

## AN INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA BERNAUR

Interviewer: Niel Johnson (July 30, 1996) [corrections in parentheses]

FINAL draft 6/15/20 (By Ross Marshall, proofed by Mary Conrad)

NJ: (unclear)building near the RLDS archives to interview Barbara Bernauer . I'll get this date on here temporarily. This is for the Trails Head OCTA oral history project. We are pleased that we could get together with you this afternoon, Barbara. So you are one of the early founders, in a sense, of Trails Head. In fact, you were involved, I think, earlier than that. At least you attended the first convention of OCTA. As I said before, we kind of have to satisfy the historians by getting a little background on you. Would you give us your maiden name, your married name, birth date, birth place, and parents' names?

BB: I am Barbara Jean Hans Bernauer. I was born in Independence not too far from where we are right now. My parents and grandparents also came from the Independence area. I spent my early childhood in Independence and later moved to Kansas City, when my father took over his father's surveying business. So I have ties very strongly to the Independence area.

NJ: Birth date?

BB: The actual date?

NJ: It's optional.

BB: January 23, 1930. Now you know.

NJ: So your father was Hans.

BB: Yes. My father was Floris Hans. My mother was Opal. And for some years they operated a florist business right down here on Lexington on the other side of Pacific Bridge, as it was called. It was the old bridge even before the double bridge was there. So my first memory is there.

NJ: What was your mother's maiden name?

BB: Opal Brown.

NJ: They may have known the Trumans or at least seen the Trumans.

BB: Truman was not a good household name in our...no. I only appreciated Harry when I grew older because they were quite...although they said they were Independents, they were probably Republicans. A lot of RLDS people were. My grandfather, W. O. Hans, operated a surveying company. It started in Independence and then he moved to Kansas City. That's another whole subject.

NJ: That was privately operated? Did he work with the county surveyor then, county government at all?

BB: No, not really, no. He started out working with the Metropolitan Railway. He was hired by Robert Young and worked with him as a young man and was an engineer. I'm not

sure exactly what that involved. On that line they called it the Metropolitan Railway from Kansas City to Independence.

NJ: Did he have any interest in the trails that came out of Independence?

BB: No, not that I know of.

NJ: So you didn't get your interest in the trails necessarily from your parents.

BB: No, not at all. I became interested in the trails because of my interest in history, which has always been very strong. I kind of missed my calling when I was younger. So I try to make up for it.

NJ: What was your education? What schools did you go to?

BB: I attended grade schools in Independence.

NJ: Did you go to Bryant by any chance?

BB: No, I went to the new Colombia School, what is called Proctor now over there when I was very young. Then Bristol, which was in Independence but was in the Kansas City school district. Then we moved to Kansas City.

NJ: What was your address here in Independence where you were born?

BB: The green house was at 1440 West Lexington.

NJ: Is that where you were born?

BB: Yes. I was born in Independence (unclear). It was recently torn down but there were greenhouses there that my father built for years and years, where the Hill Floral Companies...He built those.

NJ: Then you went to high school.

BB: In Kansas City at Paseo. Then I went to Graceland College for two years. Then I went to Iowa State University. It is now but it was College then at Ames, Iowa. I got a degree in Home Economics because at that time they didn't seem to want women archeologists and that was what I wanted to be.

NJ: That was your early interest, digging up ruins.

BB: Yes, I would like to have done it. So then I was married and had two children. I went back to work. I have forgotten the date. Anyway, I taught school.

NJ: After your kids were in school?

BB: Yes, it would have been in the 1960s, '65, '66.

NJ: What year did you get married?

BB: 1953. I married Norman Bernauer.

NJ: Your children's names?

BB: Elise, whose married name is Garrison and Richard, who is married to Carrie Latham. And they have a little girl whose name is Clara.

NJ: So you were a homemaker for a while and then went back into teaching. What level?

BB: Junior High, which meant I needed to go back and get a master's degree, which I did.

NJ: In Home Economics?

BB: No, I got my master's degree in audiovisual education.

NJ: We are doing a little bit right here.

BB: Yes. So I taught school for a while.

NJ: You earned your spurs then.

BB: Yes, I did. I started out in the Kansas City School District. I went through the riots of,

NJ: when was that?

BB: The '60s. In Martin Luther King Junior High

NJ: So how long did you teach?

BB: Twelve years.

NJ: Then what did you do after that?

BB: Well, I retired for the second time and sort of pursued things that I wanted to do and became a lot more interested in history. I became a Civil War buff and drove my husband to almost all the battlefields. (unclear) (But not) Vicksburg. We never got there. I would read books and books. I'm a very book-oriented person. I should have been a librarian.

NJ: So after you retired from teaching junior high you really got into history.

BB: Yes. From the Civil War. Then I discovered some relatives who were in the Civil War, which in turn I thought, "Well, I want to research about them, where they were," which led me to the National Archives and the information on them. One thing led to another and I got much more interested in genealogy then. So I pursued that for quite a while. As part of that I began to volunteer in the RLDS Archives because that's where a lot of my ancestors had their membership. And I thought I was bothering them so much that I would do a little volunteer work. Then a part-time job opened up and I got that. One thing led to another and I became full time.

NJ: Here in the RLDS Archives?

BB: Yes.

NJ: Originally at the auditorium?

BB: The auditorium.

NJ: So your interest in history, genealogy. That's before your involvement with the trails' history?

BB: About the same time.

NJ: Then of course about local history too.

BB: Yes, I was very interested in local history, particularly Independence because my parents and grandparents were here in the early days. Anything historic has always interested me. So I wanted to find out what happened in Independence, who was here and why. I think I ran across a notice for OCTA, at, I think, probably Mid Continent Library. I don't remember where I came across it.

NJ: Was that when you were part-time archivist?

BB: I wasn't working there at all. I wasn't working.

NJ: Back in the '80s.

BB: It was in the early '80s.

NJ: About '82.

BB: I had gotten involved with several genealogy organizations. Not a lot with Heart of America but with one called American Family something. I've forgotten the name but I actually served on the board of that. I think I was involved in the genealogy and that's how I heard about it.

NJ: Did you ever find any ancestors who had any connections to the trails?

BB: I have wanted to. In a way, I have in connection with the Mormon Trail. I had some who didn't go to Utah. They are what the Rocky Mountain saints refer to as go backs. They didn't stay.

NJ: They came back to Independence?

BB: Well, the ones that I have found so far moved up into Idaho. They stayed there.

NJ: They remained Mormon?

BB: No. They became Reorganized Latter Day Saints.

NJ: Is there a colony of RLDS in northern Idaho.

BB: I don't know about now. It was near Milan. I've never been there. I'd like to go. And so I guess reading about...

NJ: You first knew more about the Mormon Trail than any of the others or had a closer connection.

BB: I don't recall. It was sort of a learning process.

NJ: But you say the Oregon-California Trails Association when it was founded that you saw a notice for a meeting.

BB: Because I knew no one when I went. And I registered.

NJ: What meeting was that?

BB: It was the first convention.

NJ: Oh, the first convention.

BB: In Independence. The first time I went to anything.

NJ: Okay. Did you meet Greg Franzwa at that meeting?

BB: Yes.

NJ: And some of the other early prime movers.

BB: I met Barbara Magerl then. I don't know that I knew many of the other people, if at all. I think Barbara and I got acquainted because she was a publicity person.

NJ: Do you have a date on that convention?

BB: Yes.

NJ: Do you have the date on it?

Harold Smith: The convention itself, August 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>.

NJ: So you still have the brochure on that.

BB: Yes, with my comments.

NJ: 1983.

BB: Yes, I have it marked up.

NJ: What comments?

BB: The ones that I printed. There were...I don't see any concurrent sessions, but there were a number of sessions.

NJ: Do you remember what you found the most interesting and engaging?

BB: Well, the thing that took my attention, as I try to recall it now, was the papers presented. And they had a session on women on the overland trails. I remember it because Stan Kimball did the commentary afterwards.

NJ: Stan Kimball. What do you remember about that?

BB: I know him and I have had occasion to get a little better acquainted with him. My comment here was that I didn't think we needed his critique of the papers at that time. I don't remember how Barbara and I got to talking about that. But we both seemed to agree that...

NJ: Just the idea of a critique or the type of critique?

BB: The type of critique.

NJ: That was done. But you did share that you're concerned with the critiquer.

BB: No. I wasn't anybody and he was...

NJ: So the women on the trails. That's been one of your interests.

BB: I found that real interesting. I've read the books, the journals and then a couple of books of journals published.

NJ: So that was the first time you were involved with OCTA.

BB: Yes.

NJ: Were you asked to volunteer or do anything at that time?

BB: I remember once for some reason I rode back to Kansas City with Barbara. I don't remember why the occasion was. But because my husband was involved in television production and publicity, that seemed to be a shared interest. And we were talking about that and how the activities could be promoted a little more. We talked about that.

NJ: So your husband's job or profession was what?

BB: He was in television. He was a producer-director for WDAF for many years. Then he left there and went into the advertising agency business. And that's now what his....

NJ: Now is he interested in trails history?

BB: Somewhat. I sort of drug him along, the way I drug him along to all the Civil War battlefields. And at one time we took a trip from here almost to Cheyenne, I guess, following Greg's book, Oregon Trail Revisited. All the back roads and the bumpy...you know, trying to find the swales and the trail and the graves and everything, using his book as a guide.

NJ: Are you talking about Santa Fe?

BB: The Oregon Trail.

NJ: I was thinking of Greg's account of the Santa Fe Trail.

BB: This traced the trail and where it went.

NJ: Oh you mean Greg Franzwa. I was thinking of the other Greg.

BB: You were thinking of...

NJ: It predates Greg Franzwa by about 120 years.

BB: I read that too. See, I was very book oriented. I read all the early accounts.

NJ: *The Oregon Trail revisited.*

BB: Yes.

NJ: We used that in '92 when we went out to Oregon plus the maps.

BB: We didn't have those.

NJ: It wasn't available.

BB: So we wound up in everybody's corn field.

NJ: Pretty conscientious, diligent.

BB: Interesting, you know. I like to pursue it.

NJ: We went on highways and looked over (unclear). You were more diligent.

BB: Yes.

NJ: But we did stop and look at the plaques and got up on Courthouse Rock and looked over the horizon.

BB: Oh, did you?

NJ: Chimney Rock and of course toured the Mitchell Pass at Scott's Bluff.

BB: Right.

NJ: The ruts at (unclear) and the ones in Guernsey, Wyoming. We were there in Laramie on a windy day. It must have been 60 mile an hour winds.

BB: Yes.

NJ: It made us appreciate the kind of things these emigrants had to face as they went across the plains.

BB: I have a little anecdote. I don't know if you would want it.

NJ: Go ahead.

BB: When we were on that trip and we were into Colorado, we were driving south down toward I don't remember but it was out in the wilds there. And we saw this truck (unclear) car to the side and two women so we decided to stop and see what their problem was. I don't remember what it was, but we offered to take them to where they lived, which was a ranch not far. As we were going I told them what we were doing in following the trail. And it seems as though this was a mother and daughter. The mother

had been related to Stuart, who was one of the early fur trader type person who mapped some record. Anyway, she thought she was related to him and I just recently read that book.

NJ: That Stuart (Robert) who (unclear) in 1812 came back from Astoria overland.

BB: Yes. So then that sort of established a rapport. And then the daughters started tell when they were kids they would go out on the prairie. They found this thing sticking up out of the ground which proved to be the top of a cast iron stove. And so they dug it up and dug down in there and found a rifle and didn't know what to do with it, so they covered it all back up again. And we talked about, well, someone's wagon has gotten too heavy. Hence, they got rid of it. I don't know why they would put a rifle in there, unless it didn't work.

NJ: Probably didn't work.

BB: "Where was that?" Well, she couldn't remember. It would have been nice to be able to find that. I did some research for this lady, Stuart, and wrote to her. I think I told her about the trails association then.

NJ: Of course Paden has made that sort of a mission to dig up those sorts of things. Fortunately, now the Trail Center has some.

BB: I suppose there are a lot of things out there along the trail.

NJ: Yes. That would be an interesting project some time, especially for a (unclear) archeologist.

BB: Especially with a metal detector. That was interesting.

NJ: The convention, your trip to Wyoming, you said you got to Wyoming on the trails. Was that after you had been to this convention?

BB: I think it was afterwards because that's when I got some materials and books and began to read on it and decided that's what we were going to do on vacation.

NJ: But then it was another two years before anything was done locally, isn't that right?

BB: Yes.

NJ: So about two years later in 1985. Well, let's see, we've got three candidates for the first meeting that led the Trails Head Chapter. One of these was a session. This, apparently, was the first time a bunch of people got together here locally with the idea of setting up a local chapter. That might have been at Duke Sumonia's.

BB: It could have been.

NJ: Which, apparently, was kind of a planning meeting.

BB: There was a planning committee.



NJ: Whether you call that an organizational meeting or not, I suppose is subject to definition.

HS: Probably called an exploratory meeting.

NJ: Yes, and that would have come, I suppose...I don't have any record of that. You don't have any...You refer to that.

BB: I refer to that in the minutes. I served as secretary of the Trails Head Chapter from its inception for about two years.

NJ: From the organizational meeting because you've got the minutes for that, the organizational meeting in Roeland Park.

BB: Yes, that was in February of 1986.

NJ: February 27<sup>th</sup>, previous meeting at Cedar Roe Library

BB: Somewhere, I think it was at Cave Springs

NJ: You were there.

BB: I was there but I don't remember the date. [November 12, 1985].

NJ: These minutes of the organizational meeting that you have here. You do, for one thing you mention it was attended by 20 people. Mike Duncan explained that the planning committee, acting on the indicated intent of local members of the National OCTA, were presenting several recommendations for the organization of a regional chapter. So this planning committee had already been established and that may have been an outcome of this meeting at Duke Sumonia's.

BB: Could have been.

NJ: And at the Cave Spring. Okay, we have the minutes here, Barbara does, of that organizational meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1986. Now part of that there was...I just have the agenda here, notes, an agenda of the meeting to be called a local chapter organizational meeting November 12<sup>th</sup> at Cave Spring Interpretive Center.

BB: It was, yes, November, because it was cold. I remember that.

NJ: Harold, do you remember that? Do you think you were you there?

HS: I'm pretty sure I was there. Like the others have said, I have very little recollection, except that it was an unusual setting.

BB: Yes. It seems as though Bill Bullard was there. Do you remember that he gave a talk on...

HS: I didn't really get to know Bill Bullard until the convention in Wyoming in '87.

NJ: It says, "Enclosed are copies of letters from the chairman of the board and current president of OCTA," which apparently was Greg Franzwa. [1987 was Tom Hunt]

BB: Yes.

NJ: “Please read and consider this background in regard to our decisions or input.” Do you have any copies? Have you saved any copies or a copy of these letters that I mentioned?

BB: I don’t think so. Not that I know of.

NJ: It says, “Please complete the enclosed form and bring with you to the meeting.” Were these forms then turned over to the organizers, do you think? Sylvia or Barbara Magerl?

BB: Sylvia mainly provided the place for the meeting. As I remember Sylvia was quite involved at that time. The Cave Spring wasn’t very old. It was being established. I think she was quite busy and involved with that, although, of course, she’d had an interest in the location for a long time.

NJ: Do you remember anything more about that particular meeting?

BB: We had a picture taken.

NJ: You did? I wonder who took it. Did they have the print?

BB: I don’t know. I don’t remember if I ever saw a print. But I remember sort of standing up against the wall. The room wasn’t much larger than this. It was a rather smallish room.

NJ: But apparently there was an agreement that there would be another meeting in which they would actually organize.

BB: Organizing a chapter.

NJ: Duke Sumonia must have been there.

BB: I’m sure he was.

NJ: So after that meeting you set up, I guess, in a sense, a more formal organizational meeting.

BB: Yes. Mike Duncan was the curator-director of the Mahaffie Farm House in Olathe at that time.

NJ: This is his letterhead. This sends a notice and agenda for that meeting on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1986. And those are the minutes of the meeting.

BB: These are the actual minutes of the meeting.

NJ: What stands out in those minutes, by the way, as to what was decided?

BB: Well, the purpose of the chapter and we should have some bylaws. It was in a very formative stage. And I think in some ways the committee or the first officers presented a lot of recommendations, some of which were accepted and some weren’t. We had, I think, two recommendations for the name. One was the MidAmerica Chapter of OCTA and the other was Trails Head.

NJ: So you decided at that meeting to go with Trails Head.

BB: Yes, it was chosen by the majority. We also had suggested Trails Gateway Chapter and Prairie Rivers Chapter, neither of which...

NJ: Here in the agenda it says after discussion it was decided...Wait a minute. It says recommendation of executive committee and organization of local chapter. In other words, there is a presumption here that there is already an executive committee. And after discussing the election of officers it says recommend two regional members of OCTA, the following: president, Mike Duncan, vice president, Richard Nolf, secretary Barbara Bernauer, and treasurer John Leamon. So you had been approached before this.

BB: Yes, I think mainly because I had a computer at home and was, you know, interested in it and willing to do something along the secretarial line. I didn't feel qualified to do anything else. But I could do that and I had a computer.

NJ: In those days (unclear).

BB: It was a big thing. I think that's why I was secretary.

NJ: How long were you secretary then?

BB: Two or three years. I think in '88...I think it was from '86 to '88. I don't think I served through '89.

NJ: In the minutes that you printed out, these are all distributed. You gave a set...Do you have a complete set?

BB: When I left...No, I have not. When I left I just kept some. Maybe I ran off extras and they just got stuck in the file. I kept the one of the organizational meeting because I thought, "Well, this is for the Bernauer archives." I even signed it. This is a significant thing, so I saved it. So that's why I did. Some of the others that I have I think were just extras. I ran off draft copies.

NJ: Who do you think has a complete set?

BB: I gave a complete set to Barbara Magerl and also to Mary Conrad, because she was the next secretary. I know I did because I have the cover letters, a copy of the cover letters I sent to them with those copies. I think I also wrote to Ross because Ross was the one who came in as president. Here's the letter to Mary. I just talked to him about keeping the local and the regional OCTA membership on the computer and running labels.

NJ: Oh, you said you had a membership list based on these labels.

BB: Yes, I would generate labels, which I still do.

NJ: Did they put out any roster early in the history?

BB: Well, yes. The earliest one I have is '89, but it went on before that. It was someone...They started doing a more formal newsletter.

NJ: Did Greg Franzwa meet with you out here for any of these meetings? We've talked about the two, the one at Cave Spring and then the organizational meeting over here in Roeland Park. Was he in attendance at either one of those?

BB: It seems like he came once, and I don't think it was at the organizational meeting. To tell about the convention and he showed pictures. I don't know. I haven't read through this that carefully.

NJ: They had this convention here in Independence in '83. In '84 where would it have been? Do you remember?

BB: No. [Oregon City]

NJ: Did you attend the conventions after that?

BB: I did some but they were at such a distance. At that time my husband was involved in a convention that was held in Colorado every summer and we couldn't do both. The expense too.

NJ: Did you ever end up on any OCTA committees?

BB: No.

NJ: So your work is strictly local with the Trails Head.

BB: Yes.

NJ: As secretary for at least a couple of years.

BB: A couple years. Maybe three.

NJ: What do you remember about those first two years as far as progress goes or problems?

BB: Well, you mentioned it a little bit ago, in that the planning committee, and I don't know when it started. It was referred to as an executive committee. And we got into a little hot water because of that. We got a letter over Barbara Magerl's signature saying in effect that it was not an executive committee. I remember Mike Duncan and Richard Nolf and John Leamon and I. We were quite surprised about that and disturbed. But I think it was an organization beginning to form without a lot of guidelines. We were breaking new ground. There wasn't any other...

NJ: You didn't understand this to be the nominating committee.

BB: We didn't know exactly what it was we were. We just thought, "Well, we're..."

NJ: How about a steering committee? Did they use that term?

BB: No. I think someone grabbed that term, executive committee, from somewhere. I don't know.

NJ: But steering committee might have been a more accurate term, maybe.

BB: Probably.

NJ: It seems to me that is the term for any group that actually is preparing the foundation for an organization.

BB: That's exactly what we were doing. And we got our knuckles rapped soundly.

NJ: There was an election, right, in Roeland Park at the Cedar Roe library? There was an election. And these recommendations were voted on, that is, recommended people for these positions.

BB: It wasn't until April that we got our knuckles rapped. [by Barbara? – cause she was left out?

NJ: After the fact.

BB: But it was kind of maybe trying to set us straight but...

NJ: How long did that committee, well, it was called the executive committee.

BB: We were just the officers.

NJ: How long were you to serve, according to your bylaws? (no bylaws yet in 1987)

BB: A year.

NJ: So then you were up for reelection a year after.

BB: Yes.

NJ: Were there any changes?

BB: Yes, as I remember. Mike, I don't know if he didn't choose to be president again. He was a little...

NJ: Miffed.

BB: Probably, yes, if not more. Maybe that's not fair.

NJ: He did not run, he wouldn't accept...

BB: I don't know.

NJ: Who was the next president?

BB: I think it was Ross.

NJ: Ross Marshall. How about Richard Nolf? [no - Barbara Magerl became Pres in 1987]

BB: It seemed like Richard was there.

NJ: He was the first vice president.

BB: Except I don't have those minutes. I don't know.

NJ: But you remained as secretary. And then John Leamon remained as treasurer, as you recall.

BB: Yes.

NJ: Besides that little glitch, anything else that comes to mind in those first two years? What kind of things were planned? Did they pan out, those things that were planned?

BB: I think there were some—they called them treks then, trips around to see. I remember going on one to Alcove Spring and Marysville. NJ: Oh, Marysville. The real Alcove Spring. Did you see the grave markers?

BB: Yes. We had a bus.

NJ: So you remember that bus trip up to Alcove Springs.

BB: I remember that. That was a nice trip. It seems like there were one or two buses. And the people who owned the property there had given special permission for OCTA to come on the land.

NJ: Yes, that's a ways off the highway there isn't it?

BB: It was the hardest thing getting those big buses around those dirt country roads into that place because it was a rather big bus. I remember he had to make two or three tries to get around.

NJ: The highway didn't follow the trail right there.

BB: We also went to Vermillion River Crossing. There were several graves and a big old tree. I remember that. The biggest tree in Kansas, I don't know.

NJ: Who was organizing these for the most part?

BB: It seems that Barbara Magerl was.

NJ: How about here in the county? Did you have some treks here in Jackson County?

BB: I'm sure, but I don't remember going on a lot of those.

NJ: Pauline Fowler, was she one of the first members, do you recall?

BB: I don't remember her that early on.

NJ: We can find a roster somewhere, I suppose. I wonder who would have...

BB: A lot of people had membership who didn't come.

NJ: Yes, that's probably me. I had about six other organizations. In fact, did you see that as a problem having the Friends of the Trail support group starting up there around '87 or so? They had a local chapter of OCTA and then a local chapter of the Santa Fe Trail Association, MRO.

BB: Yes, I remember when that happened. It seemed divisive to me.

NJ: So you have these three organizations that fill the same crew of people pretty much. I don't know if the Santa Fe Trail chapter was established until somewhat later, '90 or so wasn't it? '91?

BB: I don't know when it was established, but it was talked about. [1991]

NJ: But you did not get involved with the Santa Fe chapter?

BB: Not that much, no. Although I tried to follow the trail some as we would take small trips and read about it. On one of our vacations we wound up at Bent's Fort. I should also say in here that for some time I was a docent at Alexander Majors House in Kansas City. Maybe that was what led me into OCTA too. I had seen that old house falling apart. We lived not too far from there a number of years and knew that this little old lady...

NJ: (unclear) (Louisa) Johnston.

BB: Lived there. Then when it was beginning to be fixed up I was so happy that it was. And I went to some of their functions and became involved and became a docent there.

NJ: I remember the tour they gave when it was still just full of junk and stuff.

BB: Yes, I was there too. It was amazing to see it later when those rooms had been cleared of the stacks of newspaper and boxes of clothing.

NJ: I think I took some pictures, probably slides.

BB: Barbara was involved in that also. It was a lady by the name of Vicky Chapman somebody. But it seems as though they were acquainted. So there was another...

NJ: So you were a docent there when this first meeting occurred in '86.

BB: Probably. I had forgotten that.

NJ: So that was another reason for your...

BB: Well, yes. Alexander Majors was a very interesting and colorful person. And the Pony Express and all that. Being there in that house. I can remember many time being there alone.

NJ: What did you see as the chief purpose of the Trails Head Chapter once it got started, as the main purpose?

BB: It seemed to me, without going to read our actual statement, but it was to research, discover, help preserve the remnants of the trail, to help others appreciate its importance and the importance of Independence as the head. We wanted to think of it as the head. People further east, of course, wanted to think of themselves as the beginning, like St. Louis or Boonville or someplace. Which, I think, is one reason why they grabbed onto that name for the chapter, Trails Head. They wanted to establish that. I was interested in the preservation. That's one reason why I was interested in Alexander Majors house.

NJ: Historic preservation. Have you been with that foundation over there?

BB: I dropped out when I began to work part time.

NJ: Part time with the archives.

BB: With the RLDS Church, yes.

NJ: What kind of progress do you think has been made? Or has the local chapter had any influence on preservation?

BB: I haven't been involved that closely because before I stopped, before I was not reelected secretary—I didn't even want to be for several reasons—I was somewhat distanced from the activities, although I got the newsletter all the time. I think they have been successful. I've gone to several things, such as the marking, the road markers, the dedication of the markers.

NJ: Like the event over there at 122<sup>nd</sup> and State Line?

BB: Yes.

NJ: Did you have anything to do with the planning for that?

BB: None, that I can remember.

NJ: Then there was a marker up there on the square. In fact, I've got pictures of that.

BB: I remember it being a marker, [the Wayne City marker](#). I was there for that.

NJ: These are some pictures of the trail marking at 122<sup>nd</sup> and State Line. Some of the best ones are in another album I gave to the friends. Was it Senator Langworthy, is she the lady...

BB: I remember she came.

NJ: There's so many. Bob Richmond and John Latschar. There's Greg Franzwa speaking. This may not show up too well.

BB: I don't recall that I was there.

NJ: This was up on the square apparently, the day before, the day after.

BB: No, I was not involved in that.

NJ: Since I've got them out...Dick Ackerman.

BB: I remember. He was...

NJ: President of OCTA. He was there to pull the veil off the marker on the square up there in Independence. Yes, these turned out rather well. Of course Mayor Potts, Millie Nesbitt, Carol Roper Park. I believe that's Ed Quick that we were mentioning. Then a group picture. I believe that's you, Harold.

HS: Yes.



NJ: I guess you're not in this group picture.

BB: No, I don't remember that. '87?

NJ: So you supported the trail marking project and the preservation of the swales.

BB: Yes.

NJ: Which ones were you especially concerned about as far as the swales are concerned?

BB: I think more the swales. I read something recently where the government owns some land and they wanted to tear it up and some preservationists were fussing at them. I thought, "Aha."

NJ: Yes.

BB: I think it is important, but it has to be balanced with the use of the land. I can sympathize with the farmer or the oil person maybe.

NJ: What's left isn't all that much, so it should be preserved. Whatever is left, wouldn't you say?

BB: Yes. And I think the project of preserving the diaries, the personal accounts, is very important. Since I've now in my third career become an archivist, I think that will probably last longer than the swales, if you get a record and you keep it well.

NJ: Are you acquainted with 27<sup>th</sup> and Topping where there is supposed to be a swale? By the river isn't it, on the bank of the Blue?

BB: I've been over there.

NJ: Have you ever seen that one?

BB: I tried.

NJ: Kind of scrub timber?

BB: Yes. See, that was an early Mormon settlement along in that area, along the blue River, which I've since found out. It might even be that my ancestor had some land there, which makes it a little more interesting. But of course they would settle near road. So it was in that same...around 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

NJ: Would that have been the trail that went into Westport? [Indep –Westpt Rd was a local road – never part of the SFT]

BB: Probably, the Westport Road.

NJ: Which would have been a later one. The early one would have been the one down through Santa Fe. [Indep Route of the trails]

BB: It would have had the crossing (unclear) [of the Big Blue River].

NJ: That's the one through Minor Park, the early one. Down Holmes, off of Holmes.

BB: Byrum's Ford is about 63<sup>rd</sup> and...

NJ: But the one in Minor Park is that swale...

BB: Yes, I was there. I don't remember being there when it was marked, but I remember being there.

NJ: I think they put that stone monument up there in 1912 or very early in the century. [the DAR SFT monument is dated 1912 – not sure when it was put there]

BB: Which one?

NJ: The granite marker that's there at the swale in Minor Park at Red Bridge Road. Have you been involved at all in tracking the exact route of the trail? Have you ever done that?

BB: Not officially, no.

NJ: Have you ever been involved in discussion of what was the actual trail through the county?

BB: It's just been an interest. I haven't been involved.

NJ: How about Trails Head? Did they...?

BB: I'm going to say they relied on Greg's early work. I live not far from Franklin, what used to be the trail in Kansas City. It goes along 67<sup>th</sup> down there, Wornall Road and State Line, according to Greg's book, you know.

NJ: Did that run through Shawnee Mission?

BB: Could have been. But, you know, there were so many. It's like someone said, the frayed ends of a rope. There were a lot of little roads.

NJ: I suppose if you can find the main path, the one most traveled. Was Lou Schumacher ever a member of Trails Head? Do you know Lou Schumacher?

BB: No.

NJ: He's the one that's done a lot to nail down the exact route of the trails. Of course there has been some controversy because another fellow [Walter Cook] thinks that he has the answers to that. Did Trails Head ever get involved in that controversy?

BB: I don't know.

NJ: While you were with them. What seemed to be their main activities?

BB: Getting organized. Deciding the nitty gritty of it, what the structure would be, what the dues would be, how often we'd meet, what kind of program we'd have. It was a nitty gritty thing.

NJ: Who did some of those early programs?

BB: Greg would come and show slides. And Ross had some slides he would show now and then.

NJ: Did you ever give a program?

BB: No.

NJ: Well, you've traveled these places.

BB: Well, but...

NJ: Did you take slides?

BB: Oh, yes.

NJ: So you do have a slide collection.

BB: Yes.

NJ: Two years, in about '88 then...

BB: I think it was '89.

NJ: That you resigned, more or less.

BB: I just didn't feel it was something that I wanted to continue to do.

NJ: Did you remain a member?

BB: Oh, yes. The reason...I went to work part time. And one of the reasons I sort of dropped out was a financial reason. I couldn't keep up with all that sort of thing. And I did not pay my national dues, although I worked out this little agreement, somehow a verbal agreement, that I would continue to keep the roster. The only reason...I still can't figure out why they had me do it. But then it was handy and I had it on my computer. And I used D Base. No one else had D Base. And that's the way I chose...It was easy to do. I could sort it on all sorts of things. So I said, "I'll provide your labels in return for getting the dues there." I pay my local dues. But I just didn't feel I could keep up the national. And that was always sort of an argument in a way. I could see the point, but it was too expensive for me and what I chose to do.

NJ: You belong to other organizations too then.

BB: I belong to genealogies associations. OCTA's Overland Journal was the only thing I got out of the national. Because I didn't go to the conventions.

NJ: Wasn't that kind of an early rule virtually, that in order to belong to the local you had to belong to the national.

BB: Yes, and when I set up my D Base I had and still do have other fields for, you know, member of national, etc. I don't keep it up any more. Actually, the number on the file has decreased from what it was at one time. It was padded but it was done to get a bulk

rate for the newsletter.(but all four newsletter editors used stamps, so we never used bulk mail) But now it is just the membership. So someone else must do this.

NJ: There is a letter from Thomas Hunt, president elect of OCTA, to Barbara Magerl on Oct. 5, 1985 in which he first says he is delighted to hear that OCTA members in Missouri and Kansas are getting together to form a regional chapter. Then he stressed that first, number one, OCTA policy dictated no one could join a regional chapter who is not in good standing with the national chapter. And then secondly those belonging to the national chapter should not be pressured to join the local chapter and that such involvement must be strictly voluntary.

BB: Yes, I remember that.

NJ: So you are under orders not to pressure people to join the local chapter.

BB: Right.

NJ: How many members? Did it increase the membership then? Was there an increase? Or did it fluctuate up and down? How did it usually go?

BB: It was, like I say, we padded it a little bit. This is a roster from March of '89. It says here there are between 70 and 75 members. Then, I think, later on it dropped down. People would be added and deleted. In 1990 there were 92 listings. I couldn't tell you now but I think there's over 100 [doubtful]. But I still, you know, maintain that for the Trails Head.

NJ: Okay, you have some documents here. Can we just get an idea what you have in either your archives or the National Frontier Trails Center archives?

BB: I have a couple of roster lists.

NJ: From what year?

BB: This is from '89 and '90. It would cover over a year because it is March of '89 and the other is May of '90 with a listing of all of the names. Then I have national rosters, which for a while we tried to keep and correlate with ours. It got to be too much. That was too cumbersome. Then I had some minutes that I happen to have kept and some letters. That was in '87, a letter from Barbara Magerl. It's just a thank you note for service on behalf of the local chapter at the Shawnee Mission. We did an activity there. Here's something I found in going through a relative's little archives. The Santa Caligon song. Has anybody ever heard about that?

NJ: No.

BB: I don't know from where or when, but it is kind of an interesting...I thought I would donate it to...

NJ: In that book of Frances Williamson Hilliard in possession of Mary Delores Williamson, Independence, Missouri.

BB: Little Santa Caligon.

NJ: It says, "Mrs. Craig Segrid on West (unclear) Truman Road, has written a song on the Santa Caligon, which has attracted considerable attention this week.

BB: Probably from The Examiner. I don't know where else it would come from.

NJ: I'm going to read the first verse.

BB: You're not going to sing it?

NJ: No. What tune is it?

BB: I have no idea.

NJ: It's called Santa Caligon. "Wherever you may travel you will always hear this song the pioneers are singing as the wagons roll along. I've got my beard, I've got my gown. I'm going to have some fun. I'm going to Independence to the Santa Caligon."

BB: Oh, here I have another collection, which I just forgot. I did attend the first Santa Caligon in Independence, as a wee, small toddler, of course.

NJ: Yes, that was back in '40 or '41.

BB: It was before that. This says it was '38 and I have pictures at home. My dad went. He grew a beard. He looked like the devil, almost literally. It was a pointy thing. I remember the old dunking thing. If you didn't have a beard and were caught on the square you got dunked in the trough. I have pictures of me and some old stage coaches and things like that. I think I might maybe be able to remember the old Weston [Sam Weston's blacksmith & wagon shop] place. It is very vague. I was very young.

NJ: The Weston building.

BB: The wagon shop.

NJ: Isn't that the photograph they have in the Trails Center?

BB: I think it is.

NJ: You say you took some pictures of that first..?

BB: Oh, yes. I have them at home.

NJ: Took some black and whites. Do you still have the negatives?

BB: I don't know.

NJ: They have to be historic. I'm not sure anybody else has...

BB: They could be, around the square.

NJ: I'm not sure anyone else has photos of that first Santa Caligon.

BB: Oh, really?

NJ: You should let...I suppose the County Historical Society...

BB: I just thought of that, when they might have published it. And this woman, this relative who has been dead a long time and it would seem to me that she would clip something from the Examiner the first one or two.

NJ: There's no date on that, date of publication.

BB: No, but I bet it's...It would have to be The Examiner.

NJ: You know, I don't know if they have it or not, but there should be a copy stand in the Historical Society where someone could simply make a copy of negatives from prints that people have...

BB: We have one here in the archives.

NJ: You have copies.

BB: If someone want to buy the film or whatever, it's not that expensive. There are more personal pictures. They are taken up around the square.

NJ: But they show the people in costume?

BB: Yes.

NJ: And some of the paraphernalia. Yes, I would think if those were snapshots by Gene Stoga with new films. (unclear) does a good job of making copies like that. Have you belonged to the County Historical Society?

BB: Yes, I do.

NJ: Are you still a member?

BB: That's one of those organizations I kept up.

NJ: Well, I think they would be interested in knowing about those pictures.

BB: Well, okay.

NJ: Maybe it could be an article for their newsletter.

BB: My dad long ago, when he was building his greenhouse that was here on Lexington, there was a building just north of the square, where the farmers' market is now. And he went up there to get some building materials. They were tearing it down and he was getting something. I don't know what. And among the debris he found some tickets that said Overland Trail something, stage or whatever. There were tickets in different denominations. They were just blowing around and he picked them up and kept them.

NJ: Stage coach tickets?

BB: I think so. I have them. He kept them for a long, long time. But that would have been before 1930, whenever that building was there. I don't know what it was now. I think at

one time I knew. But it was being torn down and people went up to get some building material. There probably were a lot of other things, but he saw these tickets.

NJ: Stage coach travel, I think, started out of Independence about 1850.

BB: They don't appear to be that old to me, now that I have had more experience looking at old documents. I could look at those. Anybody who might be interested in those, I could find them.

NJ: Bring them to the attention of the historical society.

BB: Okay.

NJ: Have you written any articles, written or published any articles?

BB: Yes, but not connected with the trails. I have done some writing.

NJ: Genealogy subjects?

BB: Well, family history. My grandfather was involved in finding the remains of Joseph and Hiram Smith in 1928. I wrote a paper on that and presented it in several places then published a little book.

NJ: Does anything come to mind that you think might be useful for the record concerning your involvement?

BB: No, because I wasn't...I happened to be in on the beginning. Since then I have kind of lost track, other than what I could keep track of.

NJ: But helped it get off to a good start.

BB: I hope so.

NJ: If you got up to 90-100 members after four or five years, that's pretty good.

BB: It's a worthwhile project and I think people should be involved. Working full time now, I don't have that much time. But I'm still interested in it and I try to do what I can. I guess that's why I keep doing the labels. Because I think, "Well, it's easy. I can do that." I can do that at home on my D Base.

NJ: You mentioned preservation, but you also think that just publicizing and getting information out to the public about the trails, especially in this area, is a very important function.

BB: And I think one of the things you mentioned about my impressions of the first convention and maybe later meetings, it bothered me a bit. I thought the organization was becoming somewhat elitist as a lot of Civil War organizations have become. What little piece of trivia do you know about this battlefield? If you don't know it, shame on you. And I don't think that should be. I think it should not be, "Oh, we know all about where the

trail went.” That’s not the important thing. The important thing is preserving not only the physical trail but the memory for people. Nothing like that will ever happen again.

NJ: Yes.

BB: Never, ever. And it was for a short period of time. It started here in Independence. That’s why I’m glad I was involved at the beginning. Because it is a very important thing.

NJ: Okay, I appreciate the information and the time you’ve given us.