

## CRIS FITZJARRALD TRANSCRIPT

Date: August 2015

Damian Macey Interviewer

Transcribed by Donna Duzan, August 2018

D: This is Damian Macey in the Marshall Public Library doing an oral history with Cris Fitzjarrald. Cris has been a lifelong resident of Marshall and has taught for many years. I think she has some interesting stories to tell us. So with that, Cris you are on.

C: I was born in 1952, on this day, today is my birthday.

D: Well, Happy birthday, Cris.

C: Thank you, I was born in Paris, IL. My parents were Carol Bridwell Davidson and Paul Allen Davidson. And I have six siblings: Bud, Sally, Matt, Paula, Alane and Candy. I had wonderful grandparents, Joe and Anna Davidson who lived here in Marshall and then my maternal grandparents lived in Oliver and ran a general store. My grandparents were a big part of my life. I have lived in Marshall all of my life, except for a two year period when we lived in New Mexico. My dad and some other Marshall people connected with a pipeline that was out west and we lived there for two years in Aztec and I had two siblings born there. Sally and Bud were born in New Mexico. I have great memories of different families in New Mexico, Don and Joann Gmelich, Jackie and Dean Callahan, Andy Gorby, just real fond memories. I did go to first grade there. I remember my teacher well, her name was Mrs. Maxson.

My first day of school was not something I wish to remember but I do remember that I didn't want to leave my mom or sisters and brothers. I did fight going hard, but I finally discovered that it was okay.

D: Where you close enough that you could walk?

C: I vaguely remember walking with my older sisters, Alane and Paula so it must have been fairly close. So I lived in Marshall all of my life except those two years. And then when I graduated high school, I lived away because we lived in Charleston while we went to college. My husband and I were married at that time.

D: So did you graduate high school in Marshall or Charleston?

C: Marshall. After I graduated high school, got married, I moved to Charleston and went to Eastern. And graduated from there with a business teaching degree. Growing up in Marshall we lived a few different places. The one that I remember the most, after we came back from New Mexico, we lived down on the Zion road, we rented from my uncle, Arch Davidson. And then we moved into a home where we lived for six or seven years, east on route 40 across from the weigh station. Those are the two places I remember best. The saying is true that "it takes a village to raise a child" is so true, especially when you have so many siblings. And we were a poor family, we didn't know it, we were

rich in love but poor in money.

We attended

Armstrong Church, I have fond memories of Sunday school, bible school and all the surrounding families. Helen and Ray Farris, Norma and Wayne Sweitzer, Clara and Pete Bartram, Dorothy, Fenton and Carole Shirely, the Welsh family, Dorothea and David Bland, I could go on and on about those families. I have wonderful special places in my heart for them. But our neighbor across the road was Dick and Wanda Wallace and we thought of them as Queen and King. They were that respected and loved by us. We always called Dick our "second dad" because as young children we would wait for him to come home and see what activity we could do for the weekend because we didn't have bicycles. Dick had bicycles in his garage, he had a little above-ground swimming pool in his yard, he was kind of our activity director. We all had very special memories of Dick. I remember growing up and telling Dick that we loved him and he would always tell us that back.

D: You mentioned living across from the weigh station, obviously this would have been before I-70, and so the major traffic went right on Route 40, was that a noisy and disturbing situation?

C: I remember vividly fast traffic on 40 and especially I remember in the summer, sitting out in the yard and all the busy traffic. And there were accidents, it was a very very busy road. The weigh station was across the road and on Sunday afternoons we would go over to the weight station because Chris Curran would be there and we would get a bottle of pop and sit with Chris there and we loved the big numbers on the scale and if they passed he would let us say "okay" into the microphone. Those are very fond memories too.

D: Because at that time, trucks, buses, everything went right through downtown Marshall.

C: The house we lived in was about five miles from town but it just as well could have been 50 because if you were home, you were home. We rode the school bus, I have fond memories that too. When we were home we had to find our own thing to do. We did have chores. we had to keep our very small house clean, we had no running water, no bathroom facilities, but as kids, we didn't really know that we were different.

D: Did you have a particular chore that you did each day?

C: I just remember the older ones took care of the house and mowed the yard. As we grew older, my dad, had a business called Davidson Outdoor Equipment and it was started when we lived there on 40, he had a little tiny wooden shed and he sold lawnmowers and it eventually grew the riding mowers, snowmobiles, bicycles, and that was kinds us older kids introduction to business. Before that he had a lawn mowing business and if you were old enough to push a mower or pull weeds, you did. So we helped outside the home with our dad's business.

D: Did you have a pet as a child?

C: I vaguely remember my two older sisters having a dog, when we were in New Mexico, for a short time, I think its name was Sandy and I think it died. The only other pet I remember was a stray collie

that appeared. I can't believe that our parents let us keep him, we named him Jimmie Scott which had some meaning to us. And then I think we had a dog when we lived out on 40, its name was Chico and we had to get rid of it because it bit a travelling salesman.

D: Did you have a particular favorite subject in school?

C: Not in younger years but as I grew older I did. In the younger years, I had wonderful wonderful teachers in the Marshall school system. Because from second grade on I was a Marshall student, but I fondly remember Miss Ruth Fredenberger, Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Buckner at the old north school, who brought in cream to make into butter, just special things like that. And then I went back to the old south school and Mary Heck was my fifth grade teacher and I have fond memories of her reading chapter books and I think that that really grabbed me and started my love of reading. From that time on, I wanted to check out a book. And then when I got to high school, probably Mildred Hutchens and Marilyn Smitley, were a big influence, especially Marilyn Smitley, since I know I wanted to do something related to business. So I really credit Marilyn Smitley as my mentor as far as my career goes.

D: And what year of high school did you decide you wanted to do something in business?

C: Well, I was able to be on the work program my senior year, I worked as an assistant secretary at the Marshall Feed Store down on Maple and Fourteenth. Evelyn O'Rourke was my supervisor, she was wonderful. And Teresa O'Rourke Durst worked there also, she was a year or so older than me. They were both wonderful people to work with and I knew then I loved the business type of work in an office. But then my senior year, you take testing and Hank Deming called me into his office and asked if I wanted to go to college. And I never even thought about that, he said they had a scholarship available and he asked what I wanted to do, he said the scholarship was for a business teacher. And I said Yes, he said I had qualified to go the college to become a business teacher. The scholarship was from the State of Illinois. And I said "absolutely" and that pretty much set me out on my life career choice.

D: What school did you attend?

C: I attended Eastern Illinois University. I was a pretty serious student because money was an issue and I was married young and my husband, Woody, was also in college at the time, we both had to work part-time and go to school. So I made it a priority to get school done as fast as I could so I went full time and did summer school and graduated in three years.

D: Did you have some student teaching that you had to do in that program?

C: I did, I did my student teaching at the Paris High School with Mary Ridell and so I was fairly young doing my student teaching. It was a challenge because I lived in Charleston and commuted and she had high high expectations but I look back and think how wonderful that was. Darlene Stone, Pennington now, was another teacher that I had at Paris High School. One of the big things that I remember about student teaching is about my transportation to get from Charleston to Paris was, there was a group of teachers that lived in Charleston and taught at Paris, I don't know how I found out about them but they let me tag along as a student teacher. I paid so much a week and we all traded off

driving and it was a really good experience because in 1973 I didn't have my own vehicle.

D: And riding with those other teachers, did you kind of get some insight into teaching?

C: I did, they were all elementary teachers but I saw what they took home every day, what they took back, I didn't know then what an influence they would have on me. They all loved their jobs, they were excited about it, they were young teachers and hard workers.

D: Have you kept in touch with any of them? Do you know where they are today?

C: You know, I haven't, I have a few close friends that I have held on to, but I have lost touch with most of friends from that part of my life.

D: I think we all think we will stay in touch but things happen and we just don't follow through.

C: And I have been blessed with six siblings and they are my good friends, and you don't realize how much they mean to you.

D: So you graduated from EIU, and what year was that?

C: In 1973. I knew I wanted to stay in the Marshall area, but there were no teaching positions here or in the immediate area, so I applied and got on with Ford Motor Credit which had an office here in town, I worked there for 5 years, had wonderful people that I worked with, it was a great job and a good transition from college to teaching.

D: Was that job more like an accounting job?

C: Yes. It was definitely accounting orientated. Dealing with numbers, whether it was helping a dealership sell a car and getting it financed, or customers coming in and making payments. We dealt with money coming in from a lot of different sources, now that I look back, it was definitely accounting related.

D: That year, there was probably an introduction to computers.

C: Oh yeah, I remember, the first office we had was located out where Terry Weir has his office now, and I remember when I started we may have had a computer but I remember the changes over the years and how we would deal with Dearborn, MI, and have to talk to the technical guy and fix our own computers if there was a glitch. They sent me to the Dearborn facility to learn about the new system that they were going to introduce and then I had to come back and train the other employees.

D: Where they in the process of relaying most of their work to computers or did that take a long time?

C: It took a long time, because when I left in 1978, that is when I got my teaching job, we still had paper files on customers.

D: Do you think that was a good change or a bad change?

C: Well, it had to be good because it happened, right?

D: They talk about computers reducing paperwork but I'm not so sure about that.

C: As a business teacher, I saw major changes. When I started teaching, I taught typing as one of my classes, and it was manual typewriters. I can't imagine teaching a child on a manual typewriter today, you had to have strong fingers. And then electric/ electronic typewriters came in then computers. So I saw lots of changes over the years.

D: Someone I know has an office and a couple years ago still used a manual typewriter and this young couple was in the office with a child and the child asked what the typewriter was.

C: I retired in 2012 and toward the end of my teaching career we had an electronic typewriter and the students wanted to use it to fill out a form and they had no idea how to use it, how to put the paper in, no idea how to use it. It's definitely a computer society today.

D: In your teaching, I believe you said you started in 1978, and that was at Marshall?

C: Yes, at Marshall High School, my first graduating class was 1979, and I think now those kids are older than I am, time has a funny way of passing by and you meet someone and you realize that that was one of my students.

D: Did you get into teaching second generations?

C: Oh yes, and kids definitely don't like being called their parents' names even if they look just like them.

D: In your teaching career, did you find a great deal of change not just in the mechanical but in the teaching philosophies?

C: I did, it seemed that when I first started in the late 70's there was still a separation between home and school. Like, when they went home there would be somebody there, but as time went on it became that the kids might not see a parent every day, it was a testament to the fact that the mom and dad were both working. So sometimes it was hard. I saw that kind of change and I also felt like as time went on, I felt like I was getting information shared with me that normally would not be shared because the student needed someone to talk to.

D: Hasn't there been a change in there being so many more single parents?

C: That's true. But I have loved the small town of Marshall and everybody pretty much knows everybody else and people take care of whatever needs taking care of. I think some of our students don't realize how fortunate they have been to have been a part of the Marshall school system.

D: I know you taught business and that covers a lot of subjects, was there a favorite part of that curriculum that you liked best?

C: As a younger teacher, I loved teaching shorthand. I taught several different types of shorthand,

one of them was like note taking, it's kinda like kids texting now. But as I finished up my career, probably accounting was my favorite. Loved teaching the kids and seeing them do the calculations and find their own mistakes and learning accounting.

D: The debits always have to equal the credits.

C: I had a lot of fun with all my classes, I just thoroughly enjoyed teaching teenagers.

D: Have you kept in touch at all to see how many went on to take accounting in college or went into business?

C: I had big plans at one time, I was going to keep track, but that is hard. There are students that have gone on to business and done well and it is fun to think that they got some tiny little something from Marshall High school.

D: Do you feel that students, not just your students, are well prepared for college?

C: I felt like I was. And I would hope that students feel that way. I think it is good for a young person to be able to find what they are passionate about at a young age so that they can pick classes out that match up with that. It's kinda sad when you get to be a senior in high school and don't really know what you like. Because in life you want to choose something that you like to do because you are going to spend a lot of time working at it so you better like it.

D: Cris, was there a particular teacher or mentor who helped you decide that you wanted to go into business, that made you want to go into that field?

C: I said before, Marilyn Smitley. I remember very well Mildred Hutchens as my typing teacher, but I would say Marilyn Smitley. When I first started teaching, I was very fortunate to have Sally Rector as my close co-worker and Dorothy Meehan was still there teaching. They were great go-workers to help me get started as a business teacher. And I had to share a classroom, there were three business teachers but only two classrooms so I had to share and a large part of time I shared with Bill Wieck. So I went over to social studies and taught consumer education in his classroom, so that was a treat.

D: In your teaching business, did you find that for some of your students, business might not be the career for them?

C: I think it was good that a student would elect to take a business class. And they could pretty much decide if business was for them. It was mostly an elective class.

D: Do you think that some of them should have had a required class that taught everyday things like balancing a checkbook and many other things that kids don't know how to do today.

C: That is what consumer education taught, I taught that for six years and there is an economics type class that teaches those basic personal business topics that you will have to deal with in real life. I also taught business math which focused on check accounts, credit cards, all those daily duties.

D: And that has changed since you taught. Now we have identity theft and all these things you have to watch out for. How would you approach that today?

C: I don't know. My philosophy is if you don't have to share your personal information, don't do it, because people will ask for it but don't share if you don't have to.

D: Has there been a world event or local event that has changed your life or changed your thought process?

C: I can think of three things that stand out in my mind, when I was young and in sixth grade, Kennedy was assassinated, and I remember having the TV on in the classroom and Mrs. Beals was my sixth grade teacher and praying in school and I remember going home and watching it on our small black and white TV. And there were other major historical events. I remember 911, I was the school work coordinator and I had left school that morning to check on a student who was working for the City of Marshall, and I had the radio on in my car and I heard the announcer and then when I got back to school everything kind of "clicked" in my mind. And then I realized there was something really bad happening.

D: Those two events are events that almost everyone can remember and remember what they were doing when they heard the news. In the period of education and within our school systems today, they are even coming back with something you don't have to teach, like cursive writing. Do you think there are some things that just don't make sense in education today?

C: I think hand writing is important, I think if you write something down, someone else ought to be able to read it. And I heard the other day that somewhere someone was pushing getting penmanship back in the schools. Just trying to keep up with technology is enough for teachers to have to keep up with, learning what is new, things are always changing and you better be ready.

D: Are there significant changes in Marshall that you can think of since you grew up here? Or businesses that you miss?

C: Just looking down main street, Caldwell's Store, two sisters and I worked there in the summer, what a wonderful wonderful family and I can still just see the store in my mind, the candy bin, feeling so privileged that Caldwell's wanted me at the cash register, they trusted me to give the right change, and Saturday nights was a "hopping" time, because men and women would get dressed up and come to downtown Marshall, shop and browse the aisles, go down to Martin's Drug Store, Blankenship Drug Store, whatever other shops were open, that was a big deal on Saturday nights. I remember when the store closed, whoever was working was responsible to clean, make sure the shelves were clean, reorganize, every inch of that carpet was swept. I had wonderful co-workers, Lois Norton, Fern Tohill, Doris Burnam, and my sisters, and Bill and his parents were so good to us. So I have fond memories of that time.

D: How many employees were working then?

C: Not that many, maybe with Bill, two of us at a time. Also the Candy Kitchen was a hot place on Saturday night. There was always a local band playing, and you went to dance and have fun with

friends and go "cruising". And the cruising, whoever had the license, you would go south of town to Dog N Suds, drive around, head north to the Tasty Freeze and go around, and do it again and again.

D: Did any of them have roller skates delivery?

C: I don't remember that. They may have. I had at least one sister who worked at Tastee Freeze, I know she didn't.

D: The stores downtown, you mentioned a couple of them, do you remember Rademaker's ice cream?

C: I remember their grilled cheese, I don't know why, or ham and cheese grilled, and getting a drink at the fountain or whatever. And after school we would walk down to Martins's Drugs and get a cherry coke with your friends. It was a coke with cherry flavor added to it and I remember looking at all their makeup. Moschenrose which turned into Wallace Jewelry, that's where you got your class ring, charm bracelets were a big thing. And I'm sure they sold lots of engagement and wedding rings.

And over the years, we have had lots of nice clothing stores. Hedges, Finkbiners, upstairs where the radio station is, Kellers from Martinsville had a little boutique up there. We have had shoe stores, Grabenheimers. Marshall main street, there used to be a Bargain Store, different little variety stores on the north side of the courthouse.

D: Something that always amazed me was the number of small "mom and pop" grocery stores in Marshall.

C: Oh, yes, the grocery store memories that I have...the first one I have would be Weaver's Store out of Route 40 on Weaver Road. It was close enough that we could borrow a bike from our neighbor Dick and go down there and spend our few pennies and ride or walk back home. There was also Blizzard Grocery, Siverly's Fruit Market, Forest Washburn's on 2nd Street, Thelma George on the corner of South 2nd, there were all kinds of wonderful grocery stores.

D: I think it goes back to the sign of the times, many people did not have cars and the grocery stores had to be within walking distance.

C: And as kids, we probably loved running that errand for mom or dad. Speaking of main street, when we lived out in the country, we didn't have a washer or dryer, and we would bring our laundry in to the laundromat that was where the fire station is now. Ray Bill Forsythe and his wife ran that and I remember spending lots of time in there doing our laundry and they were such nice people. Whoever you did business with you became friends with.

D: With all of the modern conveniences we have today, is there something you could say you just could not live without?

C: Well, I think of growing up and I think of indoor running water, indoor bathrooms and washers and dryers. Who could live without that? I don't have a dishwasher and people can't imagine that but I can stand at my sink and look out and see trees and the outdoors and I can live very well without a

dishwasher.

D: If you travelled to Europe or somewhere out of the country and you had to describe Marshall, what would you say about living in Marshall?

C: I love that it is a small community and that people care for each other. And just the rich history that we have here in our small town, like our historic buildings I love to hear about, who was the owner of a building, what was there originally. I love that it is a small town, a beautiful town, we have a great school system, it's a great place to raise a family, you get to know your neighbors, we have wonderful churches in our community. As I grew up I knew that I never wanted to leave Marshall. I have never had an desire to move away. My girls are here and my grandkids, my mom, some of my siblings live here.

D: You mentioned retirement, you have been retired a few years now, were there any hobbies that you had back when you were a youngster and that you still enjoy?

C: I love to read and I love to work outside, gardening, and I like helping other people do projects. I keep really busy, I have joined some committees that help out in Marshall.

D: It is a volunteering community.

C: Yes, it is, I think since we are a community, people see a need and just step out and take care of others.

D: Cris, it has been a real pleasure talking to you. And perhaps someday someone will hear or read this and learn something about you and Marshall. Thank you for joining me today with the Marshall Friends of the Library Oral History Project.