

# NASA HEADQUARTERS NACA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

## EDITED ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

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INTERVIEWED BY REBECCA WRIGHT AND SANDRA JOHNSON  
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WRIGHT: Today is February 20 2015. This oral history session is being conducted with JoAnn Barnicki in Palmdale, California, as part of the NACA [National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics] Oral History Project sponsored by the NASA Headquarters History Office. Interviewers are Rebecca Wright and Sandra Johnson, and we thank you so much for coming in today to meet with us.

We'd like for you to start by sharing with us how you first became involved with NACA.

BARNICKI: I was attending college at the time. I was going to school on the GI Bill [Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944]; my father was a disabled veteran, and I qualified for education under his bill. It was beginning to be early spring, and the instructor came in and asked us if anybody was interested in working at the [Edwards Air Force] Base [California] for the summer. There were about three of us that raised our hands, and she took our names and said after class that she would give us the necessary paperwork to go out to the base and apply. There were three of us; we took the paperwork out to the base. They gave us a test. I was the only one that passed, and they sent me over to the NACA. I had never heard of NACA, I had no idea what it was other than they were hiring and I was going to work for the summer.

Long story coming around, I continued to work through the summer. I actually joined NACA on June the 18<sup>th</sup>, 1957, and I worked through October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1961. I continued to go to

school part time at night, but I worked at NASA. I started at NASA as a GS-3 [General Schedule pay scale], I was a clerk-typist, and when I left NASA I was a GS-4.

WRIGHT: What were you studying in school?

BARNICKI: Just office administration, just general ed [education]. I took ceramics at night. Just regular business courses. I had math and that type of thing, but yes, I was going to school on my dad's GI Bill.

WRIGHT: And when you went out to the base and started working that summer for NACA, what area did they put you in?

BARNICKI: I was in Procurement. One of my jobs in Procurement—there were several jobs that I had, obviously; I was a secretary, so I was somewhat of a receptionist. At the time they had a lot of things going on, research programs and things like that, so we had contractors who would come in, and one of my jobs, one of my responsibilities, was to go out and meet the contractors and then take them to the cafeteria and sit with them until the procurement officer could come and get them and they could look at their bids, for whatever they were bidding on. In addition to that, I typed all of the contracts and took them to repro [reproduction] and brought them back and mailed them out. I also, for a short period of time, ordered R4D [Douglas C-47 Skytrain] parts. That was an aircraft that we had at the time.

I also spelled at the front desk, relieved the lady that worked out there. One of the questions that you ask here is, did I ever meet anybody that was important? I was at the desk one

day and this rather brisk man came to the desk, and I asked him to sign in and he said he didn't need to sign in because everybody knew who he was. I didn't know who he was. It was [A.] Scott Crossfield. Needless to say, I was not on his good list.

WRIGHT: They always assume that we know who they are, don't they?

BARNICKI: Well, yes, and not knowing about NASA, just getting there and just seeing this man come in and kind of demanding that he could just walk in and just go straight in. One of the other people that I worked with on a real regular basis, because of several different things, was Neil [A.] Armstrong. He lived, at the time, in a place called Littlerock [California], actually he lived next to Betty [Scott] Love, and he used to sing, and we would have him come and sing for our parties and those types of things.

WRIGHT: Were there specific types of songs that he liked to sing?

BARNICKI: You know, I don't remember that, I just remember that when we sang, he sang, that type of thing. Very nice man, very humble, very quiet. Then one of the other things that you ask about here is things that went on as far as what we did. I believe that we were on a bowling team together. That's where I met my husband. Actually, my husband worked there, but he and I were on the bowling team together. There was also a group of women got together and they formed what was called WONASA, but that was after NACA changed to NASA in 1958.

WRIGHT: You were there during that transition. You had just started, and then within a year it changed.

BARNICKI: It was about a year, yes.

WRIGHT: Can you share with us if there was anything significant about the transition?

BARNICKI: The only thing that was different—well, first of all, we didn't ever say "NACA." That was never how we pronounced it. It was always "N-A-C-A." Then when it became NASA, it was emphasized that it was called "NASA." The only thing I remember is that there was a lot of paperwork in reissuing badges, and that was one of the things that we did in Procurement, we were in charge of issuing badges, verifying names and that type of thing. I don't remember a lot of folderol or fiddledeedee that went with it other than just the paperwork that went with being in that particular office.

My boss at the time, my supervisor was a man named Marty [Martin A.] Byrnes, and he ultimately went upstairs and became the budget officer, and then my immediate boss was a gentleman by the name of Morris [E.] Bowling, but he went by the name of Dick, and his wife was the secretary for the pilots' office, and her name was Della Mae Bowling. They had come from, I believe they had come from NACA in Washington [DC], as did my husband. My husband came from Lewis Lab [Laboratory (Glenn Research Center, Cleveland, Ohio)], and he got there in '55, tail end of '55.

WRIGHT: Do you mind sharing what he came out for? Was it a specific project?

BARNICKI: He was working for NACA in Cleveland, and his mother had transferred out to Fontana [California]; his uncle had opened a business. He asked to be relocated somewhere where they flew aircraft, and he had two choices. He had either San Francisco, which would have been Ames [Research Center, Moffett Field] at the time, or NACA [High Speed Flight Station], and he chose to do NACA because they were flying, the beginning of the [Bell] X-1 projects, so he opted to do that instead. That's why he came out. Then he retired from NASA in 1990; had 38 years of service with them.

WRIGHT: That was watching a lot of changes, wasn't it?

BARNICKI: Oh, yes.

WRIGHT: And you were right there with him, I would imagine.

BARNICKI: Most of the time. I actually worked at NASA three different times. I worked there from 1957 through 1961, and then from 1965 for about two weeks, for a real short period of time, and then I went back to NASA in 1997 and I retired there.

WRIGHT: How many years did you stay from '97, when did you retire?

BARNICKI: In 2000, 2001. Three years, I retired from NASA.

WRIGHT: Were you in the same type of procurement position?

BARNICKI: No, oh no.

WRIGHT: Share with us all the different areas that you worked.

BARNICKI: Let's see. I worked for NASA as a typist secretary, then when I worked for them before I was in Personnel for a short period of time, and then when I went back I was in what was then called Human Resources. In the interim, though, I worked for the Air Force and for the Defense Logistics Agency [DLA], and most of those times it was in Human Resources, Quality Assurance, that type of thing.

WRIGHT: We always think of technology changing for hardware, but technology also impacted a lot of what Human Resources did, didn't it, how you kept files?

BARNICKI: When we did the Human Resources, that was the biggest impact, I think, because when I first started working for DLA, I was assigned to the Air Force Academy for six months, and that was a transition where they were going from the paper copy to automated processes, so that continued on through my career with the Air Force, having two sets of records, paper copies and then putting everything on a computer of some sort.

WRIGHT: And making sure they both say the same thing?

BARNICKI: Yes, and to this day people still do backup copies of paper, because if your computer crashes, you're lost.

WRIGHT: What other aspects of the Human Resources or Personnel did you work in? At some point did you manage a group of people?

BARNICKI: Oh, no.

WRIGHT: You were always just the hands-on, doing that as well.

BARNICKI: Yes.

WRIGHT: What about some of the other changes? The fact that you came in, and you were out, I'd have to think that over the time period you saw—and of course your husband working out there—you saw changes happen at the base and/or some of the aircraft that was going in and out. Were you able to go in and see the aircraft that landed and know much about what was going on at the base?

BARNICKI: Well, I tell kind of an interesting story. I think it's interesting. One of the things that we used to do on our breaks, we used to go into the—at the time there were two large hangars, right and left—and we used to go into the left hangar and we used to play Ping-Pong. We'd eat our sandwich real quick and go out and play Ping-Pong, just for some exercise. We were out playing one day, and all of a sudden all the doors to the hangar shut and we were told

immediately to go into our offices and not to say anything to anybody. Naturally you're curious, but you go back to your desk.

Got home, and on the news that night, that was one of the aircraft that had come in, one of the spy planes had come in and had landed, and they just didn't want anybody to know about it. I believe, but I'm not positive, it was [Francis] Gary Powers at the time that he was flying, but the fact that we were there and we saw something but we didn't know what we saw, and we were told to shut up and not say anything.

WRIGHT: Did you feel a lot of the work or a lot of the people that you worked around were working on projects that were classified or secret for security reasons?

BARNICKI: No, I don't remember them being so much classified or anything like that. What I remembered is that we were an extended family. We did everything together. Obviously the people that worked on the projects got up early and went to work, they worked late, when it was over with everybody would meet at a local restaurant, watering hole, or whatever, and sit and talk. We had NASA picnics, NASA dances. You knew everybody, and if you didn't see them on Thursday when we got paid, you wondered about them.

The community was rather small. Everybody lived, for all intents and purposes, in either Lancaster or Palmdale. There were a few people that lived in Boron because that was on the other side, the gate to the base, but most everybody lived in town, so you did everything together. You saw them at the bank, you saw them at the grocery store, you saw them if your kids were in school, you went to their Christmas plays, that type of thing. We were a real close-knit, close-knit family.



Bill [William H.] Dana was our next-door neighbor. Like I said, Neil Armstrong. Fitz [Fitzhugh L.] Fulton, who, in fact his funeral is next week. Dear friend, he gave my son his first flying lesson. It was just those types of things that were just integral to your life. Now, there were times, I'm sure, with my husband, when we got married—we got married in 1961—there were things that he did he couldn't tell me, when there was an experiment or something like that. I just knew that he went to work early and came home late because of a flight, and you'd read about it, you'd hear about it in the news. We didn't have TV like we have now.

WRIGHT: What was his background? You mentioned that he was at Lewis.

BARNICKI: He was in Life Support. He was Director of Life Support, and then during the [Space] Shuttle Program he was Community Officer and Protocol Officer. They were all the equipment not only for the pilots, but for the astronauts when they came in. That was his job.

WRIGHT: Quite impressive; even the protocol had to be sometimes chaotic with all the Shuttle landings.

BARNICKI: In fact I tell—this might be off the record, but I tell a story. Just recently they had a memorial for Bill Dana, and we got the paperwork in advance from Carmen Arevalo, I don't know if you've met her, at Dryden. She sent us the paperwork, we had to give them all kinds of things, whatever, and when we got to the gate—it used to be you could show your retiree's badge and they'd flag you through, but since 9/11 [September 11, 2001, attack on The World

Trade Center, New York, and The Pentagon, Virginia], with all the doodads getting into Dryden [now Armstrong Flight Research Center], it gets really difficult.

When I got there, I had to get out and walk, and when I went into the guard shack—I call it the guard shack—there were at least 15 if not 20 people in the same boat as me, waiting to get in because somewhere along the line the process had dropped. We waited and we waited and we waited and we waited, and they finally got hold of Carmen, and she gave them an okay and they let us in. I remember thinking that when my husband did Shuttle, they had something like 50,000 people who went through the gate and had no problems, and they couldn't get 15 of us through without a hassle.

I attribute it to 9/11 and the bureaucracy of all that, but it would have made him feel bad, because I can still see the picture of the cars that were parked, and it was thousands of people on the side of the road, just to see the Shuttle landings.

WRIGHT: Do you remember when the Shuttle came through from the factory when it was coming down the street?

BARNICKI: Oh, yes, we did that. In fact, was it last year, two years ago? When they ferried it? It came right over our house. Right over. I live across the street from a school, and so all the school kids were out in the field and you can see it, and they did a double pass; they came this way. When the Shuttle would land, we'd get those two [sonic] booms, so you could go out and watch, you could see it come over. That was exciting, in fact.

WRIGHT: I saw your bracelet. Tell us about what those [charms] are.

BARNICKI: It's all the different ones [California Shuttle landings]. My daughter put this together.

WRIGHT: That was nice of her. Are your children involved in any way, having two parents who were there?

BARNICKI: Yes, my one son worked there as a contractor for about, probably 10 or 15 years. He worked for ABC. ABC used to do the broadcasting. My other son worked there as a contractor for several years, he worked for PCR, and then he was a NASA employee for about three years, and he resigned from there and he works for a company in Orlando, Florida. The one worked on the range, for the tracking of things, and he worked there for about 10 years; he doesn't work there anymore.

WRIGHT: When you first started, you mentioned that you were here and then had started college. Were you raised in this area?

BARNICKI: Oh, no, I was from New Mexico. I'm from Albuquerque.

WRIGHT: Was your family here?

BARNICKI: I had an uncle that had come out here to live, and I came to live with him and went to school. Graduated from AV [Antelope Valley] High [School] in Lancaster. Like I said, I was going to school on the GI Bill from my dad, and went to work at NACA.

WRIGHT: I just thought it was interesting that both you and your husband were not from here but yet made your whole lives here. That's pretty interesting. When you all got married, you lived here. Did you live in Lancaster or Palmdale?

BARNICKI: Yes, we've lived in Lancaster the entire time. In fact, I'm in my house right now, I've been in it 43 years. I'm going to sell. My son lives with me, one son, and he has some medical issues, and when that's over with we'll go to Florida and I'll be with my other son there in Pensacola, Gulf Breeze.

Now, I'll tell you another story about, more about my husband. My husband, when he passed away, had over 100 models, and the majority of them were ones that he had either flown in or worked on. Half of them I gave to the Air Force Museum out at Edwards, and the other half, that are Shuttle forward, will go to the museum in Fort Pickens, in Pensacola, as a donation. To be able to say, "I worked on that one, or I flew in that one"—because he used to fly in the back seat on some of the two-seaters, just to test their equipment to be sure that the equipment was working.

WRIGHT: Some things, you said, that he couldn't share with you, but did he share a lot when he came home?

BARNICKI: The one that I found interesting at one time, he was a little late getting home, which was not unusual, because sometimes they would split their day. When he came in—my husband was heavy, had a heavy face—he had this mark just right around here [around his face], just like that, and I looked at him and I said, “My goodness, what happened to you?”

He said, “We made it from Tonopah [Air Force Base, Nevada] to Edwards in 15 minutes,” and he was flying with Bill Dana, and they had flown so fast that the mask had literally just made an imprint on his face. You figure it was another 30 minutes to go from the base to get home, so that was probably 45 minutes to an hour that he still had that impression around his face. They used to fly into Tonopah, and that was one of the places that they couldn’t talk about, where they would land, they would land it there and then come back.

At one time he bought something that was really strange and I asked him about it, and he said, “Well, I can’t tell you.” Whatever they used it for, just some chemical or something like that.

WRIGHT: That’s quite an acceptance for you, that whatever he was doing, that was part of his job. I’m not sure so many people today accept that as part of a relationship with people to do that.

BARNICKI: Well, if I hadn’t worked out there for a period of time and known that they did things and that we were told not to say stuff, or whatever, if people asked us. I guess it’s just part of growing up, that you knew you were doing something, and most often you heard about it ultimately down the road, so it wasn’t woo-woo type stuff.

WRIGHT: The working conditions when you were out there, was there a number of females that you had to build friendships with, or were the majority of them men?

BARNICKI: Oh, yes. Well, you interviewed Nellie [Gibbs]. Nellie was one of my friends. There were about four of five—well, a lot of us carpooled together. I didn't carpool with her, but we carpooled and we used to, after we weren't working at NASA, we stayed together, we'd get together for Taco Tuesday, or mostly in the mornings for breakfast and things like that. Like I said, we were a family, so you continued. Your husbands were still working there. A lot of times the women were at home and raising their kids, but we were a family.

Like I said, Bill Dana lived around the corner from us, and his wife, Judy, their kids—she was a schoolteacher, and then she moved to Tehachapi [California] and we used to keep in touch with her; when we'd go to Tehachapi we'd go up there and see her. Like I said, there's a gentleman out there who worked with my husband, his name was Stan [Stanley J.] Novak, and we would stop and see him, but he's in his late 90s and his health is failing, so he probably wouldn't have talked to you.

WRIGHT: You were there in the early '60s, and then you went back in the late '90s; there was quite a bit of difference for women, the opportunities for women had changed. Did you notice that women were in different professional roles when you were there?

BARNICKI: Well, the Personnel Director was a woman. When I worked at NACA/NASA, that Personnel Director was a man. No, there were a lot of women—I believe the EEO [Equal Employment Opportunity] officer was a female, I think the training officer was a female, in

Human Resources, there were a couple while I was there in that three-year period, they were all females. In fact my last supervisor was a lady by the name of Susan Miller, and she runs the AERO [Aerospace, Education, Research, Operations] Institute here in Palmdale. I don't know if you've met her. There were always females in the finance department, that part of it; there were females in the finance department later on, and probably an equal amount.

WRIGHT: From what I understand, during that early time there were a number of female employees that were considered to be mathematicians.

BARNICKI: Oh, well, that was Betty [Scott Love].

WRIGHT: Did you have a lot of interaction with her?

BARNICKI: I didn't. Actually there were about three of them. There was Betty, there was a lady named Kay [Katherine H.] Armstead, and Roxanah [B.] Yancey. They were called the computers, and they did the downloads, the tapes would come in and they'd do the download. We knew them, we all knew them. Betty Love's husband's first wife was in the security office, but she was a secretary. I was trying to think who else. But yes, the computers, I think there were three or four of those ladies that did all the taping. That must've been an interesting job.

WRIGHT: Sounds like it to me, the whole reading of the films and plotting it. A lot of math.

BARNICKI: Too much math for me.

WRIGHT: Me too. You said you worked with the Air Force. Were there a lot of differences that you found in the working environment between the two different agencies?

BARNICKI: When I went to work for the Air Force, I worked in Personnel for the Air Force, and we were doing all the transition from paper copies to computer type software. Then I transferred from the Air Force to the Defense Logistics Agency, they were doing the same thing, but that was when everybody was going to regional centers. It used to be that when you applied for a job, you could put your paperwork in and you'd do the skills and abilities and that type of thing, but at that particular time they were going to where everything was centrally located, and they were located in different bases.

There were a couple up in San Francisco, and there was one in Columbus, Ohio, and they were automating their process so that you could apply for a job, but it had to go through somebody other than right here in Lancaster or right here in Palmdale. That was the major change, and at the time we were working what we called skill sets, so that you could see how somebody would qualify. Plus the fact at that particular time there was a big emphasis for hiring veterans. Veterans had preference.

I'll give you an aside story. My daughter is a schoolteacher, she's actually an administrator in Hawaii right now, and my son-in-law's a volleyball player. Not to stereotype, but the Samoans, by their girth and their body, are wonderful volleyball players. He was working at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] and every spring, every summer, every Easter or whatever, he would go to Hawaii and give training camps. They said to him, "You're over here more than you are on the mainland. Would you apply for a job?"



He said, “Well, let me go back and ask my wife.” So he came back to California and he asked his wife, my daughter, he said, “How would you like to go to Hawaii and live in Hawaii?”

She said, “Oh, I’d go in a heartbeat.”

He said, “Well, put your paperwork in.” So she put her paperwork in, he put his paperwork in. She got the job, he didn’t. He didn’t get the job because he wasn’t Hawaiian, and in the pecking order, like veterans preference, for a job in Hawaii, the Hawaiians get the job first. So she spent nine months over there by herself, and he was at UCLA before he finally came up on the pecking order of a job.

So veterans preference, priority, Native American, whatever it is, where you live has a bearing on how you get a job with the federal government. I’m sure that if you were in the Oklahoma area and through there, if you’re applying for a job, if you’re a Native American, then more than likely you may come to the top of the list, if there isn’t a veteran blocking you, but always a veteran will block an entrant. Or at least it was until I retired.

WRIGHT: What other memories do you have of working out at the base, or just living in the community that was so oriented around what was up in the sky, basically. I have to think that there were lots of action that was in the community.

BARNICKI: Like I said, everybody pretty much—well, an example would be Byron and Nellie [Gibbs]. They were our friends, but we lived in town. There was a lady named Emma Lou [Smith], and her husband, Jack [Jackson B. Smith], they worked at the base. All of your close friends, Dick [Richard] Cox was who was my husband’s boss at the time, they were in Little

League and Pony League together. You were a community, and, like I said, everybody lived in Lancaster or Palmdale.

Now, later on, when I went back to work for NASA, people lived in Victorville, they lived in Tehachapi. In fact the gentleman that took my husband's job lived in Victorville. Cal City, Tehachapi, Boron. The family dynamics weren't as great later on because of where you lived, it was just a little too hard to get together like they did when everybody lived in Lancaster.

WRIGHT: I guess more people had more money to buy more cars, that gave them more opportunities to live other places? Is that part of it as well, or did those areas just become developed to give people other places, other choices to live?

BARNICKI: Tehachapi was always a draw, because there was a change in the climates. They had four seasons, where we didn't have four seasons in Lancaster. People came from Santa Clarita, now people were moving into the canyon or living in the canyon and coming up. Then a lot of times, too, in a couple of instances I can remember people that I worked with, that their significant other had a job in LA [Los Angeles]. So I think maybe the economics of the times. Plus the fact they put the big freeway in, which before we didn't have; we didn't have the [California State Route] 14. Los Angeles used to be a trip where you'd go and halfway you'd stop and get something to eat and then go the rest of the way, and now you do it in probably about an hour if there's not a lot of traffic, or two hours if there's a bottleneck somewhere along the line.

WRIGHT: I was going to ask Sandra, do you have some other questions that you want to ask?

JOHNSON: I was just going to ask a couple of questions, if you don't mind. I thought it was interesting, your husband being a protocol officer during the Shuttle Program, and I know that they had to be prepared for emergency landings when the Shuttle launched, and they also had to be prepared for landings for every flight, just because of everything else that was going on. But after the [Space Shuttle] *Challenger* [STS-51L] accident, do you have any memories? What were his duties for that flight after the accident happened? Do you recall anything about that time period? Or how it affected the community here, since you all had become such a part of the Shuttle?

BARNICKI: Well, let's see. I'll back up and I'll tell you, when Mike [Michael J.] Adams crashed [in an X-15], which was before, the fact that they had to go out and literally pick stuff out of the ground, and they did it, and then he [her husband] didn't do a lot of talking, because they saw things that you wouldn't want to share. I just remember him discussing that there were so many people going in so many directions, trying to figure out—first of all, not wanting to say stuff that—I'm reading some mystery novels, and it's amazing how somebody can put a microphone in front of you and take what you say out of context and then it's on the news. So they were so very careful.

Now, the one I remember specifically is when they went into White Sands [New Mexico, STS-3]. That was Marie Fullerton's husband, [C.] Gordon Fullerton. They went into White Sands and they went into Las Cruces [New Mexico] and then they drove to White Sands, and when they got there, there was a god-awful dust storm, just a terrible, terrible storm. I had pictures of him, and he wasn't gray at the time but he was gray because he had so much sand all

over him. Anyway, when he came home, he had sand in everything, in all of his equipment, everything was just loaded.

The following week, I was taking geology at the time, I was still in college and I was taking geology. Right here on the freeway there's the fault, the San Andreas Fault is right out here, you'll see it as you go out, and right there, we were digging gypsum, which is what [is at White Sands]. I used to have a little jar full of gypsum. That was one of the things that I remember him talking about.

As far as *Challenger*, I just remember him coming home and saying it was a hectic, busy day because a million questions from a million different people and what did the press say, plus the fact so many of the things happened because of the tiles that had been done here in Palmdale, so there was that interaction with those people.

JOHNSON: As you mention, he dealt with so many people coming out here when the Shuttle started up, as opposed to before that, Dryden was kind of the quiet Center. People didn't really pay attention to a lot that was going on unless you were directly involved in it, and all of a sudden the influx of the media increased.

BARNICKI: Oh, yes. Well, there were several people that came from Kennedy [Space Center, Florida] and from Houston [Johnson Space Center, Texas], both, that would come out on a regular basis and would see him. They used to have a trailer just outside of Dryden there where they kept the media passes. Now the Visitors Center is completely different than it used to be, and the cafeteria is no longer where it used to be.

JOHNSON: Where was it when you started?

BARNICKI: When I first started, there used to be a long hallway that went all the way down, and then to the left was the cafeteria. The last time I was there I think it was a lot of little offices, completely, completely changed.

JOHNSON: Did a lot of people gather in the cafeteria in those early days? Since there wasn't that much around that you could just go out and get lunch.

BARNICKI: Like I said, we'd go in the cafeteria and get a sandwich or whatever, and then we'd go out and play Ping-Pong. There were other times, though, that they would bring the airplanes in the other hangar, and they'd be working out there. You could go out there and see stuff, but you didn't know a lot about what was going on.

JOHNSON: You mentioned that group WONASA. We've heard a couple of other ladies talk about it. How did that get started? Who started that? Was it the women employees?

BARNICKI: No, we were the women, the wives.

JOHNSON: Okay, so the wives.

BARNICKI: Wives or employees. It was a combination of both. And you know, I think one of the first persons that started it was that Della Mae Bowling, her husband was the procurement officer.

JOHNSON: What kind of activities did you all do as part of that group?

BARNICKI: Luncheons. We met, we had parties. I think we had Halloween parties. I think we had a WONASA Halloween party. We had a Christmas party; my husband was Santa Claus. Just trying to think what else. Christmas, Halloween, New Year's. We had a New Year's party. I don't remember much else during that.

WRIGHT: Was the purpose just for you all to have an opportunity to get together?

BARNICKI: Get together. Breakfast or lunch, and it varied, and we went from different people's houses, and then there were only a couple of restaurants that we went to.

JOHNSON: I know some of the early astronauts came through here, and also when they were in Houston, the wives, after accidents the wives supported each other. Was that the same kind of thing happening here when these test pilots would have accidents and you knew the families and the wives. Did you, as a group, support each other?

BARNICKI: It's always been like that. Fact of the matter is, Marie Fullerton—at the time I met Marie, Marie was a lieutenant during the Vietnam—was it Vietnam? There were what we called

two-year doctors and two-year nurses, and Marie was a two-year nurse, and there were two-year doctors, and I was working at the hospital. I was then not working at NASA. Marie was a lieutenant in the operating room, and as soon as lunch would come about, she and her friend would go home—they lived in a place called Desert Villa, was where the officers lived, and they would lay in the sun and get a suntan. That was before she met her husband. Then he became an astronaut and they moved all over.

She's still a dear friend of mine, just a dear, dear friend. She lost her husband probably about three months before I lost mine, but he had been sick for a long time. He had been in, not in intensive care, but assisted living for about three years. Then Tom [Thomas] McMurtry was my husband's boss, and he just passed away, and his wife and I have been friends over the years. Her father owned a local car company—like I said, two towns, you knew everybody, you go to the same church.

We all went to Sacred Heart. The Presbyterian church used to have an ice cream social, and you would go to the ice cream social and you'd see everybody from NASA there, because people that weren't Catholic were either Presbyterian or Lutheran, and those were the three churches, basic churches that we had in the valley. Like I said, we were a cohesive group during those times. It's kind of sad now, and so many of us have either gone or passed away.

WRIGHT: Or moving, like you're in the process.

BARNICKI: Well, yes, my neighborhood is really bad, it's really bad. It's not safe anymore. We have a lot of activity late at night that we just don't really care for. Luckily I have a five-pound terror Chihuahua.

JOHNSON: An alarm, anyway.

BARNICKI: An alarm, and he makes a lot of noise.

JOHNSON: I was also wondering, in your experience there, when you started Walt [Walter C.] Williams was the [Center] Director, and then as you went back different Directors, and then I'm sure your husband dealt with a lot of different Directors. Do you have any thoughts on any of the Directors or their style of management?

BARNICKI: One of the nicest Directors was John [A.] Manke. There was Isaac [T.] Gillam. Wonderful man, wonderful man. My husband really, really liked him. I liked him, I liked his family. Walt Williams was a little, if I remember, but I was only 19, 20, he was kind of standoffish to me. He wasn't somebody that you would chitchat with or whatever. But Gillam was really nice, John Manke was nice. Ken [Kenneth J.] Szalai was there when I was there towards the end. I see him on a regular basis. He does a lot of the eulogies, he's a very good speaker, an excellent speaker.

Phil Walker was the Personnel Director, he was a little different. I tell a story about him. Every once in a while he'd get on a tangent about something, and I remember he came in and he said that somebody was stealing Scotch tape, and he pulled all of our documents on how much Scotch tape we had bought, and when they did a review he didn't realize that the tape that they were using, that Betty Love and those people were using, was 3M, and it was the same tracking



number on a procurement as Scotch tape. So nobody was stealing Scotch tape, but he had his information wrong.

WRIGHT: Well, he was adamant.

BARNICKI: He was trying to be progressive.

WRIGHT: That's right. Trying to make sure things were working correctly.

BARNICKI: If you stole a pencil, I don't know that they tracked those, but yes, 3M tape, he got on a tangent about that.

JOHNSON: I was thinking, too, I'm sure you saw a lot of landings out here, Shuttle landings. Did you ever get to see a launch, since you have a son in Florida?

BARNICKI: Yes, I did. I saw a night launch. That was just awesome. It was so amazing, right before everything started, you come across the waterway and there's all kinds of birds and things. Just before that thing went off—it gives me goosebumps—everything got quiet. The birds got quiet. Everything got quiet. And then that thing went off and it was just incredible. Just incredible. Everything shook. But the fact that the animals, the animals got quiet.

JOHNSON: Like they could sense it was coming.

BARNICKI: Well, they say they do. They say that they can predict earthquakes and things like that. But the fact that everything got so quiet, and then just to see it go up. We had good seats, too. We had wonderful seats.

JOHNSON: Those launches are pretty impressive.

BARNICKI: Have I chewed your leg off?

WRIGHT: No, not at all. Are there any other areas that you can think of that you'd like to share, just about anything? I'm trying to think, too, I don't know how long your husband was a protocol officer. Was he there during the time when [President Ronald] Reagan was there when that July Fourth [STS-4 landing]?

BARNICKI: Oh, yes. That one I can tell you about. In fact, well, I should have brought one but I didn't think about it. The way Dryden was set up, Leonard Nimoy [TV/Movie actor] was over here. Leonard Nimoy was over here, [Barry] Goldwater, Jr. was there. The way NASA was set up, the airplane was here, and they had to get a carpet and carpet the airplane because the Reagan people said that he always appeared in front of a blue background. So they got a carpet and they brought the carpet in and they put it behind the airplane so that they'd have a good photo shot. The building right there is like this, and the whole building was marked with flags. There were flags all the way around.

The reason there were flags there is because behind them were people with guns, and the dogs, because someone had tried to shoot Reagan when he was out on the [dry] lake bed. They

caught a guy with a gun, so the reason those flags were there was to block the view. Nobody knew, but behind them were guns. Anyway, as they're going to go ferry the Shuttle, the Shuttle comes like this, and Fitz Fulton and Tom McMurtry were in that airplane [Shuttle Carrier Aircraft]. The airplane is coming like this, and it dipped to Reagan, and there was a little boy standing in the crowd, and he says, "That's my grandpa." Somebody says, "No, no, it's not," and it was. Fitz Fulton's grandson was down here. I saw that. That was incredible.

WRIGHT: What an activity. You had a good view for that as well?

BARNICKI: Oh, wonderful view, wonderful view.

WRIGHT: That's a spectacular day.

BARNICKI: Oh, yes. They used to have a Visitors Center in Lancaster, it's on Sierra Highway, and NASA had a center there, and people would go in and get their badges, and they had buses there. You would catch a bus and you'd go out and then sit either in the bleachers or wherever you had passes to go. I have a lot of that, but I packed it all up about six months ago and shipped it all to Florida, thinking I was going to move sooner than I have.

WRIGHT: Well, it's done. That's the best part. Unless you can think of something else, I thank you for the visit.

BARNICKI: No, I can't. How about you guys?

JOHNSON: I think you've answered most of our questions.

BARNICKI: Great, great.

WRIGHT: Appreciate it.

[End of interview]