

**Oral History Interview of
Carolyn Gunter**

**Interviewed by: Elissa Stroman
November 4, 2011
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Women's History Initiative***

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The Women's History Initiative began formally in June 2015 with a concentrated effort to record the stories of prominent women from across the South Plains. The interviews target doctors, civic leaders, teachers, secretaries, and others whose stories would otherwise be lost.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Carolyn Gunter. Gunter talks about growing up in Plainview and Paducah and the piano store her father owned. Gunter discusses her experiences with music during her school years and later joining the Lubbock Music Club. Gunter also discusses teaching piano and the outreach activities she was involved in with her music clubs.

Length of Interview: 01:20:28

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Elissa Stroman (ES):

This is Elissa Stroman and today's date is October 4, 2011. Today I interviewed Carolyn Gunter at her home in Lubbock which is located at [REDACTED]. This interview is a part of the series of oral history interviews I'm conducting with various members of the music club communities of the South Plains. Today we discussed her involvement with the music clubs beginning back in the 1950s, her early music history, her teaching of piano lessons, and some of her other musical recollections. We should be good, okay, I'm going to put it close to you so we can pick it all up, so my first question is, if you don't mind, what is your date of birth and where were you born?

Carolyn Gunter (CG):

August 25, 1927, when I was born, and it was in Plainview, Texas.

ES:

Okay. Does she need to go outside? [referring to dog]

CG:

She wants to go out. She'll want to come back.

ES:

And so tell me a little bit about your family. Did you have brothers and sisters? What did your parents do for a living?

CG:

My father and his father owned a music store and sold Baldwin Pianos in Plainview.

ES:

And what was the name of the store?

CG:

J. W. Boylsonson.

ES:

And so you had piano music in your home for as long as you can remember, I guess.

CG:

Yeah.

ES:

And your mother, did she play? She played organ you were saying.

CG:

She played the piano and the organ. I have a sister, or I did, she's dead, too, but she played the organ and piano for the church when she grew up.

ES:

Can you tell me about some of the memories that stand out, musical memories, from your childhood? Did y'all sit around and play piano and sing songs or did you hang out at your dad's store a lot?

CG:

No, we sang at home all the time and we had a cabin in Aspen, Colorado, and when we went back and forth, we sang the whole time.

ES:

Wow.

CG:

My daddy, his daddy, would send him out on a trip with a team of horses or mules and a wagon with two pianos on it. They'd go out through the farms, and he said, "Don't come back until you've sold both of these pianos."

ES:

And did they usually sell both of them?

CG:

They usually sold them and one of my music club members that's gone now was one of them that bought it for her family.

ES:

What was her name?

CG:

Well her married name was Jay Joyner, Mildred Joyner. She said that he left the piano there for two weeks and asked them to keep it. When he came back they had decided they wanted to keep it. So that's the way they bought that one.

ES:

Great salesmanship, put it in the home, and you get so used to it that you can't get rid of it then.

CG:

And he had a man that worked for him and went with him and demonstrated the piano. His name was Herman Ward, and he would play the piano and demonstrate it, and my daddy decided that that was a waste of money, so he just taught himself to play the piano. He played rags and anything you could hum, he could play.

ES:

Just like the Pluggers you hear about in Tin Pan Alley, they'd sit around and play piano all day. That's amazing.

CG:

Yeah, he was good at that. He played until he died at age eighty-five or six or something like that.

ES:

Wow, so your musical education started really young, but when did you start playing piano yourself?

CG:

When I was three I remember playing, and I think I started taking piano lessons about that time. My daddy's best friend was a doctor, and they grew up together, and his sister was a piano teacher. She started giving me lessons. And my daddy was—I don't know how you put it, when he was a little boy his daddy put him on his shoulder and left home. He didn't have a mother ever after that. He just put him in different homes in the winter to stay with people and go to school until he kind of got grown up.

ES:

It seems like that made him that fiercely independent, strong willed type then. So can you remember some of the music you played early on? Any of the tunes or any of the songs you really loved back then?

CG:

Well I had bronchitis a lot and missed school. I sat in one of those chairs right there and composed songs, or pieces. Some of them were printed in *The Etude* magazine, and I think I have them up in the attic somewhere, *The Etude's*.

ES:

Wow.

CG:

But I don't know where they are now. I'd like to find them.

ES:

That's amazing though. That's so great.

CG:

Yeah, I'd miss school sometimes six weeks at a time, and my mother would fix me up with a thing, and I'd sit there and compose pieces.

ES:

So you had *The Etude* in your home, y'all played the music out of it? Did you do some of the children's—or some of the games that were in the magazine?

CG:

I'm sure I did.

ES:

That's so wonderful to hear, that's great. I'm going to have to look you up and find you in there. I've got a book of all the music, and I think I can find the dates.

CG:

Oh I wish you could.

ES:

I'll try to find the dates and let you know what I found. I'll do some researching on you.

CG:

And copy some of the pieces that I got published.

ES:

I've got a pretty full run of all *The Etudes* from 1883 to 1957 from when it was—so I will find that for you and I'll be at the next meetings, and I'll get you copies so you can have them. If I can hunt you down, I will—

CG:

Well my name was Boil.

ES:

That would be a good thing to know.

CG:

And I didn't have a middle name, it was Carolyn Boil.

ES:

Carolyn Boil.

CG:

And my daddy's name was Wylie, W-y-l-i-e. My mother's name was Avis Vivian Pickman Boil.

ES:

That's a beautiful name, though. And so you played piano in the home for a while and then was it in high school that Ms. Christmann found you?

CG:

No, I was already grown.

ES:

Okay.

CG:

When I was a junior in high school I played the march for the senior graduation ceremony. I performed all the time, all that time, in junior high.

ES:

What kind of venues and events did you play for?

CG:

All the school and different things like that.

ES:

Did you play at church as well?

CG:

Oh yeah, and I played mostly classical music back then. I could play "Boogie Woogie" and the rags and "Maple Leaf Rag" and things like that.

ES:

Could you improvise as well or were you just kind of learn everything by music.

CG:

I learned most of my music, but I memorized everything. I didn't ever play with music; I had it memorized.

ES:

Okay, okay.

CG:

That one I played the other day was twenty pages.

ES:

I know, I just marveled. I don't think anything on my senior recital was twenty pages, and you just kept on playing. I couldn't remember the piece exactly, I was like, This is a long piece, though, from what I remember.

CG:

Chopin's *Scherzo Opus 39*.

ES:

Yeah, I play a lot of the Chopin *Nocturnes*, so I was just so impressed. It was quite a feat.

CG:

Well thank you.

ES:

So you graduated high school and stayed home or did you stay and help out with the shop? What happened after high school?

CG:

We moved to Paducah when I was a little girl. My grandfather died, and it was during the Depression, and he moved to Paducah and his friend was a doctor in the hospital. He went to work for him for a year or two, and we lived right there by the hospital. I took piano lessons all those years. Then when I graduated from high school, there used to be TSCW, its TWU now in Denton.

ES:

Okay.

CG:

I majored in piano. Then after I graduated from TWU, I went to the University of Texas and got my master's degree in music education. While I was up in Aspen one summer, they called me from Dallas and asked me if I would come and teach, and I don't know how they found me, but I said, "Well, I guess so, I don't have anything else to do next year." So I went and taught in Dallas for two years. Then the superintendent from Pampa came up there, made an appointment and came to see me and asked me to move to Pampa and teach in the junior high.

ES:

And so what were you teaching there?

CG:

Music.

ES:

Oh, just the general music class, okay.

CG:

I taught in Pampa two years, and we went to Interscholastic League and always got a number 1. I took two busloads both years of junior high kids to go to the contests. Then I moved to Lubbock, and I taught two years in Lubbock and then I met my husband. He was moving around here and there, and so I didn't teach that next year. I had my two boys, and he wanted me to stay home with them, so I did for a few years and then I went back to teaching because he was going to be a —he was getting his doctor's degree, and he was going to A&M where he graduated. Then we stayed here instead. He wanted to stay here and he was the district director of twenty counties for twenty-one years, and he they wanted him to be the state director and he didn't want to move from here.

ES:

And this was the director of what?

CG:

The Texas Agriculture Extension Service, 4-H Club.

ES:

Right.

CG:

And the county agents, he supervised twenty counties and county agents. And I went back to teaching one year at P. F. Brown School here, and then I decided to just stay at home and teach

private piano. And so I taught private piano for seventeen years, so I could stay home with my two boys.

ES:

I know a couple people that do that now. It's a nice life to be able to work from your home and still get things accomplished. So how did you first learn about music clubs? When did you first hear of them?

CG:

Well, my mother was always in the music club.

ES:

And this was in Paducah?

CG:

Paducah and when I moved to Plainview after I got married, I was an officer in the music club there for five years. Then we moved over here, and I was in both of these music clubs. They had one that met on Wednesday afternoon for teachers so that they could wait until they got out of school to come to the music club. Then the other one met on Friday morning, I think, and people got to where they couldn't come, so we changed it to Saturday at lunch. So now we have one at lunch, luncheon on Saturday. The other one meets on Friday mornings. So they kept alive that way.

ES:

Right, let's so—so what are some of your earlier memories of that? Was it kind of the same way it is now? Were the programs somewhat the same? What were the ladies like? Were they young or—?

CG:

Well most of them were young and a lot of them were music teachers. I was always on the program committee and we would pick things, you know, that we thought people would like to hear. I always played for both of them. Later, I played everything that Dr. Van Appledorn composed for piano. My best friend and I played two piano numbers together. She and I were born the same month and same year.

ES:

Who is this?

CG:

Dr. Van Appledorn

ES:

Really?

CG:

She retired last year. You may have heard, she's world famous.

ES:

Yes, they did a recital of her works not too long ago, and it was amazing.

CG:

It's real hard to learn.

ES:

It seemed like it was a little above my level to ever consider. And some of it's more traditionally romantic kind of, but most of its kind of far out there and really interesting stuff. Not to sound like a young'un, but what was Lubbock like back when you were first—what year is this that you really started getting involved in clubs?

CG:

Well, it was the first year I moved here in 1954, I guess.

ES:

1954 and do you have any memories of what Lubbock looked like?

CG:

Well Thirty-Fourth Street was the last paved street and we built a house over on Sixty-Sixth. Let's see, is this Sixtieth?

ES:

Sixtieth, yes ma'am.

CG:

And then after five years, our boys needed a bigger house, and we moved over here and built it in '59.

ES:

So this was kind of the country back then. You were out.

CG:

In fact, they threw—oh not what was dirt clods back and forth because there wasn't any houses out here. They caught snakes and lizards, and it was just out in the country.

ES:

Yeah, y'all were in the pastures back then.

CG:

Yeah.

ES:

So where did the music clubs meet? Were they always meeting at the women's club? Oh, that was when they were always meeting in ladies' homes, is that what I've heard, right?

CG:

Our Wednesday one was always somewhere downtown. I guess it was at the women's club on Wednesday and then the Friday morning ones were at somebody's house.

ES:

And did you host some of those?

CG:

Oh yeah, I had to rent a lot of chairs. Sometimes I had seventy pairs in my house and then the children would sit on the floor in the next room and come back and forth to play.

ES:

So this would be where you'd have piano recitals sometimes, too, in this big room in your living room?

CG:

Well, I had them every month in here, and then I moved down to the Garden and Arts Center and had them there and rented it.

ES:

What were some of the outreach activities that you remember doing through the years? You know, now there's that Pastoral Festival, but do you remember some of the festivals or anything back then?

CG:

I didn't take part very much in competitions because my students just wanted to learn to play. They weren't really interested in going to Amarillo for contests and all of that, but I always took part in the Hymn Festival. They had to play by memory, and some of them would throw up before the contest and everything. It was just hard on them, but they would go ahead and try to memorize them.

ES:

My piano teacher was always afraid we'd be too stressed out, so she said memorizing wasn't nearly as important as just enjoying it, as playing it. So, what kept you going to the music club? Was it the people or the programs or did you just enjoy meeting up?

CG:

Well I guess it was the music. I was always on the program committee and we'd pick things that we thought we would enjoy and the other people, and I always wanted to perform, so I just kept going.

ES:

It's nice to have an outlet, I guess, to have other people be able to hear what you've been working on.

CG:

We still have the Music Teachers Association, and I was always a member of that. I played for that a lot of times, and sometimes I brought some of my students to perform for them.

ES:

So what are the differences between the Allegro Club, the Lubbock Club, the Music Teachers Club? What are some of those differences that you perceive besides the different ladies?

CG:

Well, the Lubbock Music Club is more having fun and playing entertaining music, you know? They've gotten to where they've just played, make jokes, and play funny music and not anything real serious except when I play. I'm always serious music when I play.

ES:

Okay, so it's always more about kind of appreciating music, just having fun with it? Fellowship, I guess.

CG:

We used to have a study program. Well, we still have a study program, but it's different. It's not like it used to be, but we used to study something every month.

ES:

I saw in the program like a book that was listed or something that you could study and I asked a couple ladies about it, and they were like, "Nobody reads it." It was just kind of glossed over.

CG:

We have to have about five programs with that book. Each year it's a different book, and you have to do that to turn it in, and we'd always get a blue ribbon on our study book. We'd follow all the rules on all of that. Then we had one program every year to teach us about the federation and where it started and how it's developed and have some of our federation officers to come and talk to us.

ES:

So I'm still getting the ropes of all this. So tell me a little bit about the federation as you see it. What's the benefit of a club being federated?

CG:

Well, it's a national organization and we go to the district and state conventions and we have some here. We promote music in the schools and in the Harmony Club that some of the music teachers have. They have contests.

ES:

The Harmony Club?

CG:

That's for the students of the teachers and members.

ES:

Like a junior club then?

CG:

Yeah.

ES:

Okay, okay.

CG:

You'll have to ask somebody else more about that because I don't take part in it very much.

ES:

Well I just realized we didn't finish the last question. So, the Lubbock Music Club is more about, you know, enjoyable music and lighthearted music, and so is the Allegro Club a little more serious music? Is it more formal?

CG:

Yeah it is. It's kind of dignified.

ES:

Having the luncheon it felt a little more dignified being in there.

CG:

Yeah and we have more serious programs.

ES:

And then the Music Teachers Association of Lubbock, is that more teacher-ly things? Do you talk more about students, or what is that club like because I don't know anything about it.

CG:

I haven't been a member of that for quite a few years.

ES:

What do you remember then?

CG:

It was serious; it was the teachers themselves getting together and making plans and programs and trying to get people interested in having their students come and be members; these students of the teachers.

ES:

So what's different between the club meetings now and say, when you started? Are there differences you notice?

CG:

I started, I guess, in Plainview, and we had real serious programs. They were teaching the members about different things, you know? I guess they say now that we already know everything, but I don't know, it's just not as serious as it seemed like it used to be.

ES:

But you keep going back to play to be able to hear some music at least.

CG:

Oh yeah.

ES:

It's worth going back to at least. I've noticed that the age demographic is a little bit older than say, what I've read it was like when you started. It was younger women in the fifties, and now the club's kind of aged with its members, I guess, or vice versa or however that goes. What are your thoughts on that?

CG:

Well, I'll tell you why we don't keep our young members that come in. They're too busy having babies and sending their children to school. Their schools have so much going on that they don't have time to take any lessons, and they won't let them get out of school in off periods and go to lessons. You know, they're just not interested in music in the schools. When I first came here, they didn't have any music in the elementary schools. One of our members taught free for several years just so that they would have music. And then they started paying her and let her have regular music. They're just too busy. They're not staying home with their children either. That makes a lot of difference, the mothers.

ES:

Yeah, a lot of mothers have jobs and so a Friday morning meeting might conflict with work. Do you think there's a way to help clubs survive? Do you think there's anything that can be done?

CG:

I don't know what it would be.

ES:

I don't want to say the clubs are ending, but if women are so busy these days, is there anything that y'all could do or we could do as younger women to try to, you know, you've been involved with club work now sixty years and I just feel it's a shame, It's such an integral part of your life.

CG:

Our Allegro Club is still going strong. Although a lot of us are older, but we're bringing in some younger women, but you know, if they're married, their husbands don't want them to take off and go up to some club on Saturday, and they don't even want them to go to church because that's their only day off. It's just hard to get them if they're married, you know, to get them to take off on weekends. I just don't know what we could do.

ES:

I just feel like as I'm researching more, I just feel like it's my duty to try to figure out a way to just brainstorm, I guess, what went wrong, what's changed, what's kept you going. That's what I like to hear is you like playing. That's why you keep going back.

CG:

Yeah, I guess that's the main thing for me, not everybody performs, but they like to go and be with each other and listen to the music.

ES:

So if another fifty years down the road, somebody's researching what clubs were like, what do you think the lasting significance—? What's something they should really remember about the clubs that you were involved in, and what do you think is most important? The most important takeaway, I guess?

CG:

Well, I don't know.

ES:

Okay, okay.

CG:

I guess my being in it and performing was the biggest thing for me. Having a place to perform because they're not interested in you performing at church or anyplace else you go. They say, "Well that's nice." But they're just not—there's no place to go to perform.

ES:

We kind of talked about it before I turned on the recorder, but tell me again, Ms. Christmann helped you with a scholarship when you were younger or she discovered you or she brought a tuner out to your home, right? And she listened to you play when you were younger? What's that story, your encounter with Ms. Christmann?

CG:

She's held all of the elected places up through the national places, you know and everything, she's been an officer for years, and I guess you know her husband left—when he died he left her a ten thousand dollar scholarship fund.

ES:

I knew there was some money.

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CG:

She does that every year up in Carnegie Hall.

ES:

Okay.

CG:

The students that win the contests are invited to come and perform up there. Then she's added five or ten thousand dollars to that.

ES:

I was just trying to figure out how you were all connected to all of that or if there was a connection.

CG:

Well, I don't know, we were just friends because we helped planned the programs, and I don't remember her performing. She helped me get on the programs.

ES:

Okay and I guess that brings up a point. I'm wondering about some of the relationships that have been forged and brought about by the music club. Did any of your students ever become members of the club?

CG:

I don't think so.

ES:

Do you have any like—this is going to sound cliché—lifelong friends from the club or do you have a lot of ladies that you keep in touch with because of club work?

CG:

Well, my best friends are dead, but I had some really close ones.

ES:

So maybe thirty years ago some of your close friends, were they involved in club work?

CG:

Oh yeah.

ES:

Okay yeah, it changes through the years. I know the membership changes every year, but I was just trying to get an idea. There were some people that I was talking to, and they said, "Oh yeah, I took lessons from this member, and this member took lessons from me." I didn't know if there was any of those connections you had with any club ladies.

CG:

I don't think so.

ES:

Tell me about your piano studio. You taught out of your home. How many students did you typically have?

CG:

Oh about thirty-six or thirty-eight.

ES:

Okay.

CG:

At the time, that was all I could handle because I had to quit at six thirty and fix supper for my husband and two boys.

ES:

And this was in the era where you could have students leave school and have them come take lessons from your home or did you have the younger students during the school day?

CG:

No, they had to come after school was over.

ES:

Okay so you just scheduled that three or four hour window right after school?

CG:

Yeah.

ES:

And were there any—tell me about the music you selected. Did it depend on the student or did you have anything you made them do? Any songs you made them play or any method books you wanted them to work out of?

CG:

I used the Glover Series a lot. One of my good friends that was not voted into the club helped to write that.

ES:

Really?

CG:

Jay Stewart. And he helped Mr. Glover to write those books and his name used to be still on there as one of the composers of all that music.

ES:

Did he perform for the Lubbock Music Club or which club, do you remember?

CG:

I'm not sure; the Lubbock teachers were afraid that they'd lose some students if they let him get in the club, and so they blackballed him. They did that also with Bill Murphy who was one of the greatest teachers that we ever had. They didn't want him in there because they were afraid he'd be popular.

ES:

So this was in the Lubbock Music Teachers Club then?

CG:

Well, they didn't want him in our music clubs. It didn't take but a couple of people to blackball somebody and because he was a man.

ES:

So there were some men that were applying to be in the clubs. And this was in the fifties or sixties then around that time?

CG:

Yes.

ES:

Were there other instances of people applying and not getting in for political reasons?

CG:

I don't know of any women teachers that ever got kept out. I couldn't do anything about it.

ES:

What did you think of the performance requirement for admission into the club?

CG:

Oh it was very small. It didn't matter that much. If they were interested in music, they didn't have to perform, just promote.

ES:

I'd read, though, that it used to require prospective members to play something at some point. When I asked if I could be a member, they said, "Well you don't have to play anymore so yeah, you're good," which I could have if they wanted me to, but I didn't know if there were ever any people that played so awfully on their audition that they didn't get in.

CG:

No, because we had some people that couldn't play very well, and they resigned after a year or two. They knew that they didn't belong, but they were welcomed.

ES:

Right, right, so the people that remained, that endured, the people like you, the ones that are really passionate for music and have a drive to keep on performing it seems and be involved.

CG:

We've lost two or three of our best members this year. They died and one of them moved away with her husband. You've heard of Bill Kern?

ES:

Mm-hmm.

CG:

His father and his wife were in there, and he died and she had to move away some place. I cried when she left; his name was Clyde Kern.

ES:

Clyde Kern, okay and what was her name?

CG:

Betty, she had a doctor's degree in math, I think.

ES:

I may have to call Bill Kern and see if I can get a phone number and talk to her. I worried when I first started coming. I said, How many women did I not get to talk to in time? I wanted to be sure and get to as many people as I feel like I'm barraging everybody, you know, hounding everybody, but I want to be able to talk to y'all while we can talk, while we have time and before something happens, they move away or whatever.

CG:

Well we've had several to die this year, and it just kills me that we don't have them because they were the leaders.

ES:

Well like at the Lubbock Music Club, I know Madge Webster has been donating the scrapbooks and the yearbooks for the last forty years, and she and Miss Christmann are the two I've—and you as well. When I found out that you had been in it from the beginning I said, I want to talk to these ladies who have seen it change through the years and see how Lubbock's changed and all that. Y'all are just a treasure trove of information just waiting for me to pick your brain. So I'm going to switch gears back again because I'm still interested in your piano studio. Did you do recitals at the end of the semesters like at the winter and spring recitals?

CG:

Yes, twice a year, and I had one in this room every month with my children, with the students. The parents were always too busy to come anyway.

ES:

But everybody got to hear what people were working on, so that must have been nice.

CG:

And I'd teach them to say, "I'm going to play," instead of "I'm gonna play." I'd teach them things like that, to stand up and announce what their piece was.

ES:

Did they bow afterwards? Did you teach them to bow as well?

CG:

Kind of, I had a lot of boy students.

ES:

Oh okay.

CG:

And they were good.

ES:

So you taught all ages then?

CG:

I had some grown-ups. I had one girl that was from Taiwan, and she was married and had a baby I think, and she worked at it and enjoyed it.

ES:

I just went blank with what I was going to ask you. I think we talked about it a little bit, but did you have them memorize things for the recital?

CG:

Yes, they had to—I don't think I ever let them get away with not memorizing.

ES:

And these were half hour lessons that you would have?

CG:

Yes.

ES:

Did you ever do hour lessons with students?

CG:

I don't believe I did. I may have with some of those that were in contests.

ES:

Did you have them do scales and warmups at the start of a lesson or did you just start right in with whatever?

CG:

No, I wrote what I wanted them to do when they were practicing and I hope they did them. But thirty minutes is not very long.

ES:

It's not; it's not. I was talking to Carol Masson yesterday, Carol Masson-Harris, and was saying that she expanded her lessons to forty-five minutes because thirty minutes just isn't long enough

sometimes. I'm trying to think, are there other things that you want to tell me that I'm forgetting, other stuff about club work?

CG:

I guess not.

ES:

Now what clubs—your mother was involved in the Paducah Music Club. What other music clubs in the area can you remember, do you remember? Did every town have a music club back then? I'm skipping around a little bit in time, I'm sorry.

CG:

I used to play for the Seminole club sometimes when we had a district meeting. We had an Abilene—I can't remember if there was a Childress club or not. What else did we have?

ES:

So sometimes there would be mixing of club members—you would go and play for another club or they would come and play for y'all?

CG:

No, it was just me that they would invite.

ES:

Okay.

CG:

And we had, oh, what was I fixing to—there was one in Amarillo and Plainview. That one kept going for a long time.

ES:

I think I read somewhere that there was one in Post maybe? Do you remember that one?

CG:

I don't remember that one.

ES:

Okay.

CG:

Well, after you leave, I'll think of a bunch of things.

ES:

Well, I'm just trying to think of things to ask you to drum up some more memories. Do you remember your mother talking about the club at all? What would she say about meetings or ladies in the club?

CG:

Well, she was always some kind of officer, and she tried to encourage people to come and to perform and do the best they could. There weren't very many people that would take on an officer job. They just were timid or just too busy or something, you know? Miss Bill Heatley was one of our main members. They called her Jonnie Green Heatley.

ES:

And how'd she get that nickname do you know?

CG:

That was her middle name.

ES:

Oh okay, okay.

CG:

And her husband was a state representative from Paducah, and she played the organ for the church. She played for weddings, and I used to sing for weddings and she'd play for me. I played a twenty minute recital before my niece's wedding.

ES:

Really?

CG:

And played all the classic pieces that I knew.

ES:

So even after you married and you had kids, you were still able to find some outlets for playing the works that you were practicing all the time. So you'd play at weddings.

CG:

I directed the choir there where I was. In the churches, I was the music director of the First Christian Church in Plainview for five years and in Pampa for two years. I was always the director of the children's groups and big choirs. Those were all big. I've had sixty members in the church choirs.

ES:

Big choirs then.

CG:

They'd get me to sing solos in church and at the funerals—I always had to sing at the funerals.

ES:

That made me think of more questions, which is good. How many kids did you have did you say? How many children?

CG:

Students?

ES:

No, no, your children.

CG:

I had two boys.

ES:

You had two boys.

CG:

One of them died.

ES:

Oh okay. Did you teach them to play piano? Did you pass on?

CG:

I taught a little bit, but I didn't want them to make me hate music. So I farmed them out to another teacher.

ES:

That seems to be kind of standard. You know, have a friend teach so they don't feel force fed. So did they keep that passion for music that you have?

CG:

Well the older one did that died. He loved it. I just got a disk of Israel, the singer, and he sang "Over the Rainbow" and "It's a Wonderful World." That was just a wonderful thing to him. He

has a friend that moved to Thailand, and he made a memorial disk for my son that died and used both of those songs in it.

ES:

Those are beautiful songs; those are great songs.

CG:

He was very musical. He didn't perform very much, but he loved music.

ES:

So it's just interesting to see the generations pass down music in different ways—from your father and to you and to your sons. You played mostly for weddings and funerals? Were there any other events that you would play and sing for? Any memories you have of performances that stand out?

CG:

Well sometimes I'd sing for the men's clubs.

ES:

Okay tell me about those, like the Lions Club, Kiwanis Club things?

CG:

The Lions and the Kiwanis.

ES:

Okay.

CG:

I'd take my junior high choir over to sing for them, too. They always enjoyed doing it, the choirs did. They were kind of proud that they did so well. A lot of junior high choir members were football players, and they had to be that age to have the base baritone voices. And so we got along real well with the football coach, and we didn't interfere with their practice and they allowed us to do our practice and our concerts and things, you know.

ES:

So it sounds like you were able to—you're kind of like your daddy in that you were able to drum up business and able to recruit and do really well with that sort of thing.

CG:

Well I think it was just because they were so good—the choirs and things.

ES:

Well that's your doing as well. You're able to make magic happen, I guess, because having a choir succeed in this day in age—I remember in junior high it wasn't—everybody was going off and doing their own thing which seems to be a trend in music, you know, you're going off and you're doing your sports or you've got other interests and music kind of falls by the waist side sometimes.

CG:

Well it just depends. My choirs in Pampa, they had a wonderful high school choir, and they started in elementary school trying to be good enough to get into it. We didn't have very—well we did have—I taught elementary and junior high, and we were pretty good, but they wouldn't take but about sixty-five students on each choir, and they had to audition, and I had to audition the students. It was hard to get in, and so the students wanted to be in those choirs, you know. But I'm not sure back then if they took piano. I didn't get into that when I was in Pampa.

ES:

So would you say your first, your primary instrument is piano or is your primary instrument your voice?

CG:

Oh it's piano.

ES:

And the choir directing, the choir stuff is second, but it pays the bills so that helped, I guess. Did you ever—I saw you perform piano, but did you sing also for the music clubs?

CG:

I used to.

ES:

Okay, did you ever have any of your choirs come in and sing for the music clubs?

CG:

No.

ES:

Okay, I'm trying to get an idea of programs, and that's why I ask if there were any memorable programs that really stood out in your mind. Are there any pieces that you really remember playing or enjoying at the music club; at any of the music clubs? Like what's your favorite piece on piano to play?

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CG:

Oh I don't know, I guess some of Dr. Van Appledorn's things. We used to go to Aspen every summer, and I was in the choir up there and did solos and everything. One time I sang at the Wheeler Opera House in between—I can't think of the name of it right now, but in between the two acts.

ES:

Like a musical or an opera they had?

CG:

Yeah and I sang a street song, and I can't think what else. I sang two songs, and they were real big. I took voice lessons from that voice teacher up there. She was wonderful.

ES:

I was trying to remember, you got a master's in music ed. Did you ever take—and you continued to take private lessons, but you never went back to school and worked on a PhD or did you ever think about that?

CG:

I had fifteen hours above my master's here at Tech, and I got to two hours at SMU, and I went up to Princeton to the choir college that was real famous, it may still be.

ES:

It wasn't necessarily about getting a degree; it was about just getting better at playing. So you said you were—I keep on thinking things like twenty minutes after you say it. This conversation bounces around a lot, and I'm sorry. You said you were really close in age to Dr. Van. Were y'all friends?

CG:

I've got some music that she wrote by hand and she sent it to me and we just met. We didn't know each other very well, but she would send some of her compositions to me.

ES:

Oh that's great because she knew you were a fan of her music. That's wonderful. Yeah, sometimes I imagine clubs playing only Chopin and Beethoven and Mozart. So when I first heard that y'all played Doctor Van's works I was like, That's awesome; that's great. There's this modern music. It's really nice.

CG:

Well I'm about the only one that could play any other music, and I'm not sure everybody liked it because it was kind of weird.

ES:

Yeah and you were saying earlier that the Lubbock Music Club likes a little bit lighter fare, lighter music.

CG:

Yeah.

ES:

But sometimes it's good to get the tougher stuff in there. Stretch your ears or something. I can't get the image of your father's store out of my head, the thought of a piano shop on the dusty plains. Can you remember it? Can you picture it in your head and describe it to me?

CG:

I can kind of. He closed it and moved to Paducah when his father died. I have some pictures. He invented a motor on his pickup that would lift the pianos and move it onto the truck.

ES:

Like the lift gates you see now, yeah. He should have patented it. Y'all could have been rich, but he sold pianos. Did he sell sheet music as well?

CG:

Yeah.

ES:

And did he sell records eventually?

CG:

I think so.

ES:

So an all-purpose music store there, maybe some other instrument's, too, band instruments, that sort of thing?

CG:

I don't know.

ES:

Okay. If you ever find those pictures I'd love to see them because I think that must be—it's a very—it's a sign of civility, you know, it's a sign of civilization that we can have a piano out here on the flat plains.

CG:

I used to know a lot of the women whose husband backed their pickup up the caprock because it would vapor lock if you went up and it wouldn't keep going.

ES:

Really?

CG:

And so they backed their pickup up to bring their wife a piano. There was one lady that her husband brought her a Steinway grand piano in Aspen. I'm sure that's the way you had to get it up that pass, Independence Pass.

ES:

Because I imagine while there wasn't Highway 84 back then, so you didn't have a good roadway and a sturdy vehicle.

CG:

The Independence Pass was not paved, and it was so narrow that if you came to a corner, you had to get out, go look, and see if there was a car coming because one of you would have to back up and let the other one around.

ES:

But there were still pianos out there, that's amazing. And well, it would be obvious then that you've always had a piano in your home. I can't imagine not having a piano in the house somewhere. That's really great that your dad was able to bring that to this area. Well, in our ramblings and turnings around, have you thought of any other memories you'd like to tell me about your mom or your dad or clubs or the sleeping pup that's right beside you?

CG:

Well, I remember in Aspen they used to have like thirty churches and a bunch of banks and everything. When we used to go up every summer we'd spend three months. They had one Protestant church and one Catholic church. It went down to I think one bank, but everybody had a piano. We bought one of those pianos from one of the churches, and it was a big heavy piano and it took several men to get it in the cabin. We had another piano, I think, in the barn where we would have meetings and have dances and things like that. Everybody had to have a piano.

ES:

And at those dances in the barn, would you have like fiddlers come in and would it be kind of—?

CG:

Well, the ones I remember, it was an accordion or a guitar, and they let us have big dances, great big dances in the armory downtown. There would be a hundred people there and all the children would come and dance with each other and dance with the adults. It was a big thing there.

ES:

So what took y'all to Aspen every summer?

CG:

They had five rivers that were real good to fish in.

ES:

Okay so it was just like a summer home then?

CG:

Yeah.

ES:

And was Aspen more—how did it compare to—you were in Paducah at that time, Plainview?

CG:

Paducah.

ES:

Was it—I'm guessing Aspen was bigger, more established at Paducah at that time or were they about the same size town?

CG:

No, Aspen was a lot smaller then.

ES:

Oh Okay, okay.

CG:

They used to be in 1898 and then they had the gold rush and then it all turned into a ghost town.

ES:

And that was in the thirties when it was—

CG:

And the boys came home from the war and tried to build it back up. They had a paid up clean up thing, where they got paint and cleaned up and fixed up the town.

ES:

Wow.

CG:

But then a lot of them left—after that it didn't stay.

ES:

But y'all kept going back for the fishing at least? Okay.

CG:

There were about ten families that built cabins out by the river where we did, and most of them stayed and raised their children there until they grew up. Then gradually they would move.

ES:

Do you know if y'all's cabin is still there?

CG:

They tore it town and built a mansion in the same place.

ES:

Wow, when was this? When did y'all sell the cabin and lay down roots?

CG:

I can't think exactly when. It was after I married, sometime after '55 or '60 maybe.

ES:

Any other memories I've drummed up, I've conjured up now, or anything else you want to add about clubs or music in Lubbock?

CG:

Well, we kept music going as long as I was anywhere around. I was trying to think, I think the name of that club was The Euterpean. I'm trying to think a while ago. Somebody had an Allegro

Club somewhere else. I don't remember where it was. Did I tell you I played for the music club in Dallas?

ES:

No, tell me about that.

CG:

Well, the lady that was ahead of all the music was Marian Flag, and she wrote a couple of books and she used to come out to the place where I was teaching, and she'd take over the class and demonstrate how to do it instead of sitting around and looking down her nose at us, you know, and she taught me how to teach.

ES:

Wow.

CG:

She invited me to come out to her music club one time, and she came back for me and I didn't have a car and she took me out to it, but I wasn't a member of it. I was just one of the teachers.

ES:

Do you remember what you played?

CG:

It was a Handel. It had several parts. I can't think of the name of it.

ES:

Maybe one of his sonatas or I don't think he was like Bach with those French suits. I don't know, I'll look into it. Did you get to travel anywhere else and perform at any other clubs that were especially memorable?

CG:

I don't remember playing at any more clubs, but we went to the summer camps from the churches, and I always taught the music when I was there and performed, and I'd sing a solo or something, and I was the music person.

ES:

Yeah, you were their music break. You'd come in and teach them music.

CG:

I'd teach hymns because some of them would turn into music directors at a church, and I taught hymns. We went to Mineral Wells to the army place that was abandoned, and we used all of their

facilities. I taught down at Athens. We had cut camps down there, summer camps for the children.

ES:

So it was kind of like today's vacation bible school, but it was longer.

CG:

Well they still take them.

ES:

Okay yeah.

CG:

From the churches, we go up to Ceta Glen.

ES:

Oh yeah, yeah I've heard of that. Okay, like a weeklong retreat at one of the camp grounds ,yeah.

CG:

And one of our members owns a camp up in New Mexico, and they had camps all summer and one of them or two of them are family camps, and it got so popular that they quit having the children's camps and they have family camps all summer long.

ES:

That sounds like fun.

CG:

And they're so popular that they just are full all summer.

ES:

I would never think to do that, but as an adult, being able to go to summer camp, that sounds like something.

CG:

For families, too, and you get to spend the time with your children.

ES:

Yeah that's great.

CG:

She's the one that taught piano in the schools.

ES:

And who is this?

CG:

Irma Davis.

ES:

Okay.

CG:

And she was the cook when they went up to New Mexico in their camp. They still go and have that.

ES:

I write down all these names in case I run across them with all of our stuff. I'll be like, Oh, I have a story related to her. I need to make that connection.

CG:

She would gain about fifty pounds when she was the cook, and then she'd come home and try to lose it. I told her that's bad for your heart.

ES:

Of course, it's probably a good thing. My dad always says, "You can't trust a skinny cook." So it's probably a good thing that she gained some weight.

CG:

And she still is the one that directs the women's choir when we have a program at the music clubs.

ES:

Okay, so I may have to give her a call and see if I can pick her brain, too.

CG:

Oh I bet she can tell you a bunch of things. We were in the choir together at First Christian Church years ago and she's still active in all of that. She directs the choir when we have a program in the music club.

ES:

Okay, another name. Is there anybody else that you think would be particularly valuable that I should talk to?

CG:

Well, the two that you should have just died.

ES:

Well, that's not what I needed to hear.

CG:

No.

ES:

Now I feel guilty, if I had started this six months earlier, I could have—

CG:

Let's see, who else? Let's see now, who was it that talked?

ES:

I've talked to Carol Masson and I've talked to—

CG:

She's kind of new in the club.

ES:

Yeah, but I got her name. She was one of the ones that was really interested and I got her phone number right after the club meeting. It was real interesting to hear her studio. We talked more about teaching than anything. I talked to Glenda Reynolds, too, and she's been around since the eighties. Then I am going to talk to Dr. Coppell after the next Allegro Club meeting, so I'll get the president.

CG:

She's never been a member before.

ES:

Has she not? She just came in?

CG:

She just got her doctor's degree a month ago and decided she'd be the president.

ES:

Maybe I should do that. Come in, in the spring and be like, "I want to be president." No, no.

CG:

Her husband is the music director of his church, the Presbyterian Church.

ES:

Yeah, they were telling me.

CG:

I told him he should get his doctor's now for two hundred dollars a month. It costs a fortune and my time.

ES:

It does. That's one of the reasons why I took a job at Tech. They're paying for my PhD right now.

CG:

Oh well good.

ES:

I take a class a semester. It takes longer, obviously, but I take a class a semester and work full time and millions of years from now, I'll have a PhD. Let's see, who else have I talked to? I've got to call Miss Christmann in the next couple days. I wanted her to get back from her retreat.

CG:

Well talk to Catharine Leonard.

ES:

Okay.

CG:

She's been an officer off and on here and there for years, and her sister is the president now, the district president of the music clubs. Marsha Evans, she did that after her husband died. She got interested.

ES:

I think I talked to Marsha on the phone one day or something. I need to get back in touch with her.

CG:

Catherine and I worked together to sell pecans for years making money.

ES:

Tell me about that because I've heard in passing y'all sold pecans for—?

CG:

So we could give scholarships.

ES:

So did you like pick the pecans out of your back yard and shell them?

CG:

No, there's a pecan orchard that picked them and shelled them if we wanted. Then we'd make a dollar or two for each package. We had to make the reservations early and tell them how many pounds we wanted and they'd bring them to us or we'd have to go get them, and then the members would buy them and we'd have to deliver them to them or get them to come by the house and pick them up and get them to pay. It's hard to get them to pay. They said, "Well, I can't pay this month. I'll give you the money next month."

ES:

Oh gosh, it sounds kind of like the Girl Scout Cookie stuff.

CG:

And we didn't make enough, so last year we voted to donate the money instead of trying to sell pecans, but we give so many scholarships.

ES:

So maybe that's one of the lasting legacies of club work. You get a lot of scholarships and help out the area students.

CG:

Oh yeah. We donate a lot of money to all the colleges. We've donated quite a bit of money to the high schools. Four of our high schools are playing in Pasadena, the first time they've ever invited anybody from Texas to come.

ES:

For the Rose Bowl, yeah, and those uniforms with the Texas flag, they are very pretty, they're very nice.

CG:

They cost two hundred dollars apiece, and they let us have most of them for a hundred. The children are getting to keep them.

ES:

Can you imagine? You grow up and you can show your kids, "I marched in the Rose Bowl and here's my uniform." That's really great.

CG:

And their performance at some other places to raise money.

ES:

Let's see, I'm going to look over my questions one more time. I think I've asked mostly everything. Were there any other names that you could think of? I don't want to say old timers, but long timers?

CG:

The one that's trying to raise money for them to go to the Rose Bowl, have you talked to him? He was the head of the music department of all over Texas.

ES:

I've got his contact information in here.

CG:

Be sure and talk to him. I taught with his—the one who took his place—I taught with him over in Pampa, and then he took over here in Lubbock, and then this guy took over from him. I always have trouble remembering his name, but he's retired.

ES:

I'm awful with names.

CG:

But he's retired now.

ES:

That's why I write everything down because I'm awful with remembering things. Do you have any questions for me?

CG:

I don't guess so.

ES:

I wanted to make sure I asked just in case you had anything you wanted to ask me. If not, then I'm going to turn this off unless you've got one more story for me.

CG:

I don't guess so.

ES:

Okay. That's just fine. I think we've gotten a lot of stories today, so that's great.

CG:

Well, I'm really proud of you for doing all of this.

ES:

Oh well, thank you, thank you, I really enjoy doing this actually. I really like figuring out this history that hasn't really been talked about, so it's great.

End of Recording