

Jackie Titus -- TRANSCRIPT

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Transcribed by Donna Duzan, February 2017

D: I am here for the Friends of the Library Oral Histories Project. I am in the home of Jackie Titus, Jackie would you begin by telling us about your history.

J: Well, I was actually born on the way to the hospital. So I guess I started this life pretty interesting. My dad took my mom in to Dr. George's office and he checked and thought it was going to be awhile, so he went ahead with other patients in the office. And all of a sudden he decided mom was not going to wait much longer and so they put her in Dr. George's car, he was driving his mom's car at that time, and he had to stop at Derby Hill and deliver me. And then we went on to the Union Hospital. I was born to Raymond and Ina Faye Spittler Miller and I lived in Marshall basically my whole life. When I was in 6th grade we moved to Casey for one year. My dad worked for Jewel T and drove a bread truck but he wasn't happy in the job so we came back to Marshall and he worked again as a policeman for the City of Marshall. Eventually he became the Chief of Police and then when natural gas came into Marshall he took over as the Superintendent of Natural Gas in Marshall until he retired. My mother worked as a dishwasher, cook and then in later years she baked cakes and made noodles for everybody in town. She eventually catered weddings, made wedding cakes and all kinds of cakes.

I was raised in the Marshall Baptist Church, saved and baptized there. As far as my childhood, we lived in the country when I was little but I don't really remember a lot about it. I do know that I started kindergarten when we were in the country. My sister was two years older than me and mom wanted to take me to school my first day but I really wanted to ride the bus with my sister. But when the bus came, I took one step forward and two steps back and my mom had to take me to school. So that's one of my special memories.

D: What school was that?

J: The kindergarten here, in the Ohio Oil building. My kindergarten teacher was Mrs. Barb Daily. In kindergarten...I had always wanted a pony and cowboys boots... so in Kindergarten when I took my nap, I was next to David Morgan, and my mom said a girl can't have cowboy boots, so when we would take our naps, if I woke up first I would put David's cowboy boots on and walk around. But my mom never did buy me cowboy boots. But when I was an adult, I bought my own. Then when we moved to town, we moved into a neighborhood with lots and lots of kids. So we roller-skated on the front sidewalks, made leaf houses in the Fall, and did all the things kids don't do any more, played hide and seek. I did have a pet. A little Chihuahua called Mickie. When my dad brought him home, he was in his suit jacket pocket.

I had a previous marriage, so when Gale and I got married, I had a son, Jim who was seven years old, and a couple years later B J was born and then a year later Sarah was born. The kids had normal

childhoods, I spent a lot of time with them. They did four-wheeling and B J raced moto-cross, Sarah did gymnastics and softball. We just followed them around every place.

As far as my work career, when I got out of high school I worked for Mason-Dixon tank lines as a secretary for one year. And then they filed bankruptcy, Andy Emert was my boss. He talked to Frank Pearce and he was needing a secretary so in February of 1968 I started for Marshall Mutual Insurance. I worked three and a half hours a day and made \$1.60 per hour. At that time, Frank was the secretary/treasurer, Gene was the assistant secretary/treasurer and it was run by a board of directors. And the nine directors were Harry Murphy, President; Fenton Ledermann, Vice President; Don Abel, Harold Adams, John Amacher, Richard Glick, Dora Greenwell, Dale Richardson and Kelly Shawver. I worked there for 42 years as their secretary. When I started it was just Gene and Frank and I. I worked just for the Mutual. And then they had an independent agency that did car insurance and that type too. Over the years it grew and in 1975 I quit because I was pregnant with B J and was going to be an at-home mom. And then that next year, Gene got killed in an auto accident so Frank talked me into going back to work. So I worked there until I retired in 2011. And over that time, it went from Marshall Mutual was always the same, which is actually owned by the policy owners but they had their independent agencies so when Gene got killed, Dwight Shore bought in so it was Pearce Shore. Then after that when Frank retired, Dick Parker came in, so it was Shore Parker Insurance and then when Dick retired, Jeff Murphy came in and it was Shore Murphy. And now Dwight has retired but it has stayed Shore Murphy.

D: When you started there, where was the office?

J: On North Sixth Street, right next to Pearl's Restaurant. So that is where we started and when Dulaney Bank built a new bank, we bought their building and grew into that as we grew.

D: Do you know where the business actually started?

J: No, I don't. I'm pretty sure it was in 1889. But I don't know where.

D: I know you weren't there then...

J: No, I wasn't. Actually the policy holders owned that company and once a year they had a meeting. And every policy holder has a vote. So they have a meeting that is announced and if you want to vote you can. It's like the third or fourth Tuesday in January. They have a meeting and bring up things and then vote on the Board of Directors. And then have a meeting to set salaries and rates. But I was the main bookkeeper, when I first went there I did everything, typed the policies and then as we got bigger and bigger, they got computers.

D: How many employees were there?

J: When I started it was just Gene and Frank. So there was just three of us when I started. And it was that way for several years. And then when Gene got killed Dwight came in and they started working the agency part of it more and they hired a girl for the agency.

D: So you were kind of a "do it all".

J: Yes, I did all the billing, answered the phone, did everything.

D: With the changes at that period of time when you were there, what were the major changes that you saw with the growth of the business?

J: Oh gosh, I can't think of anything in particular. The bigger we got, the more help I needed so it was nice to have another girl in the office. And before, I didn't take a lunch break, I just took my lunch.

D: With the advent of computers, did that just simply change the world for you?

J: At first it was hard, and to this day, it's great when the computers are working, but when they were down, you couldn't find out anything. Now, you know before I retired we had gone completely paperless, so if the computers were down, you had to get back with people if they had questions.

D: Any even when the electricity was off, you couldn't do anything. Not even the phones would work.

J: Yeah, when the electricity when off, you were completely down. It got to be kinda fun because when there were seven of us, four were girls, we would just go set out front and talk because there was no light and nothing we could do.

D: It's like a business that has an electric door, people can't even get in.

J: Right

D: Now the building that was the old Dulaney Bank building, was purchased and owned by Marshall Mutual.

J: Yes, and it was nice because we have a vault. The old building we were in had one small vault. But now we have three vaults and a conference room and meeting room.

D: How many employees are there now?

J: Katie, my daughter-in-law works there now, so there are Jeff and Greg Keller. Jeff is the President of Marshall Mutual and Greg Keller is the assistant secretary/treasurer. And there is another guy, I don't know his name, and deal with the crop hail storm now. And Brent Kile is the adjuster, John James is the inspector, Katie Titus does the underwriting, Colleen Gard does claims, Laura Tingley is the receptionist, and there are two part times girls that work for the agency and part time for Marshall Mutual. And Wendy Tharp works for the agency. One of those girls' names is Christi Scott but I don't know the other's name.

D: It certainly has grown a lot then, not only the business but the number of people working there.

J: It says here, person or major influence in my life. I don't really know other than my dad. My dad always stood beside me regardless of what I did, and I did do things that my dad didn't like, but he

always stood beside me and I always looked up to my dad. I loved my mom too and it was a great loss when we lost her, we lost her in 2000. But when my dad passed away in 2004 it was really tragic. And of course seventeen years ago when my first grandson was born. He was born with a severely deformed heart. They were able to keep him alive for seven weeks which is when he got his first heart transplant.

D: Several weeks ago Sarah and Kobe was at Rotary and gave a wonderful program.

J: Yeah, I knew she had done that. She knew we were in Florida and couldn't be there but she typed it out and let me read it. We (the family) made it about fifteen years without any problems and then he needed a second heart transplant and we were lucky enough to get another heart. That was October 9th. So yesterday was May 27th and we call that Happy Heart Day and we celebrate that every year. We take flowers to church and Sarah has a memorial garden in her back yard that she has planted. And we always get him gifts on that day and now he will have two Happy Heart Days. We went to Riley's on Tuesday for a checkup and everything is great. He's doing fine.

D: When you look at him he looks like a normal healthy boy.

J: It says something about a meaningful historical date for me. I remember when BJ was born in 1975 and 1976 we celebrated the Bicentennial and I remember my mom made us dresses and she had an outfit and I remember that was kind of neat and a fun event for Marshall.

J: So, next question, about modern conveniences that have affected my life the most. If you ask Gale, he would say that would have be computers. And I sell Longaberger and I do my business on the computer. I love Facebook, that how I keep up with friends that you haven't seen in years.

D: So you are a Longaberger dealer?

J: Yes, I am kind of getting out of it, but I have a room here where I have cash and carry items that people call me about. I've sold it for about ten years now. And I'm starting to get out of it. I usually do vendor events and take it everywhere but its heavy and it's a lot of trouble and I'm getting older, so I'm kinda selling out of that.

It's funny...my oldest son lives in Chicago and he was home this weekend and he had this game that asks you questions, and one of the questions was: If a foreigner came to town where would you take him and we laughed and laughed because Jim couldn't think of any place in Marshall that he would take someone. But the more we thought about it, we thought of the log cabin, the historical museum, the Archer House, Harlan Hall, that is some places that we would take someone. As soon as he graduated from college, he went to Chicago and has always lived in a big city and he doesn't understand ... he loves coming back ...that's my oldest son Jim Sweet... he loves spending time with him nieces and nephews. But Marshall, to me, there is no better place to live, everybody is friendly, the support you get like when Kobe had his first heart transplant, right away people were helping out. And then two years ago when he started having trouble the community was having benefits right away. A lot of people are moving in because our school system is a good school system so if they check that out . . .

Some people who work in the factories in Paris live here because our school system is a lot better. So there a lot of new people that you don't know. Everybody is friendly and waves.

D: Also something I have heard people say is how clean Marshall is. Everyone really takes pride in their property.

J: So I wouldn't want to live anyplace else. Its close enough to Terre Haute if you want to go shopping, or Chicago or Tuscola has a nice mall and you've got the community theater in Terre Haute. And in St Louis you can go to the Fox Theater. After Kobe was born and finally got home, he was 3 1/2 months old, and we trusted his dad to watch him for a day, The Sound of Music was playing at the Fox Theater in St Louis and we took Sarah on a day trip and she loved the music even though she worried about Kobe. We were fortunate that Richard Chamberlain was playing in it, so we have got places close enough that we can go and do some fun things.

D: You mentioned Florida, do you winter there some?

J: Yes, a year ago last August we bought a place and we spend about 3 months down there in the winter. Actually, we had ridden our motorcycle down there last October and we were going to stay for a month then come back, and we had just been there a week when we got the call that Kobe was getting a new heart that day so we flew home and left our motorcycle down there. And then when we down this year we drove, so in April BJ and Katie and the girls flew down and they drove our car home so that I could ride with Gale on the motorcycle. We are in an HMO which is a retirement community in Okeechobee, FL. It is where Jack Huffington, Dale Huffington, Dudley Crow, Ed Arbuckle, Harry Dean and Vicki Huffington and Bear Clatfelter just bought places there. And everybody there is friendly too. We love spending the winter there but we aren't ready to move permanently. The grandkids are still in a lot of activities here. The little one, Carly, plays softball all the time. She played eight games last weekend.

D: If you were visiting someplace else, say Florida or maybe another country, how would you describe Marshall, you have touched on several things, but what you tell people about why Marshall in a good place to live?

J: Just basically what we said, it's a nice, small, clean community. Everybody is friendly, with Route 1 and I-70 going through you still have worry a little bit this day and age but other than that, it's a safe community to live in. I just like it because of the friendly people and we do have the Super Walmart which is good for shopping. We still have our IGA which has much better meat. I feel bad for the businesses downtown, because they struggle because we do have the Walmart.

D: You worked downtown during your career. What do you feel ...when you first went down there to work...what is different today?

J: For one thing, it was much safer. When I raised my kids, they rode their bikes all over the place, when I went to work, they could ride their bikes uptown, I think it was a much safer place. And the businesses were all downtown. On my lunch hour I could run and do whatever I needed to do. But now, you

have to get into your car and go.

D: I guess a good thing is that the buildings have been well maintained.

J: Yeah, we are fortunate enough to have people that care about our history. And we have Main Street and the Historical Society. And it was so much fun at the end of the school year to see people like Edie Breneman and Charlotte Morecraft bringing the school kids uptown to tell them about our history and then school buildings. We would all go to the window to see if some of our grandkids were among the kids on a field trip.

D: This is National Historical Preservation month as determined by the historical preservation organization. Well, thank you so much Jackie, you have filled in several facts that I did not know about. As part of the local library oral history program, this transcript will be transcribed and can be played online by going to Marshall Library and go to oral history. So your son in Chicago can go to that and hear what you said.

D: I have one more question, your son BJ, does that stand for a given name?

J: It is Benjamin Jared. He was named after his great grandpa Ben Cork.

D: Well, we have enjoyed your hospitality and talking to you so much. And with that, I will say a big Thank You.

J: Thank you.