

BARBARA YOUNG

March 18, 2002

Interviewer: Eugene Smith

Tape #1, Side A

I: Okay, let's start. Tell me your first name including your maiden name.

BY: My name is Barbara Kay Harrison Young.

I: Alright, and do you have a nickname, or did you use a nickname when you were younger?

BY: Yeah, well I had a nickname; they called me Bobbie when I was little. And, 'cuz I was named after an aunt, and then there was another Barbara in the immediate family and she went by her middle name.

I: I see. And did you enjoy being called Bobbie?

BY: Oh, occasionally.

I: Did anybody mistake you for a boy?

BY: No.

I: [laughs] Sometimes they would with that name though.

BY: Yeah.

I: Yeah. And did the other kids at school call you Bobbie?

BY: No.

I: You were just Barbara there?

BY: Yeah.

I: I see. When were you born?

BY: I was born January 29th 1953.

I: 1953?

BY: Yes.

I: Then you are much younger than I am.

BY: Yeah.

I: [laughs] Why are you here?

BY: Well, when I first moved in two years ago I was going through a depression and a anxiety.

I: I see. And so you just decided to stay here?

BY: yes.

I: You are no longer depressed I guess?

BY: I have moments.

I: I see, so you enjoy being here then?

BY: Yes.

I: Good. And where were you born?

BY: I was born right here in La Grande.

I: I see . . . And uh, who else is in your family?

BY: Well, I've got my Mother, she's still alive, both my older Sisters, Aunt, my late Husband's . . . my two kids and his two older kids that are up in Washington.

I: So he had been married before?

BY: Yes.

I: And then you and he had two children?

BY: Yes.

I: And they are living here?

BY: Yes, my Son and Daughter and one Granddaughter living here in La Grande.

I: What do they do?

BY: My Son . . . builds caskets at New Day Enterprises. And my daughter works down at Wendy's restaurant.

I: Now building caskets is an unusual occupation I think.

BY: Yeah.

I: How did he learn to do that?

BY: Well uh, the [inaudible] working as a training program for the learning disabled.

I: I see. And then are these caskets used here or are they shipped other places?

BY: I believe they are shipped other places.

I: Have you seen them?

BY: No.

I: I see. Does he tell you about them?

BY: Um, not always.

I: Okay. Well I suppose each one is a little bit; they are very much the same aren't they?

BY: Yes.

I: So there is not a lot to tell?

BY: No.

I: Once you learn about them that's what you need to know . . . And then, did you say that your parents lived here?

BY: I did.

I: They must have if you were born here. How long do you think they have lived in Union County?

BY: Uh, well lets see, my Dad . . . well both of them were born here in Union County. My Dad was borne along Wolf Creek Road in August of 1920 and my Mother was borne way behind, well it's now Boise Cascade, uh, November of 1923.

I: I see. Are they still living?

BY: My Mother is.

I: I'll bet she has a lot of good stories about life in this valley.

BY: She might.

I: What's her name?

BY: Mildred Harrison.

I: Mildred Harrison. I'll keep that in mind; see if she might like to talk to us.

BY: Yeah, uh she lives out in Union.

I: Okay. Now, when you think back to school days, which school did you go to here in La Grande?

BY: I went to Willow Elementary.

I: Willow, which is still operating of course.

BY: Yeah, and then I went to La Grande Middle School and La Grande High.

I: Well from any one of those schools, Willow, middle school, or high school, could you remember one incident that was especially important to you for some reason?

BY: Well, I remember back when President Kennedy was assassinated. I was in the fifth grade. I remember the principal coming into the gym; we were getting ready for what we called Rhythm Night.

I: What was it?

BY: It was called Rhythm Night where we were . . .

I: Rhythm Night, oh.

BY: And uh, he had turned off the record pl . . . took down off the record, and turned on the radio and then they announced President Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas. And that's basically what sticks out in my mind . . . from grade school.

I: How did that feel to you?

BY: Uh, shock.

I: Had you been admiring President Kennedy before?

BY: No, uh, it was uh, kind of sudden news. That somebody would want to assassinate one of our presidents in the 20th.

I: And of course you were about ten years old then?

BY: Yeah.

I: And do you think you understood what assassinate means?

BY: Yeah.

I: Did that mean the same thing as murder to you?

BY: Yes.

I: And, what did you think you understood at the time about who might have done this?

BY: Well, I really couldn't say for sure.

I: It was a mystery.

BY: Yeah.

I: Course it was to most people at that time too.

BY: Yes.

I: None of us really knew. Had you been watching him on television?

BY: Not uh . . . so much before but I had uh, remember, seen the footage on television, you know, at the time that he was shot.

I: But before he was shot you had seen him on television?

BY: Yeah.

I: So you knew what he looked like?

BY: Yeah.

I: Did you think he was handsome?

BY: Yeah.

I: Did you think his wife was attractive too?

BY: Not particularly.

I: [laughs] Did you think that from what knew at the time he was doing a good job as president?

BY: Yes.

I: Did you have talks about him in school, or did the teacher discuss him at all?

BY: Uh, not that I remember too much except for about when the . . . right after the assassination.

I: Then there was a lot of talk.

BY: Yes.

I: Sure, sure. Did you know what part of the country he'd grown up in?

BY: Yes. Massachusetts.

I: Did you notice the way he talked, it was different from the way we talked?

BY: Yeah.

I: What did you think about that?

BY: Kind of a nice accent.

I: Did you know he was rich?

BY: Yeah. Real rich.

I: How did that make you feel about him?

BY: It's all right if you like money.

I: Did you like money at that time?

BY: Well I wasn't getting much of an allowance . . . at the time.

I: Your parent's weren't rich?

BY: No, uh.

I: Did you know anybody in La Grande that was rich?

BY: No.

I: Probably not . . . In your, after you graduated from high school, lets say in your early 20s, what were some of the things that you hoped you could do with your life?

BY: Well, I . . . was a stay at home mom. Which was something that I didn't get when I was growing up?

I: When were you married? How old were you?

BY: I was 18 when I got married.

I: Right out of high school?

BY: Yeah.

I: And you had started having babies soon after?

BY: Yup.

I: Okay. So as a stay at home mom, what were you hoping for?

BY: To raise my kids the best I could.

I: Yes. And what were some of the things that you did in order to try to give them a good job or, a good experience of home life?

BY: Well, as I said, I preferred to be a stay at home mom, you know, I didn't get that and I wanted uh, for my kids to have at least one parent home when they got home from, say, school.

I: And when they got home from school did you have cookies or a snack for them for example?

BY: Not always, but the first place they headed for was the refrigerator.

I: [laughs] Could you tell me a little more about how you cared for them, you know some of the routine things that you did?

BY: Well, early on I was changing their diapers and feeding 'em, and bathing 'em.

I: When they got to be, lets say six or seven or eight years old, what were some of the things you did regularly for them?

BY: Well . . . a lot of time I did, you know, make cookies back when they were growing up, and well, my Stepdaughter and my Son both participated in Special Olympics and my husband and I went to [inaudible] . . . track meets and what not.

I: Your Stepdaughter had a disability, did she?

BY: She was, I guess, what you would call borderline retarded or, fairly close to the borderline. But she is married and got two kids of her own, living up in the Seattle area.

I: I see. Well I would think that being a mother to one or more children with a disability was kind of an extra job for you, you probably had to do some things you wouldn't have done for other children?

BY: No. No. They . . . [inaudible] basically worked, how to do stuff on their own, and which would have benefited them more than if I did it myself for them.

I: For example what?

BY: Oh, when they got a little older, say in junior high, I even . . . well my Son and my Stepson, I figured they were going to have to learn how to sew and cook and clean house and stuff like that. I was certain that they were, you know, eventually going to have to learn.

I: Great. So if they were learning these skills in school, I suppose there were things that you could do at home to help them practice?

BY: Yes.

I: Can you remember any conversations with either of them about those things?

BY: Well . . .

I: Did they ever say, for instance, "No I don't want to do that," or "I can't do that," and what did you say?

BY: No. When they would come up and say "I can't do that" [inaudible] told me yes you can.

I: And then what happened?

BY: It took them a little while but they got it done.

I: You had to be firm about it?

BY: Yep.

I: And did you insist that they do it? They couldn't go out or they couldn't do anything else until they'd finished that job?

BY: Sometimes yes and sometimes no.

I: Were you concerned at all about maybe being inconsistent?

BY: Yeah.

I: What did you think about that?

BY: Well I really couldn't say.

I: Did it worry you?

BY: Sometimes.

I: Did you see any bad effects?

BY: Yeah. Uh . . . I'm having trouble getting my son to do a lot of stuff now that he should be doing but . . . I've got two other people working with him that is helping him out.

I: Does he live alone?

BY: Yes.

I: So these people check on him?

BY: Yes.

I: Do you think he is improving?

BY: Yes.

I: Is he in his twenties now?

BY: He just turned thirty.

I: Just turned thirty. So you think he is going to make progress?

BY: Yeah, there is hope for him yet.

I: Good. We always have to have hope for our relatives don't we?

BY: Yes.

I: Yes indeed we do. Otherwise we would become terribly discouraged. As an adult apart from your children or your mother or your parents or your husband, what are some of the activities that you most enjoy doing?

BY: Well since I've been in here, I like playing bingo.

I: Do you do that once a week here?

BY: Three days a week.

I: Three? Do you usually win?

BY: Yeah usually at least win my money back, sometimes a little bit more.

I: Oh you bet?

BY: Yes.

I: Tell me a little more about how that works.

BY: Well, we play nickel bingo.

I: Nickel?

BY: Yeah . . .

I: Now is that a nickel a card?

BY: Nickel a card per game and we play ten games, so I usually, as I said, win my money back and sometimes win a bit more, and sometimes a little less or not at all. Which you know better be expected.

I: What is it you enjoy about bingo?

BY: I really couldn't say, its just sometime to do, break up the monotony. Get my eye brain coordinated and hands going.

I: So you look forward to it each time?

BY: Yeah.

I: And does it go on for about an hour?

BY: Yep. Then, I was going to church before I got moved in here, I still go out to Summerville, on Sundays, and then they come up here Sunday afternoon and I attend that service.

I: What is it that you enjoy about church?

BY: Well it gets me out of here for a few hours. Its usually and enjoyable ride from here out there, and my Pastors not too bad.

I: What do you mean?

BY: There has been a few times that he has put me to sleep.

I: [laughs] When you say it is monotonous around here, is that the way you really feel about life, that it is monotonous?

BY: Uh, sometimes.

I: Well a lot of the time or just once in a while?

BY: Once in a while.

I: Do you read?

BY: No.

I: Do you watch television?

BY: Yeah some.

I: What kinds of programs?

BY: Well, lets see . . . there is one soap opera I watch every now and again, and the news . . . and there's the three Law and Order programs I like.

I: Why do you like Law and Order?

BY: I don't know, just like 'em.

I: Okay. How about movies?

BY: Occasionally, if they have a big one playing here I'll watch it.

I: What would be an example of a good one?

BY: Oh something like the Sound of Music or Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, the first Short Circuit that they came out with.

I: Short Circuit, is that a comedy?

BY: Uh, yeah, and it was filmed on the Oregon coast there in Astoria.

I: I haven't heard about that one . . . Did you ever go the movies downtown?

BY: Well the last movie that I went to downtown was when Titanic was playing. And that was about three, four years back.

I: What make you want to go downtown to see that one?

BY: My daughter gave me the money for it and told me to go see it, that it was a good movie.

I: I thought maybe you were going to tell me it was better on the big screen than on the little television screen.

BY: Well it was kind of loud in the movie theater.

I: Yeah it was. I saw it too . . . If you had one part of your life to live over again, what might you do differently?

BY: Oh . . . Boy that's a tough one. I don't think I would really want to do any of it over.

I: Tell me more about that.

BY: Well I have been pretty satisfied with my life, and you know, I wouldn't really want to go back and change any of it.

I: That's remarkable. What parts of it then made you happiest?

BY: Well, uh, when my husband was still alive, and we would oh, do stuff on the weekends. When we were living out in the Island City area we had a wood burning fireplace and my folks, before they moved from La Grande to Union also had a wood burning stove and we would go out on the weekends, get wood, and a lot of times we would take time out to go look for mushrooms. My husband and I would go out camping a lot and pick huckleberries and fish . . .

I: Have good times together.

BY: Yep.

I: Do you remember laughing and enjoying nature?

BY: Yeah.

I: I'll bet you wish you could do those things again.

BY: Oh, sometimes yeah.

I: Did life seem at all monotonous then?

BY: No. That was more kind of care free, having some memorable times with my husband.

I: And when did he die?

BY: September of '95.

I: Did that contribute to your depression do you think?

BY: Probably.

I: Well, do you think that you will live the rest of your life here?

BY: It's hard to say.

I: Is that what you hope?

BY: Well no not really. I don't see really spending the rest of my life at – here.

I: Where would you like to spend it?

BY: Oh maybe spending some more . . . fun times with my kids and one granddaughter that I have here.

I: Do you think that will be possible?

BY: I hope so.

I: I hope so too. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

BY: Well do you have anymore questions?

I: No that is the end of my questions.

BY: Well I think that would be it.

[end of tape]