

Sun Cities Area Historical Society
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Case # 203

Interview with Bernice Wallace

August 29, 1991

Date of Birth: March 25, 1895

Place of Birth: Egra, Oklahoma

Bernice was an early resident of Sun City.

Synopsis:

- Father born June 30, 1861; mother born October 7, 1861; they were farmers without much formal education. Only one of my 5 brothers had an education
- Moved to Colorado in the 6th grade; parents farmed.
- Worked in aunt and uncle's store with my younger brothers. There I met my future husband. We were married in 1919 in Boulder, CO.
- Husband died from influenza in 1932.
- I worked in Tinkerville for 18 years at layout table making patterns from blueprints; had military clearance.
- Remarried in 1950; husband worked in the oil fields. Daughter married the same year.
- Moved to Sun City in 1960 after reading about Sun City in magazine ad. Paid cash for house. If houses had problems during first year, city fixed them
- Joined Oklahoma Club, fitness group, exercise group, played cards, and volunteered in many other clubs. Del Webb would visit the clubs.
- Sun City was definitely an 'active' retirement community.
- Enjoyed the symphony and the Historical Society.

29 August 1991

Release Form

This interview agreement is made and entered into this 29th day of August, 1991, by and between Bernice Wallace (herein after called "Interviewee") and Melanie Sturgeon (herein after called "Interviewer".)

I agree to participate in a tape-recorded interview with Interviewer in association with her research on Sun City, this research being done under the supervision of the Arizona State University Graduate Program in Public History.

This agreement relates to any and all materials originating from this interview or subsequent interviews by the Interviewer, namely the tape recordings and the indexes and abstracts of the interview, and any other written materials, including but not limited to notes, transcripts, or any other materials prepared from the tapes.

In consideration of the mutual covenants, conditions, and terms set forth below, the parties hereby agree as follows:

1. Interviewee irrevocably assigns to the Sun City Area Historical Society and the Arizona Historical Foundation, co-owners, all his/her copyright, title, literary property rights, and interest in and to the Interview.
2. By virtue of this assignment, Interviewer and the Sun City Area Historical Society and the Arizona Historical Foundation will have the right to use the interview for research, educational, and other purposes, including possible publication.
3. All materials from the Interview, including but not limited to transcriptions or other finding aids prepared from the tapes, may be copied, reproduced and/or published.
4. Interviewee acknowledges that he/she will receive no remuneration or compensation for either his/her participation in the Interview or for the rights assigned hereunder.
5. Interviewer and the Sun City Area Historical Society and the Arizona Historical Foundation agree to honor any and all reasonable restrictions on the use of the Interview, if any, for the time specified below as follows:

Signed Bernice J. Wallace Date Aug 29-1991

Interviewee: Bernice J. Wallace (name)
10524 Desert Hills Ct. (address)
Sun City 85351

Signed Melanie J. Sturgeon Date Aug 29, 1991.

Interviewer Melanie J. Sturgeon (name)
1535 E. Hampton Circle (address)
Mesa, AZ 85204

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SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bernice Wallace

Interviewer: Melanie Sturgeon

29 August 1991

Transcriber: Belva McIntosh

8 August 2007

This is Melanie Sturgeon and on behalf of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society and the Arizona Historical Foundation, I am interviewing Bernice Wallace at her home in Sun City.

STURGEON: Bernice, can you tell me when your parents were born and where they were born?

WALLACE: They were born in Atchison, Kansas in 1861. Mother was in October 7th of '61 and Daddy was June 30, 1861. Both born in Atchison Kansas. There folks came overland. Mother's folks were from Kentucky and they came over ----- and they got to Kansas, Atchison Kansas was where a lot of them stopped. Daddy's folks were Pennsylvania Dutch and he ran away from home when he was only nine years old and followed a train with the people that was going overland. Two little brothers found him and they were about two weeks following this train and they took him home and took him to Indiana and raised him as their own son. He couldn't speak any English, he could only speak Dutch. He vowed when he got older he wouldn't speak Dutch. He would just speak English, because they called him Dutchie all the time at school. He didn't like that. That was my great grandfather. I don't know who his parents were or what there names were but my father's name was Holder and Mother's name was Sparks. Mother of course married my daddy and changed her name, so as they were opening the strip down in Oklahoma, my daddy with several others went down there and took some land that was free. The place was called Edgar later on when the railroad went through the little town there. It is about 25 miles east of Stillwater, that is where I was born. So I am the only girl with five brothers.

STURGEON: What did your parents do for a living?

WALLACE: They were farmers.

STURGEON: They got land in Oklahoma and then they farmed.

WALLACE: They farmed the land in Oklahoma that they went down there and homesteaded.

STURGEON: Do you know what your father's education level was? Did he graduate from school?

WALLACE: I don't think so. I never heard him say. I wouldn't think they did because they didn't have higher education at that time. Until my oldest brother, when he got out of 8th grade, they didn't have anything higher there and they sent him over to Stillwater to get his high school

education. The rest of us went through the little country school with one room. That is how we got started until Edgar got started then they built a nice school, high school there.

STURGEON: What about yourself? When were you born. Where were you born.

WALLACE: I was born March 25, 1895. I was born at Edgar.

STURGEON: That was a little town by your parent's farm.

WALLACE: Yes, well it was a little later but we always say we was born at Edgar because it is still there. At that time it was just a nice town but after ---these little towns all over the country -- it was when the automobiles came in and they could go from one town to another then it just ruined all the small little towns. Because they could go and do their trading and everything.

STURGEON: You mean economically it ruined them?

WALLACE: Yes. Now this town of Edgar had two banks, hardware stores, grocery stores and dry good stores, everything like that, but by the time the airplanes came there was nothing hardly there. The Post Office was still there but all the little stores were all gone. It just ruined it. It did all over the United States after the cars begun to come.

STURGEON: That is interesting. I didn't know that. Did you grow up there?

WALLACE: Yes, ma'am. But by the time the railroad came through it took half of Daddy's homestead and so he, to make the town of Edgar---and some of his neighbors that had homesteaded there had all ready moved to Colorado, to Rocky Ford, Colorado. They kept after Daddy to move out there so it was after we went out there I was in the sixth grade and lived there and went through High School in Rocky Ford Colorado.

STURGEON: You told me you were the only girl and you had five brothers. Were you the oldest?

WALLACE: No, I was the sixth one born.

STURGEON: So you were the youngest.

WALLACE: Well, Mother had two, a little girl and twins who passed away before I was born and so there was only six of us and two younger than me.

STURGEON: You said that only one of your brothers had a college education. Will you tell us how he got his education?

WALLACE: He had to be taken back and forth to Stillwater -- oh, the one that had the college education. He went to one of the colleges in Colorado. He got his education through the government. They sent him to college after he got through with his Army.

STURGEON: Did you spend most of your time in Colorado after the sixth grade? Did your parents farm there?

WALLACE: Yes, they did. They had ten acres and they grew sugar beets and cantaloupes and lettuce. Lots of things that they could send away to sell. So I packed maybe a crate of cantaloupes. My Daddy and I would do the crating while my brothers did the picking and would bring them in.

STURGEON: And were you by a little town, you said it was called Rocky Ford? How big was that?

WALLACE: Maybe a thousand and I think about fourteen before we left there again. It got to high for Daddy, it was higher than it was in Oklahoma and he began to get headaches. So we moved back to – after two of us had graduated from college, besides me and one of my younger brothers, so we moved back to Oklahoma. At that time Daddy worked in the oil fields after he got back to Oklahoma.

STURGEON: He didn't farm any more then.

WALLACE: No, he didn't farm any more.

STURGEON: What did he do in the oil fields?

WALLACE: He was one of the night men that watched over the drilling rigs at night. A watchman.

STURGEON: Did any of your brothers and sisters move back with you then?

WALLACE: The two younger ones did and they worked in the oil fields too. My younger brother that went to college, he came back to Oklahoma after he got through college.

STURGEON: Now what about your husband? Did you meet him there?

WALLACE: I met him there in Oklahoma, at the town of Quay and Yale – they were just like real close together. Yale was there for quite a while and then during the oil well boom they formed this town of Quay. It was a real nice big town all the time they had the oil there and drilling. So that is what my brothers did, and I worked in a – my aunt and uncle had a store and I worked in there all the time I was in Oklahoma and that is where I met my husband.

STURGEON: And what was he doing there?

WALLACE: He was a banker. He was working down at the bank in Yale, Oklahoma. Then after he came back from the service - he went to the war – and after he came back from the service then we got married in 1919.

STURGEON: World War I then.

WALLACE: Yes.

STURGEON: Did he go over to Europe and fight?

WALLACE: No, he didn't. He didn't get to. He was discouraged because he didn't get to make any trips, but he didn't get out of the United States.

STURGEON: Then after the war you got married.

WALLACE: We got married in 1919. We went to Boulder, Colorado.

STURGEON: What did you do there?

WALLACE: That is where we got married. My oldest brother was there. He had a restaurant there and we went up to visit him and it was right then when we got married.

STURGEON: Did you stay there?

WALLACE: No we came on back to Oklahoma. He was still working in the bank. He worked there in the bank until he passed away. It was when they had the flu and most of them had a high fever and all and after they got the flu they got pneumonia. My daddy and my husband died just three days apart.

STURGEON: Did you have any children?

WALLACE: I had a little girl. She was just three years old when my husband died.

STURGEON: So how did you support yourself after that?

WALLACE: Well, I lived on his insurance for a while because I was out on the farm, didn't have to pay any other things. Then there was an opening over in Stillwater, in the cafeteria as one of the cooks. One of my neighbors told me about it so I went over there and got the job.

STURGEON: Was this at a university or a school?

WALLACE: At the University there at Stillwater.

STURGEON: How long did you work there?

WALLACE: I worked there about three years, and during the war, then the war came on you know, there was a group of sailors that were there in Stillwater and I was the breakfast cook for them. There was about 250 of them. So then when I found out that I could go to Oklahoma City and work at Tinker Field during the war then I went and took the examination and started working for them.

STURGEON: Can you tell me what you did there? What the examination was?

WALLACE: It was, the instructor gave us points on how to drill holes and rivet and they called me Rosie the Riveter. It just made me feel good to think they thought that much of me. I worked there for 18 years, but after I was at Tinker Field for two weeks, the general supervisor came by and said, Bernice, I think you would be good on the layout table. Course I didn't know what the layout table was. So he told me and I said, oh that means a whole lot of arithmetic and he said yes it does. I said, I am not good at arithmetic and he said well we will tell you. So for the next eighteen years I was on the layout table making patterns from blueprints for the airplanes.

STURGEON: You were telling me you had clearance there. Can you tell me about that?

WALLACE: At first they didn't have blue prints because it was something new you know. As I had to be on all the airplanes cause they didn't have blue prints at that time and I had to go on all the airplanes, usually took off the part that I was supposed to make and brought it back and took all the measurements to make it. Of course I had to have clearance to do all that and I could go on any of the airplanes that I wished and had Roosevelt's plane there several times and I was on his plane several times. So that is how it was and when I quit, I could have worked five more years. You could work until you was seventy years old. Twenty five years or seventy was the way they put it. So I could have worked five more years at that time but I got married and we went to Oklahoma City. Course that was where I was working. Out of Oklahoma City at Tinker all those eighteen years. My daughter went to school, graduated eighth grade, went to high school then finished her college education down at Stillwater.

STURGEON: What did she get her degree in? What did she study?

WALLACE: I don't know what the name of it would be but she worked in the office. She worked in the office in Tinker Field for a while until she got married. She got married in Oklahoma City. They moved up to Wichita, Kansas for a while and then moved back to Oklahoma City and have been there ever since. They have three children and each of them have two. So that makes me three grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

STURGEON: About what year did you get married to your second husband?

WALLACE: 1950.

STURGEON: You kept working after you got married?

WALLACE: Yes.

STURGEON: I would like to go back and talk about the towns you lived in for just a few minutes. Did your parents ever get involved in the community at all when you were growing up? Were they in the PTA or the –or anything to do with the community?

WALLACE: No, because when we were small we were going to the little one room school house, from first grade to the eighth grade. At one time there was four of us in that school, so, I have a picture of us I will show it to you. When the town of Edgar started, it took half of my Daddy's homestead, that is when we moved from there to Colorado. I was in the sixth grade and when we went to Colorado we got there in the middle of the season and then I had to take the sixth grade over because that put me a year back to graduate from high school. That was the way it was with us. Our one little school house wasn't big enough then when the town of Edgar came they built a nice big high school there.

STURGEON: Did your mother or father, were they active in a church?

WALLACE: Oh yes. We always went to Sunday school. That was one of the things we had to do same as getting dressed and going to school. We went to Sunday school and church. They didn't get activated, I call it, in anything like they do now because they had too much to do on the farm. And everybody else around were all farmers. They met at church, the Fourth of July we, the whole neighborhood, all came and had a picnic together. We always had some kind of speaker there to talk to them. Usually it was somebody running for congress of something like that. So that was just the way they did in those days. Of course when the oil came in it moved everything different.

STURGEON: When you moved to Oklahoma City were you involved in the community yourself, did you do anything at all, like PTA or anything like that when you were an adult?

WALLACE: No, I didn't because I was working all the time. Then of course later on I went to college. I was always in our Sunday school class. Sometimes I was president of the class. We always had a class, same way with my daughter. That was one of the things she had to do just like when we were kids. She had to go to Sunday school and church.

STURGEON: When you lived in Oklahoma City what kind of a town would you describe that as? What was it like?

WALLACE: It was a real large town. It was about – I can't remember just how many people but it was a large city.

STURGEON: Where did you live, I don't mean your street address but what kind of a neighborhood did you live in when you lived there?

WALLACE: We moved into a good neighborhood and we tried to get our rooms in a place close to school so my daughter didn't have to walk too far.

STURGEON: You didn't buy a house there?

WALLACE: No, not until my brother was married, she was married in 1950, after she was married there was a house right across the street from one of my workers out in the field. They told me about it and said for a thousand dollars I could buy it, he just spent a thousand dollars on

it and it was practically new so I bought it and just changed the name from his to mine and just went right out there.

STURGEON: Did your daughter get married the same year you did then? You said you were married in 1950.

WALLACE: Yes, they got married before I moved out to my own house.

STURGEON: Then you got married the same year, is that right?

WALLACE: Yes.

STURGEON: And your husband moved out to your house with you?

WALLACE: Yes. We moved from there to out here. We went down to New Mexico for three weeks, old Mexico rather, excuse me. My brother and his wife was with us because they had been down to Mexico several times. So we went down there and stayed there for three weeks. Then we came back here. My husband had seen a little ad in the paper or a magazine about Sun City, and I had some friends, I grew up with in high school in Phoenix. So I stopped by to see them and they came out here with us and we looked at everything. We were told not to buy anything that faced the west. There were some houses, one or two houses on 111th that faced, over on Youngtown, so we didn't want that and they said they would be making and selling more houses. So in June we got notice from them and came out and bought our place at that time. It was nothing but a cotton patch of course. But they built our place and in November we were out here because they had it all fixed up for us to come. That was 1960.

STURGEON: What did your husband do for a living?

WALLACE: He was working in the oil fields.

STURGEON: What did he do there?

WALLACE: He was a – I can't think of the name right now - ----- . But he was buying land to drill and he didn't do any of the drilling himself but he was out buying land for it.

STURGEON: For the oil company.

WALLACE: So that is what he did until we were married and then we moved out here of course. We got acquainted with everybody who was new – we were all new. It was wonderful to get acquainted.

STURGEON: Before we talk a little bit more about Sun City, I was wondering if you could answer some questions I have about the depression. Do you remember what it was like during the depression?

WALLACE: Well, it didn't affect us too much because my husband was in the bank. That was before we were married you know. I shouldn't have said it that way. He was in the bank when we were married and I had this little girl and she was three years old. But he had a salary all the time like he was getting and my daddy was working out on the farm. They weren't farming but they were living out there. They raised some cows and stock and things they needed.

STURGEON: What year did your first husband die then?

WALLACE: In 1932.

STURGEON: So he died about at the beginning of the depression. Was it hard for you after that?

WALLACE: No. Because we were out on the farm and had some insurance from the insurance. Daddy was working out in the oil fields. By raising all of our meat out on the farm it wasn't hard for us at all. It was at that time when I learned to drive the car. My older brother was down there at one time. He was working in the oil fields for a while. To go to parties and things in town I would have to ask him to take me, so one night he got disgusted with me and he said, now Sis, you have seen me drive that car many times now go out and drive it yourself. That was the only instructions I had but I got to town and I got back all right.

STURGEON: Do you remember what working conditions were like for other people during the depression? Did you have relatives that had a hard time?

WALLACE: No, all my relatives had work because they could do different things. We had a sugar factory there in Rocky Ford and in the fall everybody would do sugar beets. They would be working in the Sugar Beet factory, which lasted several months, winter months. That was real good for so many of them around Rocky Ford because it was quite big at the time. Like everything else it grew. The sugar factory got shut down but people were doing other things besides. I guess it was because they didn't have enough sugar beets to take care of.

STURGEON: So, what did your brothers do after the sugar beet factory closed down?

WALLACE: The brother older than I was down at the round house down at Wilhuta down at the Santa Fe shops. He got a job down there and worked there for years. The other two brothers, one had gone to Oklahoma City and he was working in a bakery and the other brother moved to Colorado and was working out there at something, I don't remember what it was, they had about five acres of land and they grew something. They had chickens and stuff like that. His wife was a beautician and she fixed ladies hair, had a shop and it worked out fine.

STURGEON: Do you remember when they passed the Social Security Act?

WALLACE: Well, I remember it but it didn't seem to affect me or anybody I knew. I never thought much about it.

STURGEON: When did your father retire? Did he quit work?

WALLACE: He didn't retire until he got sick. He was 71. He was working until he got sick.

STURGEON: Did social security help him all that you remember?

WALLACE: After I moved out to Colorado and out here, after I got married to my other husband out here. I was getting mine from the government insurance you know. I was working for the government all the time, eighteen years. When I retired then I got my own and then when my husband passed away I got his social security.

STURGEON: As you started to think about retiring yourself, what were your plans for the future? What were you thinking about, you and your husband, when it was about time for you to retire?

WALLACE: We were just thinking about how wonderful it was to be able to live out here in Sun City. We were just having such wonderful times.

STURGEON: But before you came out to Sun City you went on your trip to Mexico. Were you thinking about moving somewhere else?

WALLACE: No, we hadn't at all. Because, my husband, as I said, he was in the bank and so we just decided to keep on working there. Course when I got married the second time and came out here, he wasn't doing anything except he was living on the income he got from the pension that he would get from the oil company's he worked for. He worked for the City Service Oil Company for a long, long time.

STURGEON: As you were getting older – how old were you when you retired? I don't think I ask you that.

WALLACE: I was 65.

STURGEON: How old was your husband?

WALLACE: He was 65.

STURGEON: So when you were thinking about retiring were you concerned all about your health, or your future health or how you were going to support yourself?

WALLACE: No, everything was on a different level than it is now when we first came out here. We didn't have to – everything was cheaper, much cheaper, so we got along just fine with his and my pensions. It was just wonderful.

STURGEON: When you retired where were you living?

WALLACE: I was living in Oklahoma City.

STURGEON: How long had you been living there?

WALLACE: Eighteen years.

STURGEON: I know that you had answered that before but I just wanted to make sure. Now, tell me again how you first heard about Sun City?

WALLACE: Well it was while we were on our trip down to Mexico that my husband found a little ad in one of the magazines about Sun City that they were just opening up a new city and so when we came up from Mexico we came up around Guadalajara around on the west coast and came up that way so we came right straight up to Tucson and then up to Phoenix and then we came up here with my friends that were living here. They had been here for a long time because he was president of the Salt River Project for a while. So they said it was wonderful out here and they knew Del Webb, had for several years. Of course we became acquainted with him right away. We thought what a wonderful person he was. Everybody loved him.

STURGEON: When your husband saw that ad the first time what was it about Sun City that made him want to come up here and look at it?

WALLACE: Well, he thought that would be a nice place to live out here in Arizona. My friends the Smith's were here and had been for a long time. They thought we should be out here anyway. So that is why we came out and looked over everything, the houses they had built. Course this one is number two of the houses they had.

STURGEON: What did you like about it when you saw it? The town – what was it you liked about it that made you come here?

WALLACE: We liked it real well because having friends here we weren't at all without company. Then we would come out to see the Smith's and they would come out to see us also. So we just had a wonderful time. And then we got acquainted with all these new people that were here from all walks of life. You would just be surprised how much fun we had and we still do.

STURGEON: Has Sun City been everything you thought it was going to be?

WALLACE: Yes.

STURGEON: Were you at all worried about moving to a place where they didn't – I mean it was sort of a community but it wasn't really a community yet? It just had a few houses, were you worried about that?

WALLACE: No because Del Webb was good at seeing ahead. Because he had fixed everything, the shopping centers, he had a place for everybody to go and play tennis or do things that they liked. They had a hotel already built. They had all the – everything you would want. Grocery stores, hardware stores, whatever you needed. It was right here.

STURGEON: Were those here when you first came?

WALLACE: Yes. That is what Del Webb did. He built all these things and got people in them before he started building and asking people to come out here to live. He was a wonderful man. We knew him personally and he was so good. We thought so much of him.

STURGEON: Where did you meet him?

WALLACE: Right here in Sun City.

STURGEON: In the very early days in Sun City?

WALLACE: In the early days, before we even bought a place. We were talking to him and all and it was through him telling us that he was going to enlarge and build the city right away. He sent us a letter telling us to come and pick out a place.

STURGEON: Did he send you a map of the city? And you just sort of picked out where you wanted to live?

WALLACE: Yes. It was just wonderful. We had churches. We had just one church to start with. It started up in the community center and that was, I think there were 100 or something like that when we first joined the church. It just kept growing from then on.

STURGEON: Are you still living in the first house that you bought?

WALLACE: Yes, ma'am.

STURGEON: Why did you decide to stay in this house? A lot of people I have talked to had moved a couple of times.

WALLACE: Oh, we are in a cul-de-sac here. The people that were in here were so wonderful that we would get together about once a month and have a whole evening together and have the most fun. We would do it about once a month. We got acquainted with each other so much. All of these around here. One of our preachers said he visited everyone around and he said if he ever wanted to move or had to move he would like to move out in the courts. He just liked it so well. It is so calm and peaceful. There is hardly any traffic you know.

STURGEON: Were you the first house built on this cul-de-sac?

WALLACE: No, they were all built at the same time. That is the way he did. He didn't build just one house and wait until it was sold. He build a whole group of houses and then people would buy those houses. They were already build, a lot of them. But then before we got this we had chosen the model we wished to have at our place and then that is the house he built. He had a -- everything was ready---we had told him what house we needed and everything but by the time we got in it all the rest of the people had got their houses built too. It was all built up and a lot of people were already in it when we got here.

STURGEON: And you got this place in June and moved out here in November, is that right? So you were here that very first year.

WALLACE: Yes.

STURGEON: So the town wasn't very big then was it?

WALLACE: No, ours was the second group of houses to be built. After they built up here then down to Sun City Boulevard and that was the second group. Then it just kept growing from then on.

STURGEON: Would you tell me a little about the community center? Did you get involved in that at all?

WALLACE: Yes, we all got involved in that. We had exercise classes. We came to everything we could. I tell you we all joined everything. Then we found we couldn't go to everything so we just chose the ones we liked the most. So that is the way we ended up. They had Eastern Star clubs, any kind of club you wanted, they had Oklahoma clubs. Tom Tate had an Oklahoma Club down at Tom Tate's at that time. We would meet there once a month.

STURGEON: Were there a lot of people from Oklahoma?

WALLACE: We had about 100 people at that time.

STURGEON: Were any of them friends of yours that you knew before you came out here?

WALLACE: Not until after we got acquainted with them.

STURGEON: So you made the friends here.

WALLACE: Yes, we made most of our friend's right here.

STURGEON: What kinds of groups did you join?

WALLACE: Well, we played cards, we had the card games, and in most of our clubs we had cards and sometimes we would just have a get together and talk. That was when we wouldn't have but about an hour or something like that. But in the afternoon we would usually have our clubs. We would play cards. I can't tell you right now what clubs I belonged to cause there were so many. My husband belonged to the extra ones to what I didn't. So that was what it would be.

End of side A. Turned to side B.

STURGEON: You told me earlier that you met Del Webb. Did you have any other meetings with him after that?

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WALLACE: Yes, we made most of our friend's right here.

STURGEON: What kinds of groups did you join?

WALLACE: Well, we played cards, we had the card games, and in most of our clubs we had cards and sometimes we would just have a get together and talk. That was when we wouldn't have but about an hour or something like that. But in the afternoon we would usually have our clubs. We would play cards. I can't tell you right now what clubs I belonged to cause there were so many. My husband belonged to the extra ones to what I didn't. So that was what it would be.

End of side A. Turned to side B.

STURGEON: You told me earlier that you met Del Webb. Did you have any other meetings with him after that?

WALLACE: Well, we would see each other at all the clubs. He went around to all the clubs. Everybody had a chance to know him. He would come around and he always would say Hi to all of us that he had met before. He was so nice, kind and good. Sun City just grew fast as long as Del Webb was right here to take care of everything.

STURGEON: Well, when things went wrong with your house, who fixed those? Was it the Del Webb Company or did you do that yourselves?

WALLACE: We had to do it ourselves.

STURGEON: What about the first year that you owned your house, do you remember?

WALLACE: If there was anything that didn't turn out like it should have been to start with they always replaced it. If something was broken or got out of order right away they always came in and fixed it.

STURGEON: Were you ever a hostesses in any of the model homes?

WALLACE: No, I never was. Because I didn't get here that soon you know. All those that were hostesses were those that came real early, that lived here to start with and were still here when we came. There were about 100 or so when we came.

STURGEON: A hundred in the whole town?

WALLACE: Yes.

STURGEON: As you look back on Sun City in the time that you have lived here what kind of problems do you think that Sun City has had?

WALLACE: Well, I don't think there were too many to start with because everybody was so congenial. If anything needed fixing they took it to the people that was in charge and they took care of it right away. I don't know of anything that happened at that time.

STURGEON: What about a couple of years later, for instance when there were a group of people that wanted to incorporate Sun City and there was another group that didn't want to. Did you see that as a problem?

WALLACE: Well, no, because we were among the ones that didn't want to incorporate because we were living so well and doing so good. But we always thought that the reason they wanted to incorporate was that they wanted a job.

STURGEON: The people that pushed for it wanted to be Mayor or something?

WALLACE: Yes.

STURGEON: Did they ever tell you the advantage to being incorporated?

WALLACE: They tried to tell us at the time they were trying to get it and they are still at it. It has been that way all these years. All these thirty one years now, a lot of people think yet they ought to be incorporated. The same with Sun City West. They are after them now to do that too.

STURGEON: Did Sun City have any problems after Del Webb sort of pulled out for a while?

WALLACE: Well, I imagine there were, like it would be with anybody when the boss was gone. Someone had to take over and they might have done something that somebody didn't like, they always do you know. But as a whole everything was going on fine.

STURGEON: I know that when Sun City was built they didn't have any hospital or medical facilities. Was that a concern to you as you were thinking about growing older?

WALLACE: No, I didn't think about growing older. I was just enjoying everything as it came along. But it wasn't long after the city grew so fast that they decided they should have a hospital so we all chipped in with money and started a hospital.

STURGEON: The people of Sun City did that?

WALLACE: The people of Sun City did that and got it started with enough money to start with it and finish it up and have it all ready for us. You know, that was how it was for anything. Now in the church somebody would mention the fact that we needed to have this done or this or this. Whatever it was, whether it was an electrician or something else they came right then to the church office and said, I will do that for you. I'll do this and I'll do that. That is the way they did. They didn't have to pay them. They would just to volunteer to do things that needed done. Course that isn't the way it is now but that is the way it was to start with.

STURGEON: Did you ever work after you got here? Did you have to go to work?

WALLACE: No, I didn't.

STURGEON: Well, after you moved here did you have any friends who came out here because you wrote back and said this is a wonderful place, come out here?

WALLACE: Oh, we tried to get a lot of them to do that but they would usually go someplace where they had some relatives.

STURGEON: Did you have any relatives who moved out here? You just came out here – you were pioneers by yourselves?

WALLACE: We were just all by ourselves.

STURGEON: Did you ever have any financial concerns? Were you ever looking down the road saying, gosh maybe when we are 90 years old we aren't going to have enough money to support ourselves?

WALLACE: No, we never even thought anything about that because I had my income and my husband had his income and between the two of us we just did fine.

STURGEON: When you bought this house how were you able to finance this house?

WALLACE: Well, as I told you I bought my house in Oklahoma City and with the money I got from that I just placed it right down in here.

STURGEON: So did you pay cash for your house then?

WALLACE: We paid cash for our house. I sold my house for \$8,000 and I just put it right in here and my husband finished the rest of it and we had it all paid.

STURGEON: You didn't have to get FHA financing or anything.

WALLACE: It was nice. We could have it paid right quick.

STURGEON: As Sun City started to get larger and larger, now it is very large did you feel like the community changed at all?

WALLACE: Well, we knew it was changing all the time, but for us, we had our friends that we had all these years and it didn't affect us very much. The only way we could tell the difference was the ones coming to the clubs. Of course as I said before we had the Eastern Star and every thing you could think of. We didn't notice too much and on top of that we were happy to meet new ones.

STURGEON: It grew a lot in the first few years didn't it?

WALLACE: Yes.

STURGEON: So you must have been meeting new people all the time.

WALLACE: All the time. They were always glad to have people that knew them too. They would get around to different clubs and meet everybody.

STURGEON: Do you remember when you came out here to look at the model homes the first time before you ever bought your house, do you remember a survey or anything they gave you asking questions about yourself, the Del Webb Company or the salesmen or things that you liked.

WALLACE Well if he was asking what we liked he could have been asking my husband more than he did me because you know men talk to men. To my knowledge I don't remember them ever saying anything different.

STURGEON: After you moved into your house do you remember them sending around a survey to the people who lived here and asking you to fill out some questions about what you liked about Sun City? Do you remember doing that?

WALLACE: No I don't remember that if they did. It could have been my husband filled out a lot of things and I did say well you go ahead and fill it out. That could have been at that time.

STURGEON: When you came here there was a community center and a golf course and lots of stores, and a few houses. How did they organize the first clubs? You must have been in some of the very first ones. Do you remember how they went about organizing them?

WALLACE: Well, they would get us together and ask us about different things. Like everybody that came from one town, or from one state they always had that state. I was from Oklahoma we had over a hundred in there from Oklahoma. That lasted for several years until we got other clubs and we got so interested in other things just the Oklahoma club. It seems to me the only way that we started was by meeting with other friends and say well let's get this club started or something. That is the way they started a lot of them.

STURGEON: Do you remember Tom Austin?

WALLACE: Oh yes.

STURGEON: What did he do here?

WALLACE: He was the one that seemed to look out after everybody and see that everything was OK.

STURGEON: Did you ever go to the community center and meet with him when he was trying to organize groups? Do you remember doing that?

WALLACE: Yes, I remember, but I don't remember what took place at that time. He just saw that everybody was interest and pleased with everything they had.

STURGEON: Did you think that was helpful having him do that?

WALLACE: Oh I think so. I think it helped a whole lot.

STURGEON: When you moved into your house did they give you that little key ceremony?

WALLACE: Oh yes,

STURGEON: Could you describe that for me? What did they do? Did they have a little ceremony where somebody brought you into the house and gave you the key?

WALLACE: Well we called him the key man. He would always would bring us in and check over the house for everything and see that everything was all right. If it wasn't he would fix it up before he would let us come in. I am trying to think of his name. That is the trouble sometime as you get older, you have to stop and try to think of somebody's name. The keys were always turned over to us and checked everything. I think everything was OK by the time we did receive our keys.

STURGEON: When you moved into the neighborhood did you have a committee who would go and introduce themselves or did everybody in the neighborhood just go over and meet the new person?

WALLACE: I'll tell you what. We had the nicest preacher and when we started the first church we had here and he, Dr. Walter Witt and his wife Gladys and they are still living now.

STURGEON: Yes, they are on my list to interview.

WALLACE: He had the presence of mind to get all of us in the community in one little spot and once a month we would all get together and the same way he would do it over this way and over the other way. All over his –of course the preachers went to visit everybody when they first came. That is the way he did it. He had these little groups of people getting together and then we would meet on Sundays at church as you know. We would get to talking to different people and so forth and where do you live and I live in such and such a place. That is how we got to know so many people in the church. He was a good organizer to get our first preacher for the first church. He had us build a lovely one.

STURGEON: You told me earlier that a lot of things people did they volunteered. Is that right?

WALLACE: Oh yes. Like in church if they needed to have – if something happened to their electricity or they needed something new to what they had, is there anybody who would like to volunteer. Hands would rise and a whole bunch of them and they would all come down and fix everything. That is the way they did when we first came. They didn't have to pay for it like we wouldn't have enough money to pay for things like that so people would volunteer. You would just be surprised at the number of wonderful people that we had here from all walks of life that knew so much. I think that is the reason that it did so well. They weren't afraid to work and they all did. I know my husband was with a lot of the others before they built the church and they all got together one morning and raked and did anything and got the grounds all nice to where they could start to building. And it was just wonderful. The men did that all the time. They had a men's club in the church and they still do and it makes it so nice. Usually the women are the one's who are doing everything in the church but this time the men do things and they still have the men's groups who do things and they have yet have a man who has taken pictures all over the world and they come and bring all their pictures and the man is there and tells all about them and it is just real nice. They have about six or eight of those during the year.

STURGEON: When they opened the lodge – is that a retirement home? Do they have a retirement like a nursing home here in Sun City?

WALLACE: They have a lot of nursing homes.

STURGEON: Did the citizens of Sun City organize those too?

WALLACE: No, I think that was done through the hospitals. And then they have got so many of them around in Sun City here. Ten or twelve. So many of the people have sold their homes and moved into there where they could have all their needs taken care of.

STURGEON: Do you think your daughter will come out here when she wants to retire?

WALLACE: I don't know, she keeps wanting me to retire. I told her as soon as I – when I get to the place where I can't take care of myself I'll say. And she wants to know when that will be and I say when I can't drive the car anymore. I'll come down and live with her. She has been wanting me to come down and live with her.

STURGEON: Do you think you will do that?

WALLACE: Well, I don't know. As long as I can drive and take care of myself. I got my driver's license for four more years.

STURGEON: Well, just hand in there. Did you meet Dorothy here? Was she a neighbor then?

WALLACE: No, she wasn't a neighbor. She was in different things in the church and different organizations that we would go to and we would meet. That is how we all met, going to different organizations, because we didn't know each other until we did that. And a lot of the women, you know, were the hostess, they would take them on trips down to Phoenix and around different places. They had buses, Del Webb had buses that went into Phoenix and take people down there and around, so the women were the hostesses on the bus and would tell all about the places they were going.

STURGEON: Did you find very many of your neighbors unhappy with Sun City? Did some of them move away or did they mostly stay here?

WALLACE: Oh no. I don't know of anybody who was unhappy with Sun City. There maybe could have been some, but it was there own fault if they were unhappy because everybody was good to everybody else. You say, I'm so and so, introduce yourself and you would meet somebody you didn't know who it was. It was just real nice.

STURGEON: As you look back over your years in Sun City how would you describe the community?

WALLACE: Well, it is a community that works for everybody else, not only for themselves but for others. Cause that is what counted. The way it started it was working for others and get

acquainted and help if they needed help. There was always somebody right there to help and that is the way it has been all these years. At least it has been where I have been.

STURGEON: When you were thinking of retiring did you have friends around you who had retired earlier that you looked at and at their life style and said I don't want to do this or this is what I want to do?

WALLACE: Well I didn't have anybody to retire out here with me, my friends or anybody.

STURGEON: You said most of yours went somewhere else where they had family.

WALLACE: Where they would have families, but we didn't. We just came out here. Everybody thought we had just lost our minds.

STURGEON: Really? Why?

WALLACE: Because we came out to a place that nobody knew anything about – how it would be – how it would change so forth and so on. But we would have stickers on our car when we would go back and visit our friends. They always wanted to know all about Sun City. I think that is where a lot of people came out here because they – every time they would see a sticker on our car that said Sun City, Arizona they had a group of people around them.

STURGEON: Did you have a group of people come out here after that – after you went back home and told them about Sun City? Did anyone else move out here?

WALLACE: No there wasn't any of our friends move out but we had a lot of people visit us from all over the place. We had even Scott Carpenter, you know the astronaut?

STURGEON: He visited you?

WALLACE: Yes. He visited us. His daughter-in-law lived across the street in the house right there, and so they said he was coming to visit them and I said oh how nice it would be if they would come over and see us. So I didn't do anything but here he was one day and I got it down in the book where he was and how he come and visited us, he and his wife and three little children. They signed their name in our book. Yeah that is the way it was. Everybody was so – But he said to his folks don't tell anybody I am here. He didn't want to you know – but they knew I wanted to see him so he came over to see us.

STURGEON: How nice of him.

WALLACE: Wasn't that nice?

STURGEON: Yes that was nice. How long after you moved here did your husband pass away? Did you live here quite a while before he died?

WALLACE: It has been nine years since he passed away.

STURGEON: So you lived here quite a while then together.

WALLACE: It was so wonderful. He was such a wonderful person. So kind and good. Everybody loved him.

STURGEON: When you were looking at the ad, if you can go back to those ads, one of the things Del Webb was he talked about active retirement communities. Did that influence coming out here at all, all the active retirement?

WALLACE: Oh I think that was what it was because he didn't – at the time we were looking for a place, everybody you saw stopped and talked to you. It wasn't like you do not, you meet somebody on the street you just go on and never say a word because you don't know them. But everybody wanted to know everybody else. So that is the way was when we came out here, everybody stopped and talked to everybody else.

STURGEON: Have your perceptions of Sun City changed over all those years? Do you look at it any differently now than you did when you first got here?

WALLACE: No, I still love it like I did before. Even though it gets so hot, and some people keep saying how bad it is, they said I never heard you say anything about it and I say, no because there is nothing I can change. I don't try to do anything – if I can't change it I just know it is going to be that hot. I never say anything about it.

STURGEON: When Del Webb died it seemed like a lot of people in Sun City were really unhappy, or at least sad, I guess is the word. Do you remember that at all?

WALLACE: Oh, yes, we were all sad because everybody thought so much of him and he was doing so much for everybody that we thought well, maybe our place won't be like it used to be when he was here, but it didn't change much, because the men had been working under him just kept on doing what he had taught them to do. That is the way it changed. We still have our men now that takes care of everything.

STURGEON: Is it part of Del Webb's company that is still doing that?

WALLACE: Well it isn't his company but we have an office up here and they ----- every three years. But they stay in for three years. My husband was in on that too for three years. We went out to California and when we came back they told him that he was on the ---had been elected, so they watch over everything and take care of everything. If you have anything you need to know about they do see that you have it all taken care of.

STURGEON: And they are people from Sun City that do that.

WALLACE: Yeah ----- here in Sun City.

STURGEON: And who organized that the first time?

WALLACE: Well I think some of the group got together and did it.

STURGEON: Just the people in Sun City.

WALLACE: I just knew that they had to have somebody that they could rely on to turn to find out what they needed and that is the way they did it. We have had that all these years.

STURGEON: Since almost from the beginning of Sun City or did that happen quite a few years into -----

WALLACE: Well, almost from the beginning because - as a group of people got together and found out that needed to know this and that - well they needed to have somebody there that knew that so that is the way they had the election of officers and they still do. They have a building up here on 103rd - or 105th it is. So it is really taken care of and going along just like it has been all these years. If we don't like what they are doing, the people, why we wait for their year to be up and elect somebody to take their place.

STURGEON: Does Sun City have a symphony?

WALLACE: Yes.

STURGEON: And are they people who live in Sun City that are in the symphony?

WALLACE: That is right and oh it is beautiful. I haven't been going to it lately, the last few years because I can't drive after night. I mean I can but I don't like to. I don't have any restrictions in any of my driving. But when my husband was here and when it first started we always went to it and it was so wonderful.

STURGEON: What other kinds of groups did they have like that here?

WALLACE: Well, they had the Sun City group now that if you have anything that you would like to turn over to them, you can do it, put it in the house. Up here they have a house, Del Webb has given it to them

STURGEON: Right, the Historical Society?

WALLACE: Yes. That is the way we have been doing it - a lot of things. Whatever you have and you think they would like and so forth and so on. They really enjoy it - fix it up.

STURGEON: Yes, they do. Jane Freeman works very hard over there.

WALLACE: Oh, she really does. It hasn't been long since they had the old timer's up there. Had my picture in the paper at that time - and Dorothy.

STURGEON: Yes, I think she gave me one of her clippings so I could make a copy of it. Let's see, I have a picture, this one?

WALLACE: This one is the pioneers, but the last one, it was just the four of us. Took our pictures right across here. I don't know, I have mine stashed away some place. If I had know I - ----. Now this is Sarah Buds, here I am and this is Dorothy and this, I think this lady right here, I can't think of her name, she was 101. Actually so many people here are 100 already. There are quite a few ladies up at Sun Valley Lodge that are over 100.

STURGEON: It must be a great life style that people live that long.

WALLACE: Oh, yes. And Sarah has arthritis so badly that she just - of course she is waited on for everything, don't have to cook or wash or do anything, clean house, so she just , is real good.

STURGEON: Well let's go back to when you lived in Stillwater and you lived in an apartment. Can you tell me about your experiences there with your little girl and everything?

WALLACE: I lived in an apartment upstairs that was as close to the college as I could get and then when my mother got married again then my brother had to come over to Stillwater and live with me, until I got a different place. One time when we were playing tennis, I hadn't played in sometime after he came over to Stillwater. I turned around real quick and got a charley horse and I had a terrible time. It was awful and I had to work besides that. So I had to call a cab to go up to the doctor. We had a doctor that we always had over in Stillwater when we lived over in Quay, and he said well Bernice you have really got about the best charley horse that I have ever seen. If you will just wait a little bit until I close my office I will take you home. So he carried me up the stairs. He was so nice. We had known him for a long, long time. He called me and told me -----up the stairs and so then after that, my daughter came to live with me by then, we got a bigger apartment.

STURGEON: What kind of neighborhood did you live in? Can you describe the kinds of people who were living in your neighborhood?

WALLACE: Well they were just ordinary walks of life, I guess. Because I was busy all the time and I never got acquainted with my neighbors.

STURGEON: Did you have any Indians living there or black people?

WALLACE: No.

STURGEON: What about when you moved to Oklahoma City?

WALLACE: When we were kids, you see Oklahoma had a Negro college and it was one of the best in the United States and it was full all the time. It stayed there and I don't know if it was separated like it was before. Because it was wonderful. So many of them got such good jobs after they left there.

STURGEON: What about your neighborhood? When you lived in Oklahoma City did you have any black people in your neighborhood?

WALLACE: No. They were all south of 20th street. All of the black lived south of there.

STURGEON: So most of your neighbors were just like you, they were just people that worked?

WALLACE: Yes, most of them worked. Lots of them worked out at Tinker Field like I did because I rode – our cars were always full – I didn't have a car at that time and so I always rode in with somebody who had a car.

STURGEON: I would like to ask you a question about Quay. You told me that Quay was built up because of the oil? Was it a company town? Did the company build the town?

WALLACE: No it was a little town that started when the ----- railroad came through there. They branched off and came from Kansas City up to Oklahoma City and they called it the ----- and K&T. They are the ones that took the little town of Quay – the ones that took half of Daddy's homestead. So it was just real nice. I am mistaken. It was Ager that took Daddy's homestead. But Quay was mostly farmers, just like mother and daddy were. They when the oil people came they had to build houses for them.

STURGEON: The oil company built the houses?

WALLACE: The oil company built the houses out on their land.

STURGEON: So it was a town that had lots of farmers and then oil workers also.

WALLACE: Yes.

STURGEON: Was it a mixed town? Did it have older people and younger people all living in the same neighborhoods?

WALLACE: Yes. Just all over. They mixed up around in the whole place. Now most of the oil companies out on their leased lands, but some of them lived in town that worked for oil companies that had their own houses. It was real nice.

STURGEON: Did you like the fact that when you came out to Sun City that it was an age segregated community that you had to be 50 or older to live here and you couldn't have young people here?

WALLACE: Those things don't bother me because those are things I can't change. I never questioned it at all. Because if you don't like it you don't have to live there. So we knew when we came out that it was for the older people and if we didn't like it we shouldn't have bought at that time because we knew it was going to be that way.

STURGEON: Was that one of the reasons you came out here that you wanted to move to a place where they didn't have children?

WALLACE: No, it wasn't that because we just enjoyed children so much. But it was just the idea that we wanted to move out here as a place to live. Because we had our friends down in Phoenix.

STURGEON: Well thank you very much for the interview. It was very informative.

WALLACE: You are so welcome.