, before we got that.

R. WOLF: But it got done.

N. BAUMANN: It did.

R. WOLF: Project well done?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: Okay. Did you find that there were different people getting involved with this than with the park? Or were they, basically, the same people?

N. BAUMANN: Well, the initial parents, that talked with me, about it, were the same people as with the park, but from then on I was sort of on my own. I just didn't wait. It didn't seem to be worth having a big neighborhood meeting, at that time. It maybe would have set, I just went ahead and made phone calls, got appointments, and took it from there.

R. WOLF: To talk more about the women involved, were there more women than men? Or did you find it pretty equal about who got involved with it?

N. BAUMANN: Well, in both cases I think it was pretty equal.

R. WOLF: Was it?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, but Marilyn Nichols was, she and I were more active. Jerry had his input, but we did more, for the, walkway

R. WOLF: Did the men find it conflict or, what am I trying to say, imposing on them because you kind of took over or was it?

N. BAUMANN: Not in this case. No, in fact I think they were kind of glad. [both laugh] No, they agreed with what we were doing one hundred percent. Actually, before we had achieved the actual building of the walkway, my husband and I went to a junior high PTA meeting, the first big open house in the high school.

N. BAUMANN: We presented a plea to the people who were there during the meeting to come and sign up if they wanted to participate in this; somewhere I have the names of the people who signed up, but really, there wasn't as much response as we'd thought. I think maybe if we'd been more active and known in the community that it would have been easier for people talking.

R. WOLF: The newer people?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, to talk to us. But we simply didn't go to church or join a service club, there's a contact that we don't get to make. We never felt that we were not being, you know, people disagreed with us. . .

R. WOLF: But they did disagree?

N. BAUMANN: oh yeah.

R. WOLF: Well to summarize, it seems that you're just a lady that has a cause if you find. . . I'm not sure if that's the right word, but if you find something that you believe in, you just go for it, especially when it seems your children were involved and their safety.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: To help them out in both these projects.

N. BAUMANN: The junior high and the. . .

R. WOLF: Okay. Now let's turn to your artwork.

N. BAUMANN: Oh, yes.

R. WOLF: What kind of paintings do you do?

N. BAUMANN: Mostly watercolor. I've done a few oil, but watercolor primarily. . .

R. WOLF: Seems to be the best.

N. BAUMANN: Pottery too actually, I've started out when I came to Cheney taking courses at the YW and from Eastern.

R. WOLF: Do you display your pottery too?

N. BAUMANN: I did for a while, but I got so that dust from the clay was bothering my allergies and in the meanwhile, I was teaching watercolor, and needed to practice more in paint art and so that was part of it, because I was teaching watercolor, not pottery. But I've always loved it.

R. WOLF: Could you tell me how your painting at the Chamber of Commerce, currently, got there?

N. BAUMANN: Got there? Well, I had the first art show at the Cheney Credit Union. They had asked me to help them place the nails for pictures in their beautiful new sunroom when they expanded their facilities and in return for helping put up the nails, I could have the first show. That was about three summers ago, now.

R. WOLF: Did somebody there know you?

N. BAUMANN: Yes, I knew both of them. Actually, one of them had been a faculty wife, in newcomers, with me and the other one was, that was Betty Grable, and Elsie Ableman, when she was in the Sears Catalog store, in town. So they both knew me, we were customers in the Credit Union.

R. WOLF: So was your show in the Credit Union your first display in Cheney?

N. BAUMANN: No, actually I had noticed that Farmers and Merchants Bank had an art show and so I spoke to them and asked them if they'd be willing to show my work, and they were and so I had a show there. That was, you know, a number of years ago. You know, about six years ago, or so. That was the first one and then it was several years before I had enough new paintings together to have another show. When I took those paintings down, I had three leftover that weren't going elsewhere, and they seemed appropriate. One was of the Cheney Grain Grower's elevators, down here, and a harvester and I think, something that I can't remember what it was. I took the three of them down to Chamber of Commerce and asked them, I noticed that they had room on their walls and I asked them if they'd be willing to hang them there. They were delighted, and finally I took one out and then I took another one out and the grain elevators are still there.

R. WOLF: So your paintings have depicted scenes of Cheney local life?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah. Some of them have, yeah.

R. WOLF: So that's how you got it in the Chamber of Commerce?

N. BAUMANN: The Chamber of Commerce, yeah.

R. WOLF: Okay, is there anything you'd like to add to how you got your paintings in the Chamber of Commerce?

N. BAUMANN: Well, yeah I just remembered that I was bringing a little five dollar donation for the Cheney float, into the Chamber of Commerce. That's where they were collecting it, when I noticed that they had room on their walls and it was the right time to find another spot for a painting, so I asked.

R. WOLF: So you were in the right place at the right time?

N. BAUMANN: Right and I just remembered also that I had a show at the Women's Center at Eastern, also. They were featuring a number of women artists. For one month I had paintings there.

R. WOLF: At the Women's Center?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: Okay, how do you see yourself contributing to the culture of Cheney?

N. BAUMANN: Dear, well, you mean the artistic part of the culture?

R. WOLF: Bringing something into Cheney as a woman and as an artist.

N. BAUMANN: Well, mainly by displaying my painting, a number of them had been sold in Cheney and so they're in homes as well as on public display. That's the main thing. I don't teach here.

R. WOLF: Have you thought about teaching at all? Here?

N. BAUMANN: Well, I have. There's really not much of a possibility of teaching in the art department. I've already talked to people, in the council, about what I should do, because they have a lot of hungry well qualified people looking for teaching jobs. So, attending concerts and things like that, we do enjoy those kinds of things and the plays and things.

R. WOLF: So you, just your paintings have helped bring something new into Cheney?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: Not a lot of people would go out and buy just anybody's paintings, but because it is somebody, they know, that's local.

N. BAUMANN: Well, that's part of it but use. . .

faculty wives, really in a way a cultural, or sociological reflection of what's happened to women in the past 10 years. Because a lot of women, well, okay, it was a combination of that and the economics of the university because the university stopped expanding and the newcomers were no longer there and there just weren't as many people, for a while. So there was no "new blood" to feed the organization and practically everybody who was still active in it had had an officers' position. Sometimes it was thirty years before, but they'd had it. So, then women started going back to school, some of them had gotten divorced and had to go work; some of them just went to work, things were getting tighter. They went to work, you know, to supplement their husband's income, if not just to support their family and the women were not available. All the volunteer organizations were having trouble finding mothers to keep campfire and girl scouts going and the same thing was happening to us. Some of us felt that there needed to be some organization that would keep some kind of social life going on campus because, people are happier if they know other people and especially those who haven't had a chance to..

R. WOLF: So actually, your duties as the president were just to get more people involved because of the lack of. . .

N. BAUMANN: Well, I tried and we had a meeting, you know, one or two meetings, of discussions, and we made phone calls. It just didn't work. We could not find enough people to really keep the thing going.

R. WOLF: So finally because of lack of new people and people going off and doing other things and becoming involved with different things. . .

N. BAUMANN: Working and going back to school, yeah. A lot of them ended up getting a teaching degree or something like that.

R. WOLF: So they just kind of lost interest?

N. BAUMANN: Or too busy, yeah. Or the interest was there but, the energy and the time were not.

R. WOLF: That the women of today were more interested in the personal growth than a lot of the social things were.

N. BAUMANN: Well it's harder. Yeah, it's hard to keep up these social things. So the number of women who were still around, who had time to give to teas, and hold meetings, and some had already had it up to here. I think that's an unfair thing to say but they had not only worked hard at that sort of thing.

R. WOLF: Yeah, I see that in my. . .

N. BAUMANN: Didn't want to do that, forever.

R. WOLF: My organization, which I belong to, over at Oakdale and it just, goes downhill after a while, because people lose interest, and there wasn't any new growth.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah! Well, one thing I did do as that quote-unquote president. [both laugh] that year was to, the Fredericksons came that year and I helped Mary with the first reception that they gave, in the fall, for the faculty.

R. WOLF: Oh, I see.

N. BAUMANN: So I did a lot of the footwork and worked with her in the Conference Center and I talked to her about what had been done in the past and how things were handled.

R. WOLF: So you helped out the president's wife?

N. BAUMANN: I sort of eased her into that, yeah.

R. WOLF: That's good, that's really helpful to new people.

N. BAUMANN: She was very appreciative.

R. WOLF: So did the organization actually, while you were in it, actually get to do anything? Or, I mean like did they have teas or did they do something for the community?

N. BAUMANN: That tea at the president's home was probably our last function that I can remember. I wasn't the only one--there were others who helped too and then it was the following spring, I had meanwhile I talked to, oh! Something else was in that summer, we had our faculty picnic at Salnave and we used to have, every year we had, during the summer, an ice cream social and at Sutton Park, or Salnave, whatever and a lot of fun, and the faculty, who were here during the summer, participated and there were a lot of visiting faculty who participated and they had a chance to meet people and their families to, you know, get to mix together. So we did have this, I think it was the summer before the demise of the organization. President Frederickson encouraged me to try to keep this thing going because by then I had become president, possibly the last and so I really did try and we had the reception in the hall, but in the spring, I wrote a letter to him and to the faculty staff saying that as much as we wanted to; it was not possible and that I hoped there would be some other vehicle for continuing faculty social activities and so there has been some.

R. WOLF: So your group not only got the faculty together here but also visiting faculty where you got to meet more of the . . .

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, but that was something that had been a tradition and we just managed to keep it . . .

R. WOLF: For one more year?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, one more year.

R. WOLF: Okay.

N. BAUMANN: Is it? I can't remember what it is now. I'll let you know.

R. WOLF: Okay. Now that we've covered the main topics, if you'd like to add anything later, please feel free to do so. Let's turn now to some of the general questions about Cheney and how the women have helped influence growth. What events or issues that have happened since you've been in Cheney stand out most in your mind?

N. BAUMANN: Let's see. That's really hard to say.

R. WOLF: Would you. . .

N. BAUMANN: Yeah. Well, there's several that have come to my mind. One is the opportunity. There have been several opportunities for citizens to be involved in the planning and the future of Cheney and on the week, my husband and I have not been particularly active other than what I've already described as my contribution. I've really been impressed with the opportunities that we have had, to be active and we ourselves have been involved. We have attended city council meetings and other meetings of various issues and we have never felt that the city has been unwilling to listen. We have felt that people as a whole have been sincere and have the desire to do a good job running the town and we've felt good vibrations. Oh, and we've been active too in helping, I'm a member of the friends of the public library and have helped with that mainly with posters through the years and that is definitely an area where women have been involved; in getting a public library. Joan Tracy for one was very active in. . .

R. WOLF: So the women were active in the public library?

N. BAUMANN: Yes, they are mainly. That's not 100 percent true, but there are several of them who are active in the friends of the public library now and are supportive in various areas.

R. WOLF: Also the city of Cheney encourages, even though it's not necessarily a small town, it still encourages people to get active, rather than compared to Spokane, where it's such a big city that you tend not to?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, you still, you get lost or you can hide, if you want to and there's so many layers of government, in Spokane, where here you can.

R. WOLF: It really taps the small town.

N. BAUMANN: You can talk to people who count in a big hurry and get things done. One very big event, I can remember, is the burning of the old field house and I was at home with my, actually, I had my son up at the health clinic when we heard that there was a terrible fire on campus and the wind was blowing and there were explosions and there was a rumor that the science building was blowing up and so as soon as we returned from seeing somebody at the health clinic, we got in that car and got the camera and dashed over there and fortunately the wind had changed and they estimated that if the wind had continued for ten minutes more or so in the direction that it was going, it could have really gone through the pine trees on campus and into town. It could have been a real disaster.

R. WOLF: So the fire at the field house was, seems like it is pretty eventful.

N. BAUMANN: It was spectacular. Yeah, I don't know if you know about it. They were dismantling this old field house which as I understand the university had bought from the Moses Lake Army Installation, for a dollar, and they had it shipped out here. They needed a field house and here was one they could get as a surplus government.

R. WOLF: So they were just putting it up?

N. BAUMANN: No, they were dismantling it and it had outlived its usefulness and it was old and they were taking it apart and it, I think they were gonna save the swimming pool which was our only indoor swimming pool, but they were taking it apart and it was a very hot, dry windy day and a welder's spark ignited with the dry timber, and what was left, it was like a funnel, a whirl wind.

R. WOLF: So it just went up like a lot of cardboard boxes probably?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah. Right. It was spectacular.

R. WOLF: Where was it located?

N. BAUMANN: Across the street from the Phase.

R. WOLF: It was where the Phase was built?

N. BAUMANN: No. This was before the Phase.

R. WOLF: Before the Phase. Now there may have been a Phase 1, I'm not sure about that. But it was so close to the ROTC building that there were a number of very heroic acts done by students as well as . . .

R. WOLF: To save the building on campus?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: That probably united the campus all at once.

N. BAUMANN: It did. There were some real heroes. There were cars that melted and burned on Washington street and the lamps' globes melted and sort of drooled and. . .

R. WOLF: Quite a fire.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: Wow.

N. BAUMANN: That same day, if I remember this correctly, the Farmers and Merchants Bank was robbed and the TV cameras were on with pictures of the robbers and they got caught. We had a spectacular chase, out in the country.

R. WOLF: So a bank robbery and the fire all in one day?

N. BAUMANN: Yeah. If I'm remembering this right.

R. WOLF: Wow. It sounds like something exciting happened in Cheney.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah. It's hard to believe these days and I was not here for the Mount Saint Helens eruption.

R. WOLF: Oh, you weren't?

N. BAUMANN: It was pretty well cleaned up by the time I came back to Cheney.

R. WOLF: You got lucky.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah. I was staying with my mother who was ill at the time. The rest of my family helped them clean up though.

R. WOLF: That was quite an event.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: All right. What women or woman do you consider most influential in Cheney?

N. BAUMANN: Oh dear, I can't think of any single person or single woman who could be said to be most influential but I do know Joan Tracy, a librarian, here at Eastern. She was very active in getting the public library started. Marianne Nelson and Kathy Larson are active in Friends of the Library now, and they're very active in helping it and trying to keep the city budget to include enough funds to keep the public library going. That's almost a yearly struggle; for several years, now. One person who comes to my mind and I don't know her personally, but I've heard about her many times and that is the contributions of Dede Gammin who has helped Indians in Toppenish and her husband, Dr. Gammin, who's a Doctor. A medical doctor, they have spent several years, I guess, in Africa doing social, medical work.

R. WOLF: So Dede Gammin was. . .

N. BAUMANN: Dede Gammin is one of those people that comes to my mind that's been sort of a person who saw a need and went ahead and took care of it; not just one night stands like I have been doing, but she's been doing this for years and years and years, yeah helping migrant workers and the Indians in the Toppenish, Washington area.

R. WOLF: That's neat, and there was like, three key women in the building of the public library, I guess, getting it going, and keeping it going, and. . . .

N. BAUMANN: Well, okay, Joan Tracy was active early, and Kathy and Marianne Olson are active now. Yeah, and there are others and I know those three, personally, I know them quite well.

R. WOLF: Okay. What minorities have influenced you?

N. BAUMANN: Well, I really don't know, but I was aware and heard plenty about the number of years that black students on campus were, okay, now this sounds funny, but a number of them were brought in from Chicago through the services of an educational placement bureau of some kind who helped blacks find a place to go to college and

somehow apparently through the efforts of a young man who is very eager to help the minorities. Eastern was on their list, and a number of these young people, from Chicago, were sent here, and found the style of living, in Cheney so dead, compared to the life they were living there and there were some real difficult adjustments for them to make. I'm not being critical, I didn't have any personal relationship with any of this, but it was my recollection that the Gammins did have a young black living with them and that they were patient with him long enough that they managed to get him, finally, to come and sit down with them at dinnertime at a specified time. He had grown up not sitting at the dinner table.

R. WOLF: So the Gammins were once again involved.

N. BAUMANN: Right, yeah, involved. They were involved. There must have been others too who made contributions.

R. WOLF: My impressions were that there wasn't enough research done on the area these kids should be placed. It wasn't necessarily that they were black, but the area they came from, and anybody coming to Cheney, that's not used to it.

N. BAUMANN: Right. It depends on what they were being brought in there for and what they wanted to get out of college life and I agree with you, that it wasn't the best time. At least it appeared not to be. I haven't been able to research this subject for a lack of personal interest.

R. WOLF: All right. How were the women important historically in the development of Cheney?

N. BAUMANN: I really don't know.

R. WOLF: Okay. Okay, going back to just the things you've been doing here in Cheney. What did you find fulfilling about the park and the bike trail and your art?

N. BAUMANN: Partly the pleasure that these things do or may give to other people and in the case of the park it is preserving open areas which I feel very strongly needs to be. This business of developing and improve the wilderness are, I like to see a bit of wild and just the chance for some forest.

R. WOLF: So, the preservation of not only land but for the park or for the bike path, for the preservation of kids.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: So there.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, right, definitely.

R. WOLF: Okay, what did you find frustrating about this? Did you find anything frustrating about trying to give?

N. BAUMANN: To achieve these?

R. WOLF: Yeah.

N. BAUMANN: Oh, lots of frustration yeah. Blessedly it's been many years back now and I only can remember what the good things that of trying to convince the city that, county engineers about the placement of the slow sign on North 6th took a lot of patience and coming back and coming back and talking some more instead of telling them off which is what I would like to do the whole time and how foolish, you know, these ordinances are. Eventually they came around and also they also did not know the path was not as wide as it was supposed to be. There were specifications and, we finally made a big fat appointment and said, "Please come out here with a measuring tape and believe

us, it's not as wide as you told us it was going to be" and they assumed that the man they sent out to do the job had done, you know, done it correctly. So they ended up adding a couple of feet along the bike path.

R. WOLF: So the bike path?

N. BAUMANN: To get it up to specification and then it could be plowed in the wintertime.

R. WOLF: You just had to get the eyes opened of the . . . ?

N. BAUMANN: Right.

R. WOLF: The heads of. . . ?

N. BAUMANN: They're perhaps spread so thin that they couldn't get around to checking on every project that they were supposed to be in charge of.

R. WOLF: Unfortunately, they didn't have one living in the community to see what was happening.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, this was before that stretch of North 6th was part of the city and so it was dealing with the county at that time. Later on, it became part of the city and we were part of pushing for that annexation. We were after that too.

R. WOLF: Okay. Well, this pretty much concludes the interview. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

N. BAUMANN: Well, yeah. I had an opportunity sometime this afternoon which I could have read Jenny White's, who is Jerry White's wife, her little history of Cheney and if I had brought that before this talk, I might have been less ignorant about how women have influenced Cheney.

R. WOLF: Well that's just fine.

N. BAUMANN: But that I'm happy that Jenny has done that. That book I mean.

R. WOLF: Well that's one way she's contributed to letting other people know what's happening.

N. BAUMANN: Right. Yeah. So, I'm sorry, there's one more woman I know who has contributed.

R. WOLF: Okay, so that's it. This interview will be on file at the library under your name and my name as co-authors.

N. BAUMANN: Oh?! All right.

R. WOLF: I don't know when it will be done, but you can go up and listen to it. [laughs] Thank you so very much on my behalf and the part of the women's center. I know we're both very happy you helped me with my interview skills. . .

N. BAUMANN: Yeah. Thank you.

R. WOLF: . . . a great deal and their oral history project is very important to them and your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

N. BAUMANN: Here's a very obvious plug for the contribution of the Women's Center to the life of women in Cheney and I didn't think of it until that summary.

R. WOLF: Yeah, I overlooked that too.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah.

R. WOLF: But that's something. Just the preservation of this history will help other people with that.

N. BAUMANN: Yes, yeah.

R. WOLF: So, thank you very much for your time.

N. BAUMANN: Yeah, you're welcome.
>>>>>>>End of Interview<<<<<<<<