

AN INTERVIEW July 23, 1996 WITH BARBARA MAGERL

Interviewer: N.M. Johnson – (FINAL 6/15/20 - By Ross Marshall, proofed by Mary Conrad)
(corrections in parentheses)

NJ: I am N. M. Johnson and my cameraman and assistant here is Harold Smith. He's always free to toss in a question or comment whenever he wants to. We are at the National Frontier Trails Center today. Barbara has brought a chronology, which she calls a big timeline referencing Trails Head and OCTA. We are doing this oral history project for the Trails Head chapter of OCTA. She's got quite a few highlights listed here. This is really nice to have for the historical record. In fact, I was just talking to Harold. Was it '81 or '82 when they had this first meeting here to consider founding the Oregon-California Trails Association? You've got down here, "1982. Calls from Greg Franzwa, founder of OCTA. What involvement? Why don't we start with that? Well, lets' go back farther.

BM: Yes.

NJ: Why don't you give us for the record your full name, putting in your maiden name, your date of birth, your place of birth, maybe even mention what your parents' names were.

BM: Okay. My name is Barbara Ann. My family name was Campbell, as in soup. My married name is Magerl. I've been married longer than I've been single, certainly. My parents were John Andrew Campbell and Caroline Dougherty Campbell. I was born in Kansas City, MO and educated there in parochial schools. I've always been a history buff, got a lot of it by osmosis, since my ancestors, the earliest ones came to Independence in 1847. My great-grandfather was once a county sheriff. So I kind of was fed all this history and thought it was very boring. But the drop on a rock worked, and I've always been a history buff.

NJ: Well, great.

BM: Do you want my origins of involvement with OCTA?

NJ: All right. Where did you go to school?

BM: Kansas City, MO., I didn't

NJ: What schools?

BM: Both of them are now closed. Both Catholic schools. I attended (unclear), which was a later day form of St. Agnes Academy, which Joan Fontaine and Harriet Hilliard and a number of other people attended. It then became coed and it is long gone.

NJ: So you have a bachelors?

BM: No, bachelors. Lots of classes here and there either Johnson County Community College, Avila, or KU, but, no, I didn't (unclear) beyond the family needs.

NJ: You and Harry Truman.

BM: Yes,

NJ: What did you kind of focus on during your reading, your own self-study, so to speak?

BM: History, English literature, writing. I do a lot of freelance writing and historical research.

NJ: How did you start publishing?

BM: Oh, golly. I had a few history articles published hither, thither, and yon. I probably started in the 1970's.

NJ: What publications?

BM: Kansas City Star, a couple of them. A little bit later I got into some national magazines. Usually I worked for an agency. They may have had my byline, they may not have had my byline.

NJ: How about a wedding date?

BM: Sept. 6, 1954.

NJ: Your husband's name?

BM: R. J. Magerl.

NJ: All right. When did you first get interested in or involved in the history of the trails?

BM: I always had an interest in the Santa Fe Trail because two great uncles had been killed on the Santa Fe Trail, reportedly by Indians. That's a family legend, which I believe because the legend also states that a number of people from Independence who were returning on the trail picked up their papers, etc., that were scattered "on the Kansas prairie." They knew who the two brothers were. One's body was never found. They returned their belongings to their mother in Independence.

NJ: Were these Campbells?

BM: No, these were Pools.

NJ: Do you remember their first names?

BM: George and Henry.

NJ: George and Henry Pool. But you found out all you could find out about them.

BM: Oh, yes. I used to sit and read microfilm of fort returns, Bureau of Indian Affairs reports, until I couldn't even see any longer. I went after that hot and heavy for a long time. I wrote letters to numerous county historical societies in western Kansas and eastern Colorado. However, there is a copy of their last letter. This was 1869. It was a copy of their last letter on file at Fort (unclear), because that is where they wrote it from. So I made a copy and put it in the file and maybe someday someone will solve the mystery. One of them had been the "oatsmaster" at one of the forts along the Santa Fe Trail in Kansas. It was Fort Harker, down by Great Bend. It lasted maybe about a year or so. But he was the official Army oatsmaster for the fort.

NJ: So then that has been in the back of your mind over the years.

BM: Right.

NJ: But of course you branched out into the California and Oregon Trails as well.

BM: That all happened because of a lady rather well known in this area named Sally Schwenk. I said to Sally several times, "What did I ever do to deserve this?" Good-naturedly, of course. Probably in 1982 I was president of the Heritage League of Greater Kansas City, which is a consortium of local organizations. So Greg Franzwa, who I had never heard of, called Sally, because she was then the director of the Jackson County Historical Society. He kept asking her questions. "Who do you know who does this? How could I contact this organization?" She kept saying, "Call Barbara Magerl." So eventually he started calling me all the time. One day he said, "Why don't you put together our first convention for us?" So I said, "How much is in it for me?" He said, "Nothing." I said, "Let me think about this." So as a matter of civic pride I did, kind of as a tribute to my ancestors.

NJ: The first convention. That's a real landmark.

BM: I understand that what Greg Franzwa said to John Latschar of the National Park Service in Denver was, "Boy, have I found a patsy." Here's patsy.

NJ: They had already had a group that met here.

BM: No, not here. They had met in Denver.

NJ: Oh, they had met in Denver.

BM: I believe there are 12 [yes] founding fathers, or 10. I've forgotten now. We did honor them at a (unclear) anniversary convention. But they were mostly National Park Service, (unclear) or authors, such as Greg, of course. Greg was the one, I think, who called the meeting. They met in Denver at one of the Denver office buildings and decided that, yes, there should be a national organization. There had been an Oregon Trail Advisory Council appointed under the auspices of the (unclear) advisory. As a newcomer to all this, I kept getting (OTAC) confused with OCTA. But I finally got it straightened out. And the Oregon Trail Advisory Council held its very first meeting at the location of the first national OCTA convention. They had never met before.

NJ: Now Tuesday I remember this group going down here on the river drive to the overlook over Wayne City.

BM: That was the first convention.

NJ: How many were there at that first convention?

BM: I don't trust my memory for numbers on that. I know sometimes when you see it in print it is not as much as it actually was. Because somewhere in my stash I still have a lot of

the records. And I know particularly at the banquet at Adams Mark we had well over 100 people there.

NJ: I notice on your chronology here that this could not have been put together without the help from the Jackson County Historical Society, Sally Schwenk, yourself, the Chamber of Commerce and the Junior Service League.

BM: The Junior Service League one morning hosted a midmorning refreshment break. If I remember correctly, the Chamber of Commerce did that one morning as well. And Sally and the Historical Society took care of all the stuffing of the packets and all the registration. So we could not pull this off without a lot of good help from the people here.

NJ: In '82, the year before, when you were making plans for the convention...

BM: Actually, I didn't. I have a book at home, a first edition of maps of the Oregon Trail. And it arrived on the same day that we were having the Heritage League board meeting. In the mail I received this very big, impressive book. Inside was a dedication to me in appreciation by Gregory Franzwa. That was September 20th, 1982. That was like the first or second interaction I had ever had with him. The pretty detailed planning of it probably didn't begin until January of '83.

NJ: There's a phrase in here, "Cut your cake with OCTA. The Golf Farm SFTA, the Santa Fe Trail Association." This is as early as 1982.

BM: In 1982 Greg said to me, "(unclear) a member of OCTA and I have never heard of you." So he told me a little about the organization and their dreams and aspirations. And I said, "I think you are asking the wrong person because I really don't have any identity with OCTA or Oregon, other than (unclear) family who moved there in the 1900s. So Greg said, "Come cut your teeth with our organization and then form your own Santa Fe Trail Association." So I did the first but I didn't do the second.

NJ: It finally came about.

BM: It finally came about, yes, but I was not one of the founders of it. We might mention later that I did go to Washington to lobby for the official legislation [SFTNHT - 1986] and I was the one... We played a little bit of political strategy the night before we made our first calls. I was asked to back some aspect of it. So I said, "Only if I could select who will introduce it in Congress. They said, "Who would you pick?" I said, "Senator Kassebaum, because I'm a big fan of hers." I said, "Kansas has the majority mileage." The next day the director of the National Park Service said to me, "Why Senator Kassebaum?" She wasn't totally favored by the Republican Party at that time because she had her own line.

NJ: I'm glad she did, aren't you?"

BM: I voted for her three times. I said, "Kansas has the majority mileage, and I think we deserve that right." So she was allowed to introduce that legislation.

NJ: The Santa Fe Trail Association started 1987. That's the way that started. Well, even though we are dealing with OCTA, I think it is worth knowing how the Santa Fe Trail Association sort of branched off in a way. Or at least got some inspiration.

BM: This was one aspect. I was not actually at the founding meeting, but Sylvia Mooney was. Sylvia Mooney went to founding meeting in, I believe, Trinidad [yes]. It might have been Denver, but I believe it was either Trinidad or La Junta. She too had such a vested interest. She, too, had gone to Washington as part of this five-member committee. It was Greg Franzwa, of course, and Tom Hunt, Marc Simmons, Sylvia Mooney, and myself. So we were the five who were calling on legislators, going down to lower level offices and all this sort of thing to promote the legislation. But Sylvia was at the first founding meeting.

NJ: That was in the '90s, wasn't it? [it was 1986-Trinidad, NM]

BM: I'm not 100 percent sure. I'm really not sure because by that time I was so deeply entrenched in OCTA that I didn't have that much time and energy left.

NJ: Well, we'll go back to the early to mid '80s again then and to OCTA. I notice that in '84 you were elected to the OCTA board.

BM: Right.

NJ: At the Oregon City convention [1984]. Before we go to that first convention here in Independence. Was it a big success, a mild success? What seemed to be the most important kind of activity or programs that it sponsored? [This question is about Oregon City convention. The answer below is about Independence convention.]

BM: I would say that it was an unexpectedly enormous success. Maybe not by numbers. But it may have been by numbers even when you consider that they only had a handful of members when they started this. I did not know that. That information was deliberately withheld, which is fine. Sometimes you are better off not knowing. I think it was an extreme success from the standpoint that they brought, first of all, the director of the National Park Service. I don't remember his name, Dickinson maybe? I know he did the forward for a couple of Greg's books. Yes, Russell Dickinson was director of the National Park Service. He came to Independence for that. He was part of the first event, the opening event at Bingham-Waggoner House. They brought out all kinds of National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management people, who had never interacted before. We had a very good slate of speakers. I think it led to bigger and better programs, bigger and better conventions. But I think it was very successful.

NJ: So it was a good prototype for...

BM: People from California, Oregon, all of the trail states were here.

NJ: Do you remember who some of the presenters were? I suppose Greg, of course.

BM: Greg, of course, was one of them.

NJ: Was Merrill Mattes involved?

BM: Merrill Mattes was involved but I can't remember if he did a presentation. But we all knew that Merle was one of the gods, even then. He just radiated his wisdom, this knowledge that he is now so known for.

NJ: John Latschar from the National Park Service.

BM: Yes, he was from the National Park Service. At that time he was the secretary of the National Park Service. Later that needed to cease, as it was a possible conflict. But at that time he was secretary and he was one of the founding fathers, of course. He actually hosted the meeting in Denver when they were founded. Barbara Burgess, of Washburn University faculty, was one of the presenters. Sharon Brown of the National Park Service, who had graduated from, I believe, Southern Illinois University. Dr. Stanley Kimball from Southern Illinois, was one of them. Oh, and Bob Richmond of Topeka, Kansas State Historical Society, was one of the presenters.

NJ: Some of those presentations ended up in the Overland Trail Journal.

BM: Right. This was one of the goals from the beginning, to start publishing some of this literature that had been very carefully researched and documented by some scholar, hopefully presented at a convention and subsequently published in the OJ.

NJ: I don't think we've had any history of how the Overland Journal started, have we? I haven't seen anything in print on that. Do you recall or have any recollections of how that journal got started and who might have been the prime mover for it?

BM: The prime mover, I'm assuming, is Greg Franzwa.

NJ: I suppose it was. Where was it published?

BM: Gerald, Missouri. Greg had a company called Patrice Press in a town called Gerald, which is west of St. Louis. He ran his own publishing company. He published, for instance, the history of St. Genevieve, some things, I think, on St. Louis history, and I think this is what instigated his curiosity about the Oregon Trail. You know, his *Oregon Trail Revisited*, I'm quite sure, and *Maps of the Oregon Trail* had both been published before the OJ started. I'm not certain on that, but that's a good point. I don't know.

HS: The book had been published as early as 1972.

BM: That's what I thought.

HS: I know that because I had read that and was so taken with it that I invited him to speak to the Platte County Historical Society.

BM: When was this?

HS: In November 1982 when we had our meeting. Since we had a big response, we had our meeting in Leavenworth. I was almost thrown out as president for taking the meeting outside of Platte County. He was sold on the Oregon Trail.

BM: He was definitely a mesmerizer. And I think you're right. I think I have looked several times at the introduction in the front and marveled about the early date on that book. He talks about his curiosity and traveling the trail as opposed to when OCTA started. He actually has a mailing list and said, "Why aren't you on this list of people having an interest in the Oregon Trail." There were probably five or six charter members already in Kansas City at that time.

NJ: Yes, because this meeting here comes 10 years later, 1983.

BM: Yes.

NJ: In 1984 you were elected to the OCTA Board at the Oregon City convention. That makes sense. The first meetings here at the Queen City (Independence) of the Trail, to a lot of people the beginning of the Trail, at least at Queen City where the trail started, the jumping off place. Then the second one is at the official end of the trail. I believe that the Oregon legislature has actually designated Oregon City as the end of the trail.

BM: Right.

NJ: I suppose you have some recollections of that.

BM: I do. We had a delegation, their mayor. If I remember correctly he was Mayor Thom, Cathy Gallburg, who was with the city, I think development. Actually, she was a historian working with the city. And then there was a third person, Mike (unclear), the city manager. They came to Independence and they brought along some items that they asked to distribute at one of our meals at Sermon Center, urging everyone to come to the next convention at the other end of the trail. And so that was quite successful. And so that's why we took a vote at that initial convention, the charter convention, to hold the next convention in Oregon City.

NJ: That probably helped lay the groundwork for this sister city relationship.

BM: Probably it did.

NJ: It was '87. That was when it becomes another branch off of this story. It begins in '82. Now let's see, in '85 I notice you have some question marks here about just when we're talking about in '85 that the chapter got its start. I could have some letters here that I could put on the record again. Here's a letter from Greg Franzwa to you as vice president of OCTA, it says.

BM: The year was?

NJ: September 21, 1985, an OCTA letterhead.

BM: Right.

NJ: He's writing to you. He says, "I'm sure president Tom Hunt will be as pleased as I am to learn that you finally have a chapter 3 off the ground. This would be the third chapter founded.

BM: That's right. Yes. I'd forgotten that. I'm sure California had the first one. Then Oregon City did. (no, Idaho had second chapter.) We were the third.

NJ: Thomas Hunt was the founding president.

BM: Exactly, right. (No! It was Greg Franzwa!)

NJ: Then he mentions the Overland Journal. He says, "Be sure to have someone write up the details for our use in the Overland Journal. It might prompt others to come with you." Then he goes into some things we don't necessarily have to put on tape here. Dues structures, identical to those of California, Nevada, and Idaho state chapters.

BM: California and Nevada are one chapter. Idaho, then we were the third one.

NJ: Then he brings up the issue of belonging to a local chapter without being a member of OCTA. I guess that was one of the questions they had to resolve. What decision did they make on that?

BM: That was taken up at a board meeting, if I remember correctly at a convention because in some states some people wanted to support only their own state's segment of the trail. That was the only thing they wanted to put even their dues. The board felt very strongly that we should all act as one. Therefore you had to belong to the national OCTA before you could join the local chapter.

NJ: Joining OCTA, they said, didn't mean you had to belong to a local chapter.

BM: No. But if you wanted to join a local chapter, you had to belong to national OCTA first.

NJ: If you were a member of the national chapter without being a member of the local chapter, about the only involvement you would have would be the convention.

BM: You would get the publications. And you would meet a lot of people who were in those publications.

NJ: So are we talking then about September of '85 as being a founding date for the local chapter of OCTA?

BM: Greg said in the letter, what month?

NJ: September 21, 1985.

BM: I suspect that we became more formal after the convention, which would have been in August, of course. The convention has always been in August. So probably we formalized in 1986. I would have to trust someone else's papers to find out when we actually had our first election of officers (1986). We had a kind of loosely knit arrangement. But until we knew each other better, we weren't going to elect officers. So

we had a series of kind of informal informative meetings. The first one, if I remember correctly, was at Duke Sumonia's house [yes] in Leawood. Duke had contacted me asking me how I had become involved in the trails and what my background was because he had been an independent trail buster for a long time. He grew up, I think, in Sugar Creek or Independence, lived in Leawood. But he had explored all the Blue River areas all by himself and was just very knowledgeable about the trails there.

- NJ: Before we get to some of the issues that you mentioned here in '85. You have this memorandum or letter from Sothern and Ephraim, memoranda really. It went out to a number of people. "Local chapter. Organizational meeting. Nov. 12, 1985. Cave Spring Interpretive Center." Here's the agenda. "Brief discussion of scope, purpose, and name of chapter. Dues structure. Election of officers." It says, "Enclosed are copies of letters of chairman of the board and current president of OCTA. Please read and consider this background in regard to our decisions or input. Do you have any recollections at all of meeting out there at Cave Spring?"
- BM: No. Because I probably answered (unclear). Sylvia and I had become friends and I think it was a way of trying to keep the meeting places moving around and trying to meet, not necessarily in people's homes but opening them up to the public by having them in public facilities. And Sylvia being interested in the Oregon Trail as well as Santa Fe would have been a good hostess.
- NJ: I don't have a record of any minutes or what might have come out of that particular meeting. But the next item I have is about the Mahaffie House and Farmstead letterhead. It says, "Organizational meeting, February 27, 1986, Cedar Roe Library."
- BM: Right.
- NJ: Now that one you have some recollection.
- BM: I do. In the meantime officers had been nominated, so I do remember that at the meeting at my house I appointed a nominating committee. I remember Peggy Smith was on it. Mike Duncan was on it. I think Richard Nolf of St. Joe, although he wasn't present, I put him on the nominating committee. I remember some other people who were at the meeting at my home but I don't remember that they were on the nominating committee. I think it was Peggy, Mike and Richard Nolf. They met at Mahaffie House for a nominating committee. [Comment: Magerl is saying there was a meeting at Mahaffie. In other interviews, Nolf and Leamon also thought there was a meeting at Mahaffie.]
- NJ: Okay. There is mention here that on January 22, about a month earlier than that, there had been an executive committee. "The executive committee chosen for the local chapter of OCTA, met at the Rodeway Inn at I-35 and Metcalf, Overland Park on January 22, 1986." I don't see your name on here. "Those present, Mike Duncan, Elaine McNabney, Ross Marshall, Peggy Smith, Richard Nolf and Barbara Bernauer."
- BM: Except they weren't actually the executive committee (Nominating or Steering).

- NJ: So then the agenda. Election of officers with these apparently nominated. President, Mike Duncan; vice president, Richard Nolf; secretary, Barbara Bernauer; treasurer, John Leamon. They were going to talk about purpose of the chapter, the title. I see that one of the possibilities was MidAmerica Chapter. They agreed on Trails Head Chapter, apparently as a result of that meeting. So at least as a named organization, the Trails Head Chapter probably dates from that meeting, doesn't it?
- BM: It was the meeting at Cedar Roe.
- NJ: Yes, Cedar Roe, February 27, 1986.
- BM: I came up with that name and I fought very hard for it because a number of people there wanted it to be called Gateway. And as we say in this area, we know our community isn't the gateway. St. Louis has laid claim to it. We didn't want people thinking we were from St. Louis. So I proposed Trails Head for two reasons, to pay respect to Blue Mills, Independence, Westport, and St. Joseph, which at that time was part of our territory. So it was a very animated discussion. But by hands, Trails Head won.
- NJ: Now in '85 on your chronology you also bring up the term signage legislation first put out by Kansas Senator Audrey Langworthy, Barbara Burgess of Wamego and (unclear) advisors. I guess you and Barbara Burgess were advisors to the Senator Audrey Langworthy.
- BM: The way that came about, possibly in October or November. November is when elections are traditionally held, so it would have been somewhere after the elections in November of '84. Greg was the speaker. He came in and we sponsored a luncheon at the Alexander Majors barn. And Barbara Burgess had grown up with Senator Langworthy, newly elected to the Kansas Senate and looking for "a noncontroversial bit of legislation." And so Barbara Burgess, who had taken part in our first convention, said, "Why don't you try the historic trails signage because the signs will be coming available from the National Park Service. So Barbara came down from Wamego and brought Senator Langworthy to the luncheon. So this is how the ball got rolling to designate the Kansas Department of Transportation as the responsible party in the state of Kansas.
- NJ: We are talking about the Kansas State Legislature.
- BM: Kansas State legislative act, because you have to have an organization accept responsibility for the signage. And they decided in Kansas it would work best to turn it over to KDOT because that controls the highways.
- NJ: Then you apparently chose the location of the first sign at 122nd and State Line.
- BM: Right, never realizing that it was the first one in the United States to go up. It had been urged at the previous national convention to go home and start working on placing the new signage. I thought, "Well, everybody knows that Wyoming with those wide open spaces and those gung-ho people or certainly Californians would have the first ones." I did not know it was the first until I called John Latscher in Denver and said, "Is there any

possibility of coming for a sign dedication?” He said, “You have the first one in the United States.”

NJ: The design of that sign had been established...

BM: By the National Park Service.

NJ: So they were ready to be used, ready to go.

BM: Ready but they weren't ready because they were being done by prison industries and something happened within the prison production system. Somehow they turned out flawed. In the meantime KDOT was chomping at the bit to get those signs up. And so the assistant to the governor called me at one point and said, “How can we expedite these?” I said, “Let me give you a phone number and a name.” And so our signs ended up being done in Kansas so that we could move this project forward.

NJ: This is the new New Santa Fe sign at 122nd?

BM: Correct, on the Kansas side.

NJ: On the other side of the line.

BM: It seems to keep disappearing every time they change the roads. We have no idea what happened to the original first sign. It's long gone.

NJ: So we have pictures of it. I remember that day very well.

BM: There were legislators, local VIPs. Bob Richmond came down from Topeka.

NJ: I've got a bunch of pictures I'll have to show you. What would have been the alternative to that?

BM: The choice of the state line? The Kansas Department of Transportation was very pleased with a brand new roadway they had just opened now known as Overland Parkway, Highway 69 coming off of I-35 and then coming back into Highway...what we know as 69, Old Metcalf. They had made a bypass road, which is now called Overland Parkway. At a meeting at Senator Langworthy's home where there were about five of us present I just kind of shuddered and said, “What about the traffic?” I was concerned with safety. And I said, “May I offer an alternative location, 122nd and State Line, which at that time was only a two-lane road. It had some traffic but it didn't have what it has today, nor did it have what the new Overland Parkway had. And so the secretary of the Department of Transportation, Kansas KDOT, said, “That could be workable. There's a big open field.” Now there had been a drive-in but it was not yet a shopping center but we knew it was coming. But there was a big open field where there had been a drive-in theater. And so they all agreed that it made sense to make it at 122nd and State Line. Welcome to Kansas.

NJ: Harry Truman when his grandfather Solomon Young was going west was going to Santa Fe.

BM: Wonderful.

NJ: But he never went to Santa Fe. He went on the Santa Fe Trail to Salt Lake City and California. Truman said in one of his letters that he didn't go to Santa Fe. However, I heard a story recently that makes me wonder if maybe he didn't go to Santa Fe at least once.

BM: It would make sense in that time period.

NJ: Well, then we have the exhibit in the museum here of New Santa Fe artifacts.

BM: Right.

NJ: Which were apparently uncovered on the Missouri side right there at 122nd. There are lots of hot letters over site for trail center in Independence. The Examiner ran a headline that OCTA disputes the city's claim of trail importance here. Well, I think that might have been when I got involved, Polly Fowler and I and Ben Zobrist, Director of Truman Library wrote an essay, a research paper to document the role of Independence in the history of the trails. And the part I did, the first part, was more of a general treatment of the subject. And then Polly did some of the details of the history of Independence and its connection with the trails. So that became part of this working (unclear) here.

BM: However, let me add that the Examiner admitted that they were incorrect. The article had been done in haste. Even though Gregory Franzwa was quoted, Gregory Franzwa had never been spoken to or interviewed for the article. So as the...I was vice president of national OCTA at that time, I was called upon to mediate the situation here. So I of course called the Examiner and also sent them information. I said, "If OCTA felt that way, why would their first convention have been in Independence?" I proceeded to provide them with a whole sheet, one sheet, with ties between OCTA and Independence. So the question is not over a trail center in Independence but where in Independence? There were some unwise things put into letters which, because of the public policy, I guess, are public information. The revered Merrill Mattes wrote a letter. Everyone on the board received one, basically saying, "Cut it out. You are giving the organization a bad name." So Merrill Mattes mediated and that was the end of letters that were unwise.

NJ: One letter went to the city, I guess, from Greg Franzwa, over the article. So we responded to that. And I think one of the issues was where did most of the emigrants to California and Oregon pass through? Well, eventually you could argue Omaha and Council Bluffs.

BM: Right.

NJ: But that also included the Mormon Trail with numbers that were considerable.

BM: Yes.

NJ: And of course the other aspect was that even though OCTA wasn't involved in the Santa Fe Trail this was the best place to head for Santa Fe from Independence.

BM: No doubt.

NJ: So when you're talking about overland trails and want to include Santa Fe, that gives Independence a plus that the others don't have. We recognized that in '49 in the gold rush. St. Joseph probably sent out more gold seekers.

BM: Right.

NJ: But the contemporary accounts show that the reason some of them went to St. Joe was that they were so crowded here that they went on to St. Joe. Then this this obviously the main jumping off place for (unclear). So I think we got that ironed out.

BM: Yes.

NJ: Then they ended up selecting the Waggoner-Gates Mill here, the general actually pinpointing this as the place.

BM: Not pinpointing. Part of the consideration of OCTA getting into deep trouble locally was that there was a prevailing feeling that the trail center belonged on the square and that there could be real estate made available there if certain people kind of moved behind that. So that was why OCTA really wanted the trail center up on the square. And there was a meeting called in Mayor Potts' office. I believe you were present. (unclear) and Dr. (unclear) was present and I was present. No, back up a second. I received a call from Mayor Potts one day asking me if I could get John Latschar from the National Park Service to come in. So I explained that they were always on a very tight budget, but I would try. So I called up and told him it was very important that he come, that we needed some sort of semiofficial. But he did not wear his uniform. He said, "I am here strictly as a member of OCTA, not the National Park Service." So he attended that meeting at the mayor's office. OH, Bill Bullard was there, the city manager. At the end of that meeting Bill Bullard put John Latschar and I in his car and we drove down here. There were no lights. There was nothing. We came through a back door at the back end of the building and went through by flashlight. As we exited Bill Bullard and said, "What do you think?" And John Latschar said, "I've seen the National Park Service do wonders with buildings far worse than this." So Bill Bullard looked at me and said, "And as for you?" I said, "The guru has spoken. We have no more opposition to the building." Not in the sense of pinpointing it but in the sense of being in on the ground floor of this great building.

NJ: The rally that we had here...

BM: Yes, I have photographs of that. Actually, before even this stage I called a meeting sometime in....I'm not sure what my authority was. Maybe it was just that I was very vocal about wanting it. But I got the board to agree to a meeting of Trails Head people out in the courtyard. This is before...I don't even know if the state had approved this yet. But Bill Bullard was gracious enough to meet outside on a summer evening and somewhere I have snapshots of that. We had possibly 15 to 20 Trails Head members show up to learn more about the project. And so I thought that was very gracious of him. So when they had what they called the kickoff for beginning the process, we were here in quite a few numbers and we have photographs which are either Peggy's sister or mine.

I'm not certain whose they are. But we have photographs of what this place looked like on the day of the kickoff. And Nolan Nesbitt honored those Trails Head members who were present.

NJ: In fact I have a few pictures I took that year too. So I'll have to get those on the record.

BM: Right.

NJ: Then the state agreed to finance the building, (unclear) the adaptive reuse, (unclear) with the agreement that the city would then take over operation and maintenance.

BM: Right.

NJ: 1986. Lots of PR. Three Englishmen flew the Oregon Trail. I remember the dinner we had that night.

BM: Yes. And do you remember what a hot day it was and the plane was delayed leaving St. Louis, which is one of those hilarious stories that only Englishmen can tell. They called for a taxi to take them to the airport and the taxi company said, "Where are you?" They said, "We are at a Shoney's Restaurant." The woman said, "Which Shoney's?" "Well, we don't know." She said, "Look at the street signs." They came right back in and said, "There are no street signs." They were out in a suburban area somewhere. So this delayed their flight. And the temperature that day, it seems to me, was over 98. It seems to me like it was in the three digits. And Councilwoman (unclear) was there looking gorgeous in a high necked long sleeved dress. But she kept her cool until they arrived. And I think a newsman from the Kansas City Star left and came back. Channel 19 had come out to videotape it. They left and came back. So they were very gracious people in the media who worked with us who were finally there at the right time and recorded it.

NJ: I think I may have two or three pictures I took there still.

BM: I have some given to me by a professional photographer, who said you can use these however you want.

NJ: Great. Now weren't they going to use a Gypsy Moth and that didn't work out so they ended up with a Piper Cub?

BM: Actually, they used the same type of plane. The difference is this gentlemen named Maurice (unclear) had entered a major liquor brand, Canadian Club in a contest in England. It was kind of along the theme of what's your fantasy? What's your dream? I mean somebody wanted to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel. You know, they were English. Somebody wanted hunt the tsetse flies or whatever. And his was to fly to Oregon Trail because he had seen that old movie when it came with Jimmy Stewart, "Bend of the River," I think. Actually, he almost moved to the United States based on that film. But there was so much family in England that he didn't. So he entered this contest and he was one of 10 winners. So he was all primed to bring his own plane over from England but remember this is the time when horrendous insurance policies started being made, or I mean insurance regulations. They were going to fund the shipment of

this plane and all the expenses. But that all fell through. But as he said, he was bloody well not going to give up his dream. So it took him longer, but he did get it together and he chose two of his flying buddies and they brought their three wives. What they did was they flew to the United States. With feelers had been put out beforehand, he located exactly the same type of plane in upstate New York. And he went to an air show there and he negotiated. The people he bought the plane from really didn't want to let loose of it. But he signed a sales agreement that if he didn't wreck the plane, he would bring it back and sell it back to them. And that's the way it was. But they had a great time.

NJ: Was this Gypsy Moth?

BM: Let's see. It's in this Kansas City article. A (unclear) plane.

NJ: Do we have a video of that?

BM: They did their own videotaping from on the ground because you see two would fly and the third gentleman was charged with escorting the three women. And the gentleman (unclear). "Oh please, can I fly today?" But they did their own video. I understand that they flew around England later showing it. They never showed it here. But later they were invited back to the United States by two different flying clubs. And in fact the year of the Baker City convention (1984) my husband and I kind of cut off one day because we wanted to go to Walla Walla to see the Whitman mission. As we came down out of the mountains toward Baker City we saw a couple of small planes coming in and pretty soon we saw four or five more and I said to my husband, "Can you believe such air traffic in a little place like this?" And all of a sudden it hit me and I said, "When we get to the airport, turn in." So we had an unexpected reunion with Maurice (unclear) who had come without his two pals and their wives. They gave me a little covered wagon that they were giving out to people who were flying the trail. So they took him along as a copilot. He was a pilot but someone invited him on a sentimental journey as a copilot.

NJ: And there was an article from the New Smithsonian Airspace Magazine.

BM: Yes. I don't have that but it is in a magazine at home. But the interesting thing is that I had contacted a man who had switched from (unclear) journalism to the BBC. And I contacted him. I got his address from the Kansas City Star. I thought he was an American working in England. It turned out he was an Englishman who had studied journalism for about two years at K-State in Manhattan. That was why he wrote so warmly about the midlands of America, or as he said, "the true America." So I wrote to him and said, "As an American, why don't you promote this trail over there?" He wrote back and said, "First of all, I don't write any more. I am with the BBC. But let me take a hand at writing an article." The next thing I knew, it showed up in the Kansas City Star. So wrote it over there about these English people who were interested in the trail. A man from Prairie Village caught my name in the article and called me up and said, "Can you provide me with information? There is a new magazine coming out called Smithsonian Air and Space Magazine. I had never heard of it. They were still working on their first

issue. So this man in Prairie Village wrote an article which appeared in either the first or second issue. It was a brand new magazine

NJ: Okay, '87. "I [Barbara] became Trails Head Chapter president." We were talking about the dates of this administration, so to speak, when these people were presidents. Actually, you say the term of office starts on the first of January and ended the last day of December.

BM: Right.

NJ: So essentially these are single year.

BM: Right. Now I can't testify to that as far as '84 and '85 are concerned. But I know by '86 that system was in place. And certainly in '87 when I became president. On my agenda for my final meeting in December of '87 you see it talks about Elaine McNabney as chairman of the nominating committee and the introduction of the new president, indicating that whoever became president in 1988 took over the first of January.

NJ: You're not on this list.

BM: Well, I didn't (unclear).

NJ: We'll put this on the video so they will know what list we're talking about.

BM: 1987, for instance. July 30. I got Peggy Smith to chair this project. But this is when one of my projects was creating bookmarks. The reason I had such bright colors is because I had a friend in the printing business who said, "If you will take leftover lots of very bright things, I can work a real good deal for you financially." So we printed 15,000 bookmarks, distributed them free through libraries or given away. We had an article in so I received some requests at my house. Peggy Smith received some.

NJ: Now this is July of '87.

BM: '87. Right.

NJ: You were president on this letterhead.

BM: In August of '87 with Jane Mallinson I was asked to contribute remarks at the National Three Trails Museum Support Group, which was held at Sermon Center. And here I am listed at the bottom of that one.

NJ: You obviously were traveling.

BM: Oh, here's another letterhead. It's nice to have letterheads where you have officers' names on them. So the officers for 1987 are all designated there.

NJ: From '86 to '87 we have Mike Duncan president.

BM: I think Mike Duncan was probably president in '86. [yes]

NJ: So in '87 you would have been president. [yes]

BM: I think this is where the glitch of putting two years...

NJ: Ross Marshall...He succeeded himself. (Marshall pres.1988 & 1989) You should be right here in '87.

BM: First of all we need to eliminate the two years. If Mike was in '86 and I was in '87 and Ross was in '88. [yes]

NJ: That's probably the way it worked out. Ross Marshall in '88 and '89, Jim Lee in 1990, Bob Hamilton in '91, but Hamilton resigned December 1990. Bill Bullard in '91 & '92). Jim Lee again in '93 and Ross again in 1994 and 1995) it looks like.

BM: The officers in '87. I was president. Milt Perry was vice president. He had been interested since the beginning. Barbara Bernauer was secretary and Elaine McNabney was treasurer. That was 1987.

NJ: So this needs to be corrected.

BM: Right. Then December of '87. Here is a letter to Elaine telling her that I need from her (unclear). She was treasurer but she also chaired the nominating committee. Incidentally, these papers I brought for you, they are all copies. So anything I brought today are for you.

NJ: They are supporting documents and reference material. They will be filed in archive boxes and folders.

BM: And in '87, this is when we came to the kickoff meeting here. And this is where our group is mentioned in (unclear) down at the bottom. Trails Head Chapter, OCTA.

NJ: Was this the rally we had here?

BM: Yes, those snapshots...

NJ: That was March 15, 1987.

BM: Right. Not related to Trails Head, because I was doing public relations for the national OCTA in 1987. Here's a letter announcing that we would establish our headquarters in Independence, Missouri.

NJ: August 18, 1987.

BM: Following the convention.

NJ: "OCTA will move its national headquarters to the proposed National Frontier Trails Center in Independence, Missouri. Meeting in a national convention last week in Casper, Wyoming, OCTA's board of directors voted unanimously to accept an offer from the city of Independence to relocate its office to the Queen City of the Trails." Then March 15 before that we had this big rally here meeting here in this building before the renovation.

BM: Yes, because our first headquarters was in the lower level of city hall.

NJ: Yes, I remember that.

BM: At that time, actually, there was a major change, shall we say, in national OCTA. I volunteered to take over producing News of the Plains newsletter because I wanted to keep it at this end of the trail. And I was the editor and Polly Fowler was my assistant. So for (unclear) we produced News of the Plains out of the city hall, lower level.

NJ: You did a walk of the square with Midcontinent Girl Scouts in May 1987 in Minor Park.

BM: Right.

NJ: That is still the most prominent, most visible swale in the whole part of the country.

BM: Yes, it is.

NJ: It was marked by the DAR.

BM: it was marked by the DAR with a huge marker, a huge swale. That was a huge success for us. Actually, Evelyn Bartlow, who was with the Midcontinent Council of the Girl Scouts and the recent author of a book, *Emily on the Santa Fe Trail*, contacted me about this. I love to delegate, especially to someone who was brighter than I am. I said, "Do I have a good chairman for you. Elaine McNabney is a former Girl Scout and her parents, at least for some period of time ran the Girl Scout Camp during the summer. So I called Elaine and said, "Do whatever you want. All the members will work with you." And we had a great time. We talked about cooking on the trail. We talked with them about the rigors and the hardships and Elaine filled up some small gunny sacks with sand and those became babies. And I think some of those girls learned what responsibility for children was all about.

NJ: Then you mentioned that you invited the city on first round of proposals by firms to apply to develop the trail center. Those who attended local Peggy Smith, (unclear), Sylvia Mooney and you.

BM: I'm trying to remember whether he sat in on those or whether she was already busy. She became the volunteer, unpaid, director of the OCTA office here. So I don't know if Elaine was sitting in on those or if she was too busy taking care of the store. But there were four or five Trails Head people and these were daytime presentations. There probably weren't very many men who could attend.

NJ: What were you trying to do?

BM: Listen to the various proposals for development and their concepts of what was important.

NJ: So the Trails Head Chapter had input this way.

BM: I don't think we really had an input, in the sense that we were never called upon. If we were called upon, it certainly wasn't in a public format. It was kind of behind the scenes maybe. I don't know that you could say that we really had that much... Trails Head Chapter, national OCTA. I don't know that locally we had that much impact. But we felt

very honored to be invited to sit in on these proposals and to listen to these various people.

NJ: To develop this facility right here where we are. The architect, he was a Kansas...

BM: That's why I specified here the first round of proposals. Something happened. I'm not exactly sure about that but those proposals were set aside and there was a second round of proposals. And it was at that point that a Kansas City architect was selected.

NJ: Yes, in fact I think he ended up winning an award, didn't he?

BM: He did.

NJ: For adaptive reuse, or whatever the term is.

BM: Exactly. And it was the same architect who did the Sermon) center. He did a very good job on that.

NJ: Yes. You say here, "I recommended Harold Smith as the editor."

BM: I did. I have an actual letter here. Which year was that?

NJ: 1980 (transcriber typed wrong date; OCTA did not exist in 1980 so Harold Smith could not have been OCTA book review editor in 1980). He has been a dependable worker over these years, hasn't he?

BM: I think that's what I put in my letter.

NJ: Good job.

BM: Oh, here's a letter from Mr. Bullard, 1985.

NJ: We'll put that in our files.

BM: Oh, yes. All these things you can have. These are all copies. Somewhere I have this wonderful, but somewhat embarrassing to me, letter, which I will find. But, yes, I recommended Harold Smith to become book review editor. See, I always work to try to get as much input from our end of the trail as possible.

NJ: You had a table at Santa Cali Gon. That was the first time you've done this. That was in '87.

BM: Right. Actually, it kind of followed that program, where I was asked to say some remarks. The Three Trails Museum Support System. That was before they were called Friends of the Trail Center. So Mayor Potts said to me, "You are going to have a table at Santa Cali Gon, aren't you?" I said, "We haven't been asked." She said, "You are now." So we had a table at Santa Cali Gon. It was on the upper level of the courthouse on the west end. So we were in between the Santa Fe Trail and the Oregon Trail markers.

NJ: That was appropriate enough.

BM: It was a great spot.

NJ: In the spring or summer you took part in the KC Convention and Visitors Bureau exhibit at various malls. So you got more visibility, working to get more visibility. Did that, do you think, have some impact on membership or did it help draw in any new members?

BM: I think sometimes we create more awareness but it doesn't necessarily result in membership. I've never really worked on membership records. So I only know people who I kind of twisted their arm. But I do remember that the night we were in Sermon Center there was a tornado alert.

NJ: That kind of makes you keep your head up.

BM: Yes, it does.

NJ: Then you finished your year as president at the end of '87, December 31. And then, let's see. Who would have followed you? Was that Ross? [yes]

BM: I'm not certain. Isn't that terrible. It would be in the minutes.

NJ: Yes, we'll have to check that.

BM: It would probably make sense that it was Ross from the standpoint...I remember him coming up to me at the Scottsbluff Convention (1985) and handing me a check and saying, "I want to become a lifetime member." I said, "If you are becoming a lifetime member, you deliver the check. Make yourself known to the national people." So he and his wife Jana did go up and I introduced them to Tom Hunt.

NJ: In 1988 you had the first Trail Trek, which you chaired. You went from the first Oregon Trail sign in Leawood to Lawrence. David Dary, noted western author, then KU journalism professor, speaker at the trail marker on Jayhawk Boulevard. The program was taped by KLWN radio, broadcast later on local public radio.

BM: Did you know David Dary?

NJ: Yes, I heard him give a program.

BM: I like that phrase, "Seize the moment." I was at the Kansas Day celebration in January (unclear), which I usually attend. And David Dary was the speaker that year. So I waited until the luncheon and everything was all over. I went up and introduced myself. I said, "I know you are at Lawrence, because I have kids at KU." And I also said, "I know there is a big monument right on Jayhawk Boulevard." I said, "If I bring our people up there, would you give us a program?" He said, "If you catch me at the right time, I'd be honored to." So we ended up with David Dary. And this was wonderful because when I called, I wanted to put the quotation from the monument in something I was sending out to local people. And I think it sits near the geology building. I'm not 100 percent sure. But it's pretty hard to find. The boy who answered said, "There's no marker out there." I said, "Well." No, it was a woman first. She said, "There's no marker out there." I said, "Yes, there really is." She said, (unclear). I said, "I'm sorry, but there really is. I've

seen it. It is directly opposite this little circle where you either turn right and go north around campus or you go left to basically leave the campus. So I waited a day or two and called back. I got a young boy. I said, "I tell you what. I'll send you something. Just go out and read the..." He said, "Maybe it's not out there." When he came back he thanked me for educating him and he had never seen it. It was a gift from a graduating class at KU like maybe in the 1920s, who thought the Oregon Trail should be remembered by students. In fact, that's in these snapshots here. So we did a trek and we presented some certificates. We got the mayor of Overland Park to turn out at 151st just west of Antioch at Blue Valley Baptist Church. We ate lunch by the "dividing of the trails" marker, brown bag lunch. So this was our first trek. Our first couple of treks were by individual autos. Then we decided that the logistics were a little tough. So then we started renting vehicles. But we did start at 122nd and State Line and ended up at the marker on the KU campus. We did Lone Elm. We had someone from the Johnson County Highway Department, who was kind enough to have the weeds cut the day before so we could see the DAR marker. This was that gentleman. I cannot remember his name, a very nice man. (award given to Jo Co supervisor of roads Phil Yauger) And we gave them an award. And we ended up with David Dary at the marker on Jayhawk Boulevard. [this was Trail Trek #1]

NJ: A coup.

BM: Dary later moved to Oklahoma, so we were lucky we got him while he was at KU.

NJ: Did you stop at that marker in Gardner, in the city park?

BM: Yes, we did. We hit every known major marker from 122nd and State Line all the way up to Lawrence. Actually, I selected a couple of OCTA members and asked them if they would unveil the first marker that we would have found as we crossed into Douglas County just west of the Johnson County line. So we have a picture in here of that. We went out first to drape burlap and a leather thong around it and then did a little ceremony and unveiled it.

NJ: Then you said in '88, the first trail map of Johnson County was published in partnership with the Johnson County Museum, which suggested it, and Trails Head, 50-50 sharing of costs and maps. [yes--& some money came from the Kansas Humanities through Jo Co Museum. In 1990 this map was reprinted with Jo Co Museum and Trails Head again splitting cost—Trails Head portion included \$100 donation from Eleanor & Oscar Eggers]

BM: It shows on the front, partly funded by the Kansas Committee for the Humanities.

NJ: Okay.

BM: The interesting thing is most people do not remember that first one. The first one is easy to remember very specifically because when we reissued it changed the map a little because I thought the legend should be on the same page with the map. So the original had the orange colored ink and credited the Kansas Committee for the Humanities on the front. This one has green ink and in the back it pays tribute to Doctors Eleanor and Oscar Eggers. She had called and asked me for more copies of this map and it was my sad duty

to tell her that we were practically out and didn't know how we were going to fund the next one because we no longer had Humanities money and it was quite a bit between the museum and Trails Head chapter. So she said, "What if I make a donation?" I said that would be lovely. I had no idea what she had in mind. If I remember correctly, John Leamon was treasurer of Trails Head at that time and she sent the check to John. [The Feb. 1990 Trails Head newsletter reported the Eggers donated \$100 to assist with reprinting the map. That newsletter also reported the reprinted maps first would be available at the Feb. 24, 1990 Trails Head meeting. If the Eggers couple donated money in 1989, the treasurer was Jim Budde. If the Eggers couple donated in early 1990, the treasurer was Henry Boppart)

NJ: For the entire cost?

BM: Well, not the entire cost, but it certainly defrayed the cost and made it more possible for Trails Head. You see, in the meantime we had become involved in saving the park land in Prairie Village. Craig Crease had called me up. I don't remember how Craig and I first became acquainted, but we did. He called me up one day and said, "Do you know about the swales in Prairie Village?" I said, "No, but I think you'd better tell me."

NJ: This is in '89, according to your chronology.

BM: Okay. It was a very interesting lesson in the power of the people because if I remember correctly, the sale had already been approved by the city of Prairie Village. It was an extremely complex, legally frightening situation. The city of Prairie Village had already granted zoning for condominiums. But the people who lived around it were very distressed and they formed a group, called something like Citizens to Save the Park. Because it was the immediate south land area next to their city park and north of the YMCA. And they wanted it kept as public land. And so there was this very frightening possibility of the developer filing a lawsuit against the city of Prairie Village that had already granted them zoning. And we kept saying, "He won't do that. He won't do that." Perhaps we were naïve and were whistling in the dark but we attended a number of meetings and the night that they took the vote...One of the people who was there was William Deramus, the gentleman who was head of Kansas City Southern Railway, DST or some elements of it. I'm never really sure what the division is. And he stood up at one point when they allowed public discussion and he offered a very sizable sum of money to help them in the lawsuit if the city of Prairie Village was sued. And he got a tremendous ovation. But one of the councilmen that night had been a graduate of Rockhurst High School, I don't know about college. But he said he was all of sudden thinking back to his civics courses that when you are elected to something, you represent the people. And he was one of the swing votes and he voted to rescind the zoning and save the park.

NJ: Great. Now you were the president emeritus, whatever. Now you didn't have an office in the chapter.

BM: I don't think I did.

NJ: You were kind of lobbying as a private citizen.

BM: Right.

NJ: I suppose in keeping with what the chapter had wanted, certainly.

BM: Right. So the ball on that project was pretty much carried by John Leamon. Because Craig called me again after asking somebody else to do something that they are better at it than I am. And not only that but in national OCTA they had asked local chapters to name someone as like their mapping and preservation expert. And John Leamon drew that role in Trails Head. And so after Craig explained to me this whole situation, I said, "You need to work with John Leamon." (Yes, Leamon had become Trails Head preservation officer in 1988)

NJ: Now Craig is a lawyer.

BM: No, Craig is an insurance man.

NJ: Now this was the first time you knew about Craig Crease?

BM: It was not the first time I had known about Craig. And I should have known about the swales in the sense of going back to Senator Langworthy. She was a Prairie village city councilwoman. She had asked me about the trails through Prairie Village. But because they were not part of the main focus of the National Park Service. I mean, to me, Independence was always the dominant trails aspect going south. And even though I knew they went past the mission and kind of filtered through Johnson County north of what is considered the primary corridor, I really didn't spend a lot of time on what I considered the secondary route. But Senator Langworthy had said to me when she was working on this legislation and really catching a lot of static, particularly from people in Leavenworth who knew that the trail runs up there tied to the fort and the Army, which, you know, you couldn't deny. I kept saying, "Call John Latschar or look at this document which says the primary route... This is what they are marking as the primary route. Well, she had asked me about possible trails in Prairie Village, and I merely said, "I don't know," because I had concentrated on this. She said, "Well, you know, during the bicentennial in 1976 we put up a statue [Blue Boy] out in front of the Prairie Village city hall that has trail connotations." So of course it is right where this arm of the trail is going.

NJ: I've never seen that swale but there is a notice there.

BM: The National Park Service or the city of Prairie Village, probably the city of Prairie Village, acting as the city, did. They put limestone posts so that it is easy to follow. It is a minor swale. But it's there, and in suburbia, we're grateful.

NJ: Wherever you can find them, it is valuable.

BM: And it does have the Santa Fe Trail logo embedded in the limestone posts.

NJ: In 1990 you say, "Held program which began as a Kansas City Parks and Recreation presentation by Jim O'Shea at the church of New Santa Fe and proceeded to downtown

Overland Park where we rededicated the DAR marker as a sign of respect for their work. I invited all DAR presidents in the metro area. Mayor Eilert and several city council people became drop in VIPs, since they were near

BM: Right. We didn't realize we were bumping into Downtown Overland Park Days. Here's the letter from the DAR state organization secretary thanking me for the recognizing them in the state in June. In June they do have Downtown Overland Park Days. And so there was this big event going on half a block away. So the mayor and several city council people came down and so they became instant VIP guests. I think as people got more and more into OCTA they became great respecters of the DAR and all of the work they did before us. I mean it is always important to acknowledge people who have gone before you.

NJ: They are the ones who began the National Old Trails Association and road system in the mid '20s [1912].

BM: I did some research on that at UMKC.

NJ: Again in '90, this may have been the year that we reissued the Johnson County Trails map.

BM: The one with the green print. You can have those as well.

NJ: And this was helped by the donation of Oscar & Eleanor Eggers. At the OCTA national convention, which may have been in Casper...We don't know where it was in '90?

HS: It was in Omaha.

NJ: Oh, in Omaha, okay. The board voted to allow Trails Head to merge into one unit with the local Santa Fe chapter [no – the action was to allow Trails Head to also be a SFT chapter]. Later the board reversed this vote in an evening meeting concerned about the impact on OCTA support in Utah, where there was an active Mormon Trail Association. Did that become an issue?

BM: I don't know. I don't live in Utah. At the daytime board session I don't even know who presented this. But we had long talked about while we could cooperate informally, we kind of wanted OCTA sanction to be able to probably not even mix officers but to kind of work together more with OCTA's blessing. And so the point I was pushing was kind of like you were with the Trail Center. We're unique in the fact that we have the Santa Fe Trail, the Oregon and the California here. So we were looking to that aspect of it. And they did vote to allow that. And then we went out on a trek somewhere. We were gone and it was very late. But I was wanted just as soon as we got back to come to an evening meeting but no one would tell me what it was about. So we went to the evening meeting and they took a new vote because, as they said, they were trying to build a chapter in Utah and they had been telling people who were members of the Mormon Trail Association that they could not join the state chapter of OCTA without joining National OCTA. So there was some resistance on that. So that they decided then that we couldn't

merge our chapters here [yes?—SFTA chapter did not yet exist, so “merge” is not the accurate verb. Trails Head asked OCTA if Trails Head also could be a SFTA chapter].

NJ: Okay, you say you have no notes from 1991. In '92, is this the chapter head, is this you, who arranged for the meeting to tour the Arabia?

BM: We were looking for a way to reach people that we maybe hadn't reached, of course, through our limited meetings. And the Arabia was pretty new in '92, if I remember correctly. I don't remember when it opened. But it was still new. So I put a note about holding a meeting at the Arabia and opening it to the public and bringing someone to speak on a related issue. And so Dr. James Pope had spoken at maybe the St. Joseph convention.

HS: That was in 1988.

BM: I think Dr. Pope had spoken there. If not, he spoke in Omaha. So we brought Dr. Pope in from St. Louis and he presented a program called, “To the Trails Head by Water.” And this was at the Arabia. We did have to pay admission. But there were quite a number of people who had not yet seen the Arabia, and we wanted to lure them there. We opened it to the public and we had over 100 people who attended. So this might have been the largest meeting Trails Head ever had. Before we went to the meeting and toured the Arabia, we gathered, voluntarily, a number of us and I don't remember. There was something like 30 to 35 people. They gathered for dinner beforehand at a restaurant that no longer exists in the River Market. So we were trying to socialize among the members too.

NJ: Is James Pope still living?

BM: As far as I know, he is.

NJ: But he is an authority on traffic on the river?

BM: He has studied it a great deal. He and his wife are both or have been, they are now retired. But they were both federal employees involved somehow in mapping, I think. Topography and whatever. Government statistics and analysis and that sort of thing.

NJ: It is one of the big questions, how many came by boat here to the trails' head jumping off place and how many came overland. We don't have good statistics, but there is interesting evidence of both kinds of overland transportation. Okay, 1993. “Arranged dinner at Courthouse Exchange Restaurant in January for Trails Head members.” Probably before meeting at the Trail Center.

BM: This is where I get an interesting conflict between what is in minutes. The only thing I wonder is if it's January. Maybe it got snowed out. In one set of minutes it talked about a meeting at the Trail Center January 20th. And yet my list of dinner attendees is January 28th. So I wonder if there was just a postponement or a snow out. Again, you can have copies of that.

NJ: All right. Shared project to hold forum regarding construction of new areas of I-435 near Watts Mill co-sponsored by Trails Head and the New Santa Fe Historical Society. There

seems to be some question now about Watts Mill as the location of the original Fitzhugh mill. So I don't know what the status is. What is your opinion on the subject?

BM: Well I know scholars have done years of research on it. I want it to be Watts Mill. It hasn't been mis-proven, so that is probably the camp I am in. And I think it is awfully hard in 1997 or 1998 [this transcription must be from Barbara's 1998 tape or she wouldn't say it that way] to say that something didn't occur. And I know that those terms Westport, Independence, all of those, New Santa Fe even. What they meant back then is different than what they mean right now. We also know that weather entered into all of that. So when people say they left from Fitzhugh Mill I think they probably knew where they were coming from. [it wasn't just one group – there were many from several spots]

NJ: It seems to me when I was out there once for an open house the impression I got was that this rendezvous in 1843 was west of there in a wooded grove. And I'm not exactly sure what the source for that was but even if Fitzhugh Mill was sited somewhere else, it wouldn't have been that far away. [??]

BM: It was in the neighborhood.

NJ: You wonder if it wasn't at least the neighborhood. So I guess that is yet to be kind of worked out as to whether that was exactly in the same place.

BM: It is kind of like in the same ball park with [Fitzhugh's?] Mill, Elm Grove, Sapling Grove, Round Grove. The jury is still out, as far as I am concerned. The reason for this form, actually, is that we were all hearing rumors about the desecration of Watt's Mill. And since I don't like rumors, I've always thought that the best thing is to bring everybody together at the same time to hear the same thing. So we put together one terrific panel. We had KDOT, the Missouri Department of Transportation, Missouri Conservation. I think we had officials from the city of Leawood. I know we had one city councilwoman from Kansas City, MO. We had probably about eight panelists there to discuss what was and was not going to happen. It was very well done and quite well attended as well.

NJ: I don't see a date.

BM: It was 1993. It was in that issue.

NJ: It's in the Squire Magazine, March 14.

BM: It was probably the week proceeding, probably early March or late February.

NJ: Did this have an influence then on the preservation of the site or the maintenance of it?

BM: I think what it did was, number one, squelch rumors, you know, that a lot of Watts Mill was going to be destroyed. I think it also made them very aware of the fact that historic organizations are very interested in what goes on and that we do want to monitor in a very respectful way changes that may or may not take place. So I think it was a good awareness for both the Santa Fe and for Trails Head.

NJ: Now Watts Mill Historical Society. Do you have any idea when that was founded?

BM: I don't. That would be on (unclear) department.

NJ: But the local chapter head, they did try to network to some extent.

BM: Yes.

NJ: Coordinate, cooperate with these other groups.

BM: We are very interested and always have been interested in networking with people in the area of awareness, preservation, protection.

NJ: Including the Kansas side.

BM: Yes.

NJ: At least they voted the tax increase over in Kansas, along with Jackson County.

BM: Right.

NJ: Restoration.

BM: Right.

NJ: Co-chaired with Jana Marshall.

BM: I think it was Jana.

NJ: Project with Johnson County Museum. Presentation of "Daughters of Courage" by L. K. Cronin

BM: Right.

NJ: Another one of those impersonators, reenactors.

BM: Of course we always try to get the OCTA logo on anything that goes out.

NJ: "Daughters of Courage."

BM: Right.

NJ: June 12, 1993. Johnson County Historical Museum. I guess this is where the mural is too, isn't it?

BM: Yes, it is.

NJ: Charles Goslin mural of a wagon train coming through the Indian mission.

BM: The Shawnee County Indian Mission, correct. Beautiful mural.

NJ: I was up there when they dedicated that. (unclear) from a bank, wasn't it?

BM: A law office, which was relocating out to College Boulevard and they didn't have room for it yet.

NJ: Okay. Provided many names to Jan (unclear) of the Kansas City Star for the Oregon Trail sesquicentennial series. Assisted in presenting OCTA media awards to Art Brisbane of the Kansas City Star, and James Fisher photographer. Presented OCTA media award to the managing editor of the Oregonian, in Portland after the Baker City convention. In 1994 arranged KLWN radio interview regarding Trails Head award to the David & Mary Gage family of Lawrence as Friends of the Trail.

BM: And this was, if I remember the generations correctly, it was the grandson [David's father was also named John] of former Kansas City mayor John P. Gage. Are you aware of that, Harold? I'm quite sure that the one we presented it to was the son.

NJ: Yes, I'm getting involved in the Gage collections as soon as it comes to the County Historical Society. It is amazing too that the elder, John B. or John C., the father. The first John Gage came out here in the 1850s.

BM: Right.

NJ: They apparently made a significant contribution to the trails story.

BM: Right.

NJ: Assisted with symposium at UMKC co-sponsored by (unclear). You have a flyer on that.

BM: I do. What year was that?

NJ: '94.

BM: Yes. Dr. Mary Adair was one of the presenters and did a marvelous job as always. And Dr. Shortridge of KU...

NJ: Shortridge, Department of Geography.

BM: A wonderful man.

NJ: Missouri Valley (unclear) defining the region. And Mary Adair, Museum of Anthropology, KU. "The Impact of Western Emigration on the Indian Tribes of the Missouri River Region." Ray Breun.

BM: He's a great guy too. He may be retired now. He worked at the Jefferson memorial.

NJ: That's interesting.

BM: It was that train....However we discovered....Is it spring break time, Harold? What's the date on that?

HS: October 29th.

BM: Okay. Then it interfered with something else, maybe quarterly exams.

HS: Midterms.

BM: We were specifically slanting this toward the educational community. And it was just very bad timing for that. But the quality was fine.

NJ: And those papers. I wonder if any of those appear in the Overland Journal.

BM: Probably not. I don't think so.

NJ: Okay. '95. Assisted with local presentation of publicity for (unclear) Portland, Oregon. Program on quilts on the Oregon Trail. I remember that program, well attended.

BM: Right. And she has an excellent book.

BM: Oh, yes she does, "Treasures from the Trail."

NJ: A lot of color.

BM: I shared breakfast with her unexpectedly at Baker City in 1993. She remembered me from the night before. Someone had asked me to be part of the welcome. The next morning at breakfast at a fast food place across from the hotel in Baker City she came up and said hello to me. She remembered me from the night before. So I could see tags hanging on her so I said, "And you are...I had this very flippant custom. It is unpremeditated. It just overwhelms me. I do kind of a little curtsy when I meet someone I am impressed with. And I had only seen her book the week before by happenstance at Johnson County Museum. I was awed by the subject matter and the color and the research. And I did a little curtsy. She said, "Would you like to have breakfast with me?" And then she invited me to ride because my wheels had not yet arrived from Portland. She invited me to ride with her because we were holding our meetings at community college. So she invited me to ride along with her. As I departed her vehicle at the college she handed me this book of postcards and said, "Select one. It's yours." This is what she does as little tokens when she meets people.

NJ: Let's get together again.

BM: Yes.

NJ: I nearly forgot. Worked with a National Geographic writer on an Oregon Trail story back in the mid '80s. Called on Pat O'Brian and Elaine McNabney to help with that. National Geographic, did they put out a book (unclear).

BM: They did a trails book long before that one. The one I am familiar with has Carl Smart from Missouri Town with a great picture of the forge. That covered the Santa Fe and probably the Oregon and California. But that come out before I got involved with OCTA. This one was an article on the Oregon Trail by Boyd Givens. So we had a great two days. Both Elaine and I received postcards from him after that. But a rattlesnake almost got him at Independence Rock, which is supposed to be somewhat traditional.

NJ: We were kind of watching out for snakes out there.

BM: Right.

NJ: My biggest mistake was not going...we circled the rock. But then I noticed as we were leaving people were up there crawling around on top of the rock. We should have got on top of that rock.

BM: I had lunch on top of the rock. We all did at the Casper convention in **1987**.

NJ: Really?

BM: Yes.

NJ: Those things are still chiseled. They haven't weathered.

BM: That is inspiring. Yes it is. OCTA is a wonderful organization.

NJ: Now Pat O'Brian, I believe was doing his doctoral dissertation.

BM: Is he?

NJ: **Commerce** of the Santa Fe Trail. But that was years ago. I'm just wondering if it is available or just what has happened to it. I'll have to ask him when I see him. It's great to have this chronology here.

BM: Here's something also. All these copies are yours. But this was a whole little song book put together, "Parodies in Celebration," Citizens to Save the Park in Prairie Village in 1989.

NJ: "This Land is Your Land."

BM: Many people like a lot of folk songs. "I've Been Working on the Railroad," "I've Been Working on the Park." Very cleverly done.

NJ: Citizens to Save the Park. So this is one of the real highlights.

BM: Now that is not the dedication of the completed park. That was just to celebrate their victory that the city of Prairie Village had reversed their zoning.

NJ: Otherwise those swales would have been dug up.

BM: That's right.

NJ: For the foundation of some building.

BM: For condominiums. All these things are yours. Here's a copy of the state legislation for the state of Kansas. This did not copy well but this was something I was proud of. Even though most of our people stayed at Shoney's for the first convention and some stayed at Adams Mark Hotel, we had some guests and some activities at the Ramada. So they put up a sign on their marquee saying "Welcome Oregon-California Trails Association." So that was our first really big...I can give you a better picture later.

NJ: Now in the last three years since '95 what kind of involvement with either the Trails Head Chapter here or with publicity or writing?

BM: Most of my involvement in more recent years has strictly been local. I heard someone at a seminar say, “The duty of a good director is to get on, give, and get off. And the give can be money, time or talents or all three or any of the three. But just remember it’s get on, give and get off.” And I believe in that. I believe in term limits. I’m very involved with the local chapter.

NJ: We have a big convention coming in 2000.

BM: Yes, we do. I’m on the committee.

NJ: Well, we’ll probably have to wait until after that is final and has become a part of history that we put that on the record.

BM: Right.

NJ: I guess this will be the first national meeting since ’83.

BM: In our area, right.

NJ: Well, there was St. Joe in 1988.

BM: St. Joe, right. I would like to pay tribute to the people who did the St. Joe convention. St. Joe is up there, but they did one terrific convention. A lot of people from California weren’t coming back. They refer to our area as the concrete trail because there is so much development, industrialization and all that. But the St. Joe people put together one terrific convention. Very well done. Even a Californian said, “We need to go home and tell them.”

NJ: Well, that’s where a lot of Californians came from, right out of St. Joe.

BM: Right.

NJ: In the ’49 gold rush.

BM: Right.

NJ: They crossed the river first. They talk about the Blue River here being a bit of an obstacle if you are leaving from Independence. But it is certainly a tiny river compared with having to cross the Missouri. But once you got across the Missouri then you have a pretty fair shake. That was, I think, a bit of a problem for St. Joe, being on the east side of the Missouri River. You have to have a ferry. You couldn’t really swim animals across there.

BM: Even now I think that (unclear) Missouri River. I’ve kind of forgotten...I met Maurice Brecht on the day after the conclusion of the Scottsbluff Convention in 1985. I sat and talked with him. He was in his automobile and we talked. He had forgotten me but I remembered him because he was an Englishman doing our trail. Then I think the clue that he was going to be flying the trail came from a man named Richard Batters, who was with the Army Corps of Engineers in Omaha. And he dropped me a letter and said, “I

imagine you are involved in this.” And I wrote back and said, “I don’t know about it. Tell me more.” So I think that’s how I got involved with Brecht’s flying the Oregon Trail.

NJ: That’s certainly...especially an Englishman. You know, we have maps here at the Friends of the Trail. I don’t remember how many countries I have listed here, membership that includes foreign countries, one two or three or so. But there are people around the world on the other side of the ocean who know Independence because of trails. And they may not even know the Truman story either, but they know the trails.

BM: They know the trails. They are interested in the old Wild West.

NJ: Of course they get a chance to learn the Truman story while they are here as well. I think this has a lot of potential. I appreciate your time and all this information, Barbara. And we shall have this on tape. We are going to make a VHS copy as well as having this original 8 mm. We hope sometime we can arrange to have transcripts made. The transcripts would be the most useful, to have this in black and white.

BM: One of the things I realize as I look at this letter that I sent to Elaine, who was our treasurer, if I remember correctly, in 1987. I asked her to do some shopping around for some identification tags, something that would be very visual that would identify us as Trails Head OCTA people, so when we went to events they would be aware of our attendance. And so she came up with these green plastic pin on name tags where you slide a card in with your name and date. So that was something that we did in 1987. And also I see that it was in 1987 that we did one of the projects with the Shawnee Indian Mission. In fact, my husband and I, who are not artists, painted a big board with animals on it and we had kids with like suction cup guns hunting on the trail. And we gave out prizes. We had an adult division and a children’s division.

NJ: Here are some snapshots of (unclear) on the square.

BM: Those are nice. Those are mine.

NJ: Those are yours? Well, now I can realign them. I had some like that.

BM: I could make copies for you, but I recognize the exact poses.

NJ: These photographs did turn out to be from my album. This is a picture of this group on the square here in Independence dedicating an Oregon Trail triangle logo sign just to the west side of the courthouse. Here are some of the people who were there. There’s Merle Nesbitt and Dick Ackerman up there at the right hand corner. Is that Ed Quick?

BM: Yes.

NJ: Ed Quick from the state legislature and Carole Roper Park, another legislator from Sugar Creek, who has always been very helpful, hasn’t she, when it comes to trails matters. And here is Barbara there with P. G. (unclear). There’s Harold and Ross Marshall trying to get into the picture. Here’s the actual unveiling. What’s the story on that?

BM: This was the first Oregon Trail sign dedicated in the state of Missouri. And appropriately it's on the square in Independence.

NJ: In October of '87.

BM: Actually, I think it was part of Santa Cali Gon weekend, which would make it September.

NJ: Well, let me check the back side of it for date. (unclear) local chapter.

BJ: Right.