

## **Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society**

**Interviewee:** Sharon Buck

**Interviewer:** Tom Martin

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TM: Today is Friday, April 29, 2022. This is Part 3 of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Sharon Buck. My name is Tom Martin. Good morning, Sharon. How are you today?

SB: I'm fine, thank you.

TM: Great. Sharon, may we have your permission to record this oral history over the phone?

SB: Yes.

TM: Thank you. Sharon, you've been telling us these amazing stories about your childhood growing up in the brand-new town of Page, Arizona. I had a couple questions about that. I wondered— You had mentioned that one of the things that the town, the people living there tried to do, was to make things as normal as possible. Can you expand on that a little bit?

SB: Well, there were just— There were a lot of things that you would think in a town that was mostly trailers and plywood buildings and tin buildings and stuff like that that you might think would just be missing. And I think city planners, number one, wanted to, which would predominantly be the Bureau of Reclamation, but I give also the construction companies a lot of credit, I think they wanted to make this town as much like any other town as it could possibly be, considering that we didn't have the infrastructure that most towns had. And when it came to school things, I mean, we had assemblies, and they were maybe outside, but we still got together as a group. Also, when we would have a graduation, and I remember my eighth-grade graduation here, it couldn't have been any better if it had been in the city. We still wore nice clothes, nice dresses.

TM: What did you wear? Do you remember?

SB: I do. It was, kind of, for an eighth grader, now, it wouldn't be by today's standards at all what you might have called semiformal. Very fancy dress and fancy fabric, and I had all the typical cancan underneath, so my skirt stood out about four miles. Friends were all dressed the same, and we had as fancy a hairdo as eighth graders can have. They didn't just say, "Oh, you went to school in a tin building. Sorry, we don't have any place to make this really nice. Here's your diploma. Go home now." Everybody tried to make things really good. One of the first high school graduations was actually in the Bureau of Reclamation building, and they set up chairs, just like, you know, folding chairs like they would in the other area. And graduates walked down an aisle between the people. The girls' parents, mostly, had made or bought or something that resembled, like, a corsage which was very popular in the day. And, I mean,

they tried to make everything as good as it would have been had we have been living in some other town. And I think that made it even more special to me because I knew it wasn't easy for them to do all those things for us to make it good.

TM: Right.

SB: We had teen groups meeting, and different ones. Some of them were church groups. Some were kind of like pseudo scouting. We didn't go full scouting, but kids getting together to do some of those same things. The parents were willing to work with us, but the city also— Well, it wasn't a city. The Bureau of Reclamation also made it possible for us to use facilities or to have equipment or oftentimes provided us the money to do some of the things that we did and would have done had we been in a town that was fully developed. So, I felt very lucky when I first got here. I'm thinking, "Oh, I'm never going to have this graduation, or I'm never going to have this dance, or I'm never going to have this assembly. And I ended up having all of them.

TM: Sharon, I want to go back to your eighth-grade graduation for a bit. Where did you get your dress? Did your mom make it? Did you make it? Did you help her? Or did you buy it? How did that work? Do you remember?

SB: My mom was an amazing seamstress, but when we moved, everything, pretty much everything was left behind. They went to their home. Different aunts and uncles took pieces of furniture that would never fit in the trailer. And so, the sewing machine didn't come either. But thanks to Sears and Montgomery Ward, we all had nice clothes. We all had similar clothes, and sometimes we had identical clothes, because of that choices, but we all still had nice things.

TM: So, your dress would have been purchased out of a catalog.

SB: It was.

TM: Okay. Did it look in real life as good as you thought it did in the catalog?

SB: Oh, of course! I was in eighth grade. I thought it was even more beautiful.

TM: Perfect! Lovely. What else do you remember about that eighth-grade graduation?

SB: Oh, you know, it's the one and only I've ever had, and we had the guest speaker like they do at a graduation now. We didn't have— Oftentimes, they have the school band play or something like that, and we didn't have that. We still had everybody's parents with some little funky Brownie camera taking pictures. My eighth-grade graduation picture is with another girlfriend, and we are sitting outside of a big, old hunk of sandstone in our gorgeous dressy dresses. It just seemed normal. I mean, that was the right thing to do. Everybody fit in, and everybody helped everybody else. And you know, you didn't take a picture just two people. You took a picture of everybody. It was nice as my kids' eight-grade graduation only on a much smaller scale because there weren't that many of us.

TM: Right. And was that— Was your graduation, the eighth-grade graduation held on a, on a— Gosh, because I'm thinking that the dam construction would have been going 24 hours a day.

SB: Right.

TM: And how did the parents get the time off to attend their children's graduation? Because they would have had staggered days off and different work shifts.

SB: You know, I wish I could tell you the truth, but I will tell you my thought on this, because I don't know what those parents went through. This was a town where people really did try to work with each other. I didn't— I mean, I grew up in the same town and I had a big, big family so I had a lot of closeness but not with the community necessarily but with my extended family. Here it's like it was this big community, and

I honestly believe that if a dad needed to come into town for graduation, some other dad would have covered that shift. And I could be completely wrong. But we had parents there, and it wasn't just the moms. There were moms and dads there. So, somehow, they were able to trade shifts, or the job foreman just gave them the day off. And I mean, it didn't even have to be a day off if they could just have a couple of hours or three hours off to come for the graduation. And so, I saw their parents there. As a child, I never questioned how did the dads get to be there. It never crossed my mind until you asked.

TM: Okay. Okay. Because clearly, as you say, there would have been arrangements needed to be made and there were accommodations made. Yeah. So, was your graduation in the Bureau of Reclamation office building there?

SB: No. Mine was actually in one of the tin buildings, and what they had done, and I can't tell you because I wasn't that into it, there was a room added between, like, if the two buildings were almost side by side, they opened up a back end of one of the buildings so that it was kind of a meeting hall. And remember, there weren't that many of us then, so we could have an assembly back there. And it was actually the width of, like, maybe two and a third of the trailers because they put it together somehow. I would love to find a picture if I could for you, but right now I don't know where to look. I could try because you can see then that it was large enough to accommodate it. It made it seem just like a real graduation. Now, when they had— They had a graduation then that was a high-school graduation and an eighth-grade graduation, and it was before mine and because one of my friends was one year before and they did use the Bureau of Reclamation building that time. But by the time I did eighth grade, we did it in the tin buildings. I mean, people just— People would let you do anything. If you wanted to have a gathering of a church, say, before churches were built, most of the time people met in homes. That's where I went to church some. But oftentimes they were able to use school buildings for what they needed done or it was just an effort made by everybody to try to make this as real as possible. And there were a couple of reasons. Obviously, they wanted families to be content so they would stay, and dad wouldn't decide to move on because it was just too hard on his family. But I think, for the most part, it was just simply because they were really generous, kind people.

TM: Were there roughly 20 students in your eighth-grade graduating class?

SB: I don't think there were that many of us.

TM: Ten?

SB: I'm sure I have that someplace, but right at this moment I can't tell you that.

TM So, less than 20. Okay, small. What else do you remember about that ceremony?

SB: Not really a whole lot. I mean, as far as the ceremony was concerned, it just seemed to me that it was a very normal graduation ceremony. There were speeches. We didn't have any kind of a band at that time. I don't think that there was even any canned music. We were called one by one, I remember, to go forward and get a diploma and shake hands. And I just assumed that that was how every eighth-grade graduation was until, of course, then my daughter graduates and the band is there, and there's hundreds of people. But her class was also three or four times the size of mine.

TM: Right. Did you have a cap and gown?

SB: No. Just a really pretty dress.

TM: What other things do you remember that the town did to try to achieve normality?

SB: Well, one of the things, and I think it's just such a cool idea, and it's really exactly what it was intended to do, it gave kids a place to go pretty much seven days a week and it was called the Teen Canteen. There was a piece of property that was obviously bureau property that was donated. The lumber, supplies, metal— It was tin, again, in some places. Mostly plywood. The dads and many of the— Well, most of the

dads in this town were way more skilled in building things. I mean, that was their job. And we had what was called a Teen Canteen. To me it seemed like it was a nice, big room. Probably if I looked up the dimensions now, I would discover it wasn't that big. We had, like I said, donated equipment. Many, many dads came to work on it, and they had a plan. You know, here's the size of the building, and it's going to be this far off the ground, and it's going to be all these things. But then also, kids came with their dads, and I just remember the funniest thing because on the backside of the building, and I think it was going to be three windows, and there was a young man back there just working away, and he just built right across the window. I can remember being out there, and one of the other dads said, "Wasn't that supposed to be a window? And the second dad looked at him and said, "Yeah, but I think two's just perfect." I think things like that, you know, so the kids were involved in building it. Once it was done, it was only possible because any night it was open, it was manned by at least two parents. And if they didn't have two, the doors weren't open. There was a record player. People brought in their records. Some of them stayed there. When I took mine, I always made sure at the end of the day that if I brought my favorite five, I took home my favorite five because I didn't want somebody else to get them. We danced. We sat around and visited. Frequently, we had snacks, but when we did, that was only because the parents volunteered and just brought stuff in with them. There was always water to drink. Sometimes we had soda, sometimes not. I don't know. I just thought it was such a fun place. I loved music, and I love dancing, so as often as I could, based on what I needed to do in school, I was at the Teen Canteen, which was probably only the equivalent of at half of a city block or less from my home. It was pretty close to everybody's home.

TM: Nice. Nice and close. And what— Do you remember some of the records that you had? Do you remember who the performers were?

SB: Well, I know my very first one was Pat Boone's *April Love* because there was no place here— We didn't have, like, record stores and then Babbitt's decided that they would put in some records, and I'm not talking hundreds. Maybe the first shipment was 25 different records. But maybe there were four or five of the same ones, know what I mean?

TM: Yeah.

SB: Maybe there were hundreds of records that were for sale, but maybe only 25 choices.

TM: Right. Twenty-five titles.

SB: So, yes, we all had some records, so when we got together even not at the Teen Canteen, just, like, outside of each other's trailers, we would have an extension cord and play records. Everybody would bring their records and then at the end of the day, they would go home. I still have my record player, and I still have all my records.

TM: Well, good for you. That's great. Pat Boone. Where there are other artists that you liked? Who else do you remember in your record collection?

SB: Oh, well, there were so many because I just— Music— Well, that's what we had, you know. We didn't have TV, so music was it. I honestly can't recall right now. My husband and I were talking it the other day as we were traveling to Flagstaff. What was our favorite music and what we each brought what records first.

TM: And you like to dance. What kind of— Remind me again. What year was this when you were eighth and ninth grade?

SB: I graduated in '63, so '59 through '63, but it lasted forever. That's my favorite activity. If, you know, if I was going to get invited on a perfect date, I wanted it to a dance because that was so much fun. I love dancing.

TM: Nice. And what kind of dancing were you doing?

SB: Well, I called it jitterbug. I don't know what other people called it. I guess that's as good a name with anything I can come up with.

TM: Good enough. And I'm assuming that a lot of the kids probably would have been pretty good at that.

SB: Oh, I think so. I mean, when that's what you have to do, it didn't even matter if you were good. I don't think anybody judged. This wasn't like *American Bandstand* where they had judges out there. Everybody just danced with each other, and some people were really good, and some were not so good, and it didn't seem to matter.

TM: Okay, so the kids, some of them got to help their dads build the Teen Canteen.

SB: Right.

TM: Would that be open most nights or after school?

SB: On a Friday and Saturday, it seemed like it was always open then. Weeknights, if there could be, like I was saying, if there were parents. They tried to always have two parents there. If there were parents that were willing to come down and open it up, then you know, it could be a weeknight. But it was pretty much always Friday and Saturday. And then other days, you know, it's varied.

TM: Okay. Fun. So, it was just a nice place, it sounds like, for the kids to hang out outside of school or on the front porches in front of other people's trailers.

SB: Right.

TM: Okay. And then I'm thinking about the adults. Where would the adults hang out?

SB: [*Laughs*] I'm embarrassed to tell you this. I don't have a clue. My parents were, I mean, they gathered, like, just like we would do on a porch or with lawn chairs out in front. Frequently, that was it. But if it was like a big gathering of people, like for meetings or something like that, I think it was pretty much, like, in the warehouse or places along those lines. Once the schools were done, then the schools were used for everything. People could have a church service up there on a Sunday. You could have a meeting in one of the buildings. The town was very communal, if that's right word. Prior to that, I think it pretty much had to be just like people hanging out and outside with lawn chairs in front of their trailers. And it wasn't really good lawn chairs like we have now. It was all those woven hard ones.

TM: That's funny. Kind of the big, fat sort of vinyl weaving that if it sat in the sun too long, it might, kind of, rot a little bit.

SB: That's the chair! I know another thing that we did, and I think I mentioned this earlier, but if I did, then it's some repetition, is that they also would get movies. And I'm talking about relatively new movies, not new releases but within, like, two or three years, which for most of us who lived here for a long time hasn't seen any way. They projected them on a really big screen. And we had our chairs or blankets on a cement slab. And I think I paid a dime to watch a movie there. The sound was pretty awful. And of course, the picture was kind of grainy, but we didn't have television and obviously haven't seen those movies living here in Page. That was still a good time. Parents would come and bring their outside chairs again, their lawn chairs, and sit and watch movies.

TM: Right. Nice. You mentioned a place called Big Al's. Can you tell me about Big Al's?

SB: He was, like, our first teen hangout. It was like our first teen hangout place. In fact, when we had our sixtieth-class reunion, I had a trivia question with games, you know, they could win prizes. And some of them didn't even remember it. But it was a trailer, not a really big one. Maybe a, I don't know, maybe it's 20-foot trailer. And in front, there was a plywood platform that was a little bit off the ground so you weren't just in the dirt. And this trailer was not the place where— Well, I don't think, unless there was a bedroom in

the back. I started— It wasn't a place where Big Al lived. A hole had been cut like you see sometimes at carnivals now and at state fairs. A hole had been cut so there was a pass-through window. You could go down there and sit, like, on a picnic bench and have a Coke or— I honestly don't know what all they served because I only had the money to buy the Coke, but I'm sure there was ice cream and all kinds of things. And there was a little, sort of, a baby jukebox so you could listen to music, have a Coke, kind of like you would have in the city, except it was in the dirt at the side of the trailer.

TM: Okay, and who was Al?

SB: Well, he's the guy who ran it, and I never even knew him more than Al. I'm sure that if you had been able to talk to my parents, they probably knew where he lived and if he had family. And I never ever asked those kinds of questions.

TM: Okay, but it was just Big Al's, and it was a place to go to hang out. There was music there. There was food there, food and drink.

SB: At least drink. Like I said, I never had the extra money to buy food. I know there was things like chips and stuff like that, maybe cookies, if I remember correctly. But I always just had a soda.

TM: Okay, all right. But it seemed like a little more of an adult step up from the Teen Canteen.

SB: Yeah. Well, it's a little more grown up. Yeah.

TM: And that brings up a question for me about alcohol, being a reclamation town. I'm kind of thinking about Boulder City, the company town for the construction of the Hoover Dam. Was alcohol— Of course, surrounded by the reservation, was Page, or is even today, was alcohol then forbidden?

SB: Well, alcohol was consumed in town. It was never purchased in town. Again, remembering from a youth standpoint, I can remember people going over to Fredonia, and it was the border town of Arizona. Then they would come back with— I don't even know the amount, again, as a kid. I don't know if they came back with 20 cases of beer or five and it was one for each of your friends. But I know that alcohol was brought in. That was also one of the things that turned out to be, like, the joke because we didn't have a lot of things to do, and the men were unbelievably generous with their time and the construction companies and the bureau with supplies to some degree. When the churches were being built, after work, maybe, the guys would go home and get something to eat and then they'd come up and help work on one of the churches. We always knew when somebody had been out of town. My dad was always talking about all the workers were at the Catholic Church. Well, that was because the priest had had somebody bring in beer, so if you went and worked for an hour or whatever, you got to have a beer because it was not sold in town because we were on the reservation.

TM: Got it. So, it was a sweat equity kind of deal. You know, you pound nails for an hour, and we'll give you a cold beer.

SB: Yeah, it was.

TM: Great. That's a good deal. And it's funny you mentioned Fredonia, because there is still, I think, today an alcohol store, you know, just what, a number of yards from the from the state line. And I always assumed the purchasers were coming from the north. I didn't realize the purchasers would have been coming from the east, as well, from Page.

SB: Yeah.

TM: You want some beer, well, you got to drive down and cross the bridge and— Well, for you guys, the Fredonia run would have been right across the Glen Canyon arch bridge, and then it probably was a dirt road, I'm assuming, to Kanab. Is that right?

SB: Well, they also went a different way. And I honestly don't know. That's something, again, that an adult might know. But I know that there was a car accident with somebody that was coming from there, and it's— I, you know, I'm not even going to guess on that one now, Tom. I'm going to just say I simply don't know because as a kid, I honestly didn't pay attention.

TM: Right. Well, certainly before the dam the road, you know, Highway 89 ran up to Marble Canyon and Cliff Dwellers and Vermilion Cliffs, those places, and then on up to Jacob Lake and then down to Fredonia.

SB: Right.

TM: And you could head over to Kanab, but then once the dam came in, Utah pushed that road down toward, you know, what is the Fredonia side of the river. And the bridge, of course, was built right in front of the dam and that connected everything up.

SB: Right.

TM: So, people didn't need to go down to the gap to get on Highway 89 to go up and cross on the Navajo Bridge because they could cross right there at Page to get to Fredonia. So, it must have been an easier, much easier drive, way easier than driving to Flagstaff.

SB: Oh, it was, and you know, some of the roads then going out across the reservation were still pretty awful. And, as in the day, many of them were very narrow, so of course, it made it very dangerous driving. So, when they opened it up and cut the drive down, that helped a lot. Then people going all the way around, especially if they were going all the way around to, maybe to drink or to bought, maybe they drank and then brought the alcohol and brought it back, they had a very long, dangerous trip back.

TM: Okay. Do you remember anyone playing a band or singing?

SB: Playing in a band?

TM: Yeah. Did anyone have any band going there that they would play after work?

SB: Oh, just for music and stuff?

TM: Yeah.

SB: I don't remember that, no.

TM: You also mentioned the warehouse. I don't think I've asked you about that. Maybe I have.

SB: That building is actually still here. It's still a big, old metal building. I mean, they have— *[Laughs]* It's not the same old, rotten building. It is, but it's been fixed, and you know, they've added some windows and they've made it into a much more modern and— You know, over the years, probably most things have been replaced as they age, you know, with new stuff. But the building is still there. I have not been in it in, oh, probably since we moved back I've not been in that building.

TM: Okay. What are your childhood memories of it?

SB: The only one that I really had was, because there was no reason for me to go in, the strongest one was the graduation ceremony, and it was before I even graduated from eighth grade. One of the gals, ladies, well, she's lady now, but she was a girl that was a friend. She lived on C Street, and we lived on A Street. And Alice was in the graduation, so I went to that eighth-grade graduation, and it was nice. It was just so big. You know, I mean, it's a warehouse and it's so, like, empty like nobody was there. Unlike my graduation, where many of us were in a much smaller area, it seemed nicer to me because we were all close together and, you know, the sound was better. But that was still a super thing to happen because, like I said, everybody tried to give kids the full experience. And that was a great— You know, had a graduation.

TM: Nice.

SB: We needed to do that.

TM: I think of the word cavernous as a—

SB: Yes, that's a good word.

TM: —as a way to describe, maybe, the warehouse as a child would see it.

SB: That's a super word.

TM: Okay. Do you remember the construction of the Wahweap Marina at all? Did you ever get over there and see what was going on?

SB: A little bit. Not, I mean— When it first came, it was nothing like it is now. It's very small and then that one got, things got added onto, you know. It grew just like the town grew, so to see the beginning of stuff like that, yes, yes, we did. My dad was Mr. Curious, so anytime he had an opportunity to go look at some construction or something like that, and I liked to tag along because I probably was equally curious, and so we watched a lot of things, kind of from the ground up, and that was interesting to see. It's just so sad that we're where we are now. We just took friends out yesterday to look at what's going on and to see the islands in the middle of the marina.

TM: The whale. Yeah, isn't that something?

SB: When it first started, and it was just this mound, this little circular mound, I couldn't figure out what it was. I thought it was something floating out there. And then just gradually as the water went down, it's become an island, you know, a good-sized island. And it's like, okay, so now I make myself— My husband and I, he's more curious than I am, we'll go out at least once a week to see what's happening out there. And it's fun to watch the changes. That's not fun to see, but it's fun to watch it.

TM: Right. Well stated. Has that— Does it look like the island is going to become a peninsula at one point? It's going to have to eventually if the reservoir keeps dropping.

SB: I don't see that part of it, but I'm only looking at it from one side, so there could even be a hint of land on other side of it that I wouldn't see.

TM: Yeah, I don't know. Definitely— Well, of course, as a 12-year-old, 13-year-old, the impoundment behind the reservoir, behind the dam, would have been way down there and certainly not anywhere near where the water level is now. But I guess it's kind of getting close. I'll go back and look at the numbers. What else do you recall about— Let me kind of work this forward. Did you graduate from high school there in Page?

SB: Yes, I did.

TM: Can you tell me about your high school graduation?

SB: By the time I graduated, the real school, brick-and-mortar school, was fully built, and we also had a gymnasium. It was a cafeteria by day and a gym by afternoon and evening to play games there. It had a stage, so we got to have school plays and pep assemblies and all the things that every other school was doing. In fact, we were like every other school. We had a beautiful facility, and our graduation was there. We had speakers that were up on the stage. Our— It wasn't the whole band, but there were a few instruments, and I can't tell you what they were at this date, but a group of us got to sing a song that the class chose. It was just like graduations everywhere then.



TM: Okay, and did you go to prom?

SB: Oh, yes. And that was also in the gym. And they would help us. The custodians were great. They put big, old bolts in the wall so we could string wires from one bolt to the other, so it wasn't the full gym, you know, to make it smaller, and the crepe paper all around the edges. By the time I was in high school, I think that our school was as good as any small town anywhere.

TM: Nice.

SB: And maybe better because our buildings were all brand new.

TM: Yes. It would have been difficult, I suppose, for the teachers and, you know, families, of course, just because it was so isolated and rural. But the facilities would have been, as you say, state of the art.

SB: They were. You know, the business room with all of the typewriters— We didn't just get three new typewriters like some of them have to rotate three out every year. They were all brand new. Everything was brand new.

TM: I'm wondering about the funding train for that. I wonder if that would have been funded by Reclamation instead of the state of Arizona. I wonder how that worked. Or both.

SB: Well, I can't— it's from kid's perspective. I didn't care as long as it got there. I didn't worry about where the money came from.

TM: Exactly. The equipment was new. It was great to work with, and that was that.

SB: Yes!

TM: That's great. Did you then leave Page after graduating? Was college an assumed part of your family life?

SB: Kind of the words used, so I guess actually could say it was. It was not— My parents didn't do “If you go.” It was, “When you go to college, you want to blah, blah, blah,” or “When you go to college, do you think you will...” And the questions were just always there, so it was in my head that when I graduated, what you do is go to college. And so, I went to NAU. It wasn't NAU then. It was Arizona State College, ASC, and then graduated from NAU, which made my diploma way more valuable because “university” on the end. But it was the same education, and I got just as good of an education before it changed.

TM: Right. So, were your folks still running the store in Page while you were going to school in Flagstaff?

SB: Actually, my dad was still running the store. My mom helped some, but my mom also— When we got a really nice, new bank, my mom went to work for the bank. And I think part of that had to do with insurance because Dad had some and then Mom got another plan. So, then they had two because they knew what it was like to struggle through all the stuff that my dad had had happen that I talked to you about already.

TM: Yes.

SB: And so, I think that was the move to be sure that you're covered from both ends to some degree. And she loved that job. So, they were both still here while I was going to school. In fact, the day that I graduated from NAU, you my parents, well, my family came to graduation. I walked down the aisle, shook hands, hugged all my friends, and threw the last of my stuff— I had moved stuff home the following weekend. We jumped in the vehicle and headed straight back here because my brother graduated from Page High School that same evening. So, I have a picture of David and I, and I have on my NAU cap and gown, and he has on his PHS cap and gown. And it happened on the exact same day.

TM: Oh, very fun. Okay.

SB: It was a good experience. And shortly after that my dad went back to Holbrook, and I had already talked about that, for a number of years. And then when they moved back, my mom told my dad, "That's it. This is where we're staying." When they came here, I don't think my mom was prepared to love this town, and my dad considered it a job. And then they fell in love with Page, and Mom just said, "Hey, we're not moving. If we go back there, we stay there."

TM: Nice. Yeah, I'm curious to know your thoughts of going to college in Flagstaff. What did you find enjoyable about Flag that you didn't have in Page and vice versa? This would have been '69, '70, '71, '72. Is that roughly how that worked?

SB: I went to school down there, started in '63, and then went directly from NAU to ASU to do a master's degree. One of the teachers in my department knew somebody at ASU that was looking for a grad assistant. And my teacher asked me if I would like to apply for that position, and I said, "Yes, I would like to apply. How do I do that?" She just said, "Oh, you have it."

SB: And so, I thought there was some kind of an agreement, and I'm sure that I was discussed well before it was offer to me. And so, I went straight, I mean literally, straight there, did summer school, and then did the year and another summer, and I was through with the master's then in that period.

TM: Okay, I'm sorry. I misunderstood that when you mentioned earlier in this interview it was from '63 to '69, I didn't realize that that was your college and master's degree time.

SB: Yeah.

TM: Okay. All right. What was Flagstaff like in 1963?

SB: Wonderful. Lots of snow. While we were there this last time, I was talking with somebody about how different it is. I mean, they— We had a winter festival on campus and had snow sculptures. I'm not talking snowman. Sculptures that different clubs or sororities, fraternities had built, I mean, all over the place. They did have to haul some in, but they don't even have the snow now that they can do that. I felt so lucky starting when I did that by the time I graduated, not that I knew to talk to everybody, but by the time I graduated, I felt that I knew who, probably, 75% of the people of the students on that campus were. Well, now it's so big and so many people that you might know the people in your department, you know, in your major, because you take the same classes together and the people in your dorm or your sorority house or whatever. But to be able to say that you know most of those people, it's not possible. Now, they have many more classes offered to them now than when I was there, you know, the electives and the opportunities for different majors and stuff. So, it's a tradeoff. They've got a lot of good stuff with the growth, but I loved the fact of the closeness and the friendship of going to a smaller school.

TM: Nice. Yeah. I'm thinking that the tiny, little cow town of Flagstaff would have been a big city in comparison to Page.

SB: Oh, yes!

TM: And there might have been a movie theater or two. I'm assuming that the Orpheum downtown was a lively—

SB: That's it.

TM: Okay. And the sound would have been very good, and the screen would have been bigger.

SB: That's right. Much bigger. But you know, the campus also had an auditorium. They'd have plays and stuff. It was part of the main cafeteria, mailboxes, all the stuff in the front that's all changed dramatically.

But in that auditorium, and it wasn't a fancy screen, but it was a decent-sized screen. And I think we paid either 25 cents or 50 cents, and we could go watch a movie right there on campus.

TM: So, you didn't have to walk across the tracks and over to town there.

SB: No. And also, it was affordable.

TM: Right. It would have been cheaper, indeed.

SB: And we also had another place on campus, and it was over in some of the old original buildings, and it was downstairs in probably what would have been a basement. And I think they called it Axe's Alley, if I'm not mistaken. And they had records, music, and you know, they had some good speakers. And you could go hang out there or dance or whatever. I didn't go that often because I was not a super student, and I needed to study more than a lot of people did.

TM: Oh.

SB: I think it was probably open maybe two or three nights a week, which was pretty cool.

TM: Okay. So, when I think of the the Flagstaff— Sorry, the university symbol, I guess, I'm thinking a mascot, but that's not right it, is the Lumberjacks, a university name. So, Axe's Alley— This is where Axe the Lumberjack hangs out.

SB: Right.

TM: Got it. *[Laughs]* Okay. Speaking of lumber, the mill, the lumber mill would have been in operation at that time.

SB: It was.

TM: What do you remember about just the sounds you heard as a student while you were trying to study coming from the mill?

SB: You know, I don't know if kids are more blessed with this ability or if it happens to everybody, but there was that. There was also the railroad. And I had been in my dorm probably less than a month, and I really like it cool, so windows open most nights at least an inch or so. I never heard anything anymore. Those sounds became nothing. I didn't hear the trains at night. It didn't bother me during the day with the train going through and blowing the whistle for so long to be sure the tracks were cleared. I was immune to all of those sounds, and I blocked them out.

TM: Okay. Because I'm thinking that not only the train horns from the mainline, but they were still running trains from the mill out to the forest weren't they?

SB: I don't know.

TM: And I think those trains would have their own sounds as well. And so, you studied hard, but occasionally you were still dancing.

SB: Oh, yes!

TM: Okay. And was your record collection growing?

SB: Not so much. College was my first real "you're on a budget, girl" experience and so— I was able to work in Babbitt's all summer.

TM: Oh, great.

SB: And I was also the one that was— They used to close it always on Sunday, and just about the time I graduated is when stores started staying open seven days a week. And many of the employees, you know, especially the older ones with families or smaller children or whatever didn't want to do that, and so I worked any hour I could work to save up the money. And I could earn enough money in a summer to go to school all year. But that didn't include buying new records or eating out. Once a month, a group of us from the dorm would walk over to a Mexican restaurant that was very close to the campus. It had really good food. But for the most part, most of my friends were about equally as rich or poor, however you look at it, as I. And so, we didn't have— We didn't spend a lot on frivolous kinds of things. I watched the kids now— We were on campus just last week, two weeks ago, and pretty much everybody looked like they had a fancy coffee in their hand, pretty coffee cups, maybe the whipped cream on the top. And I'm, like, whoa! That wouldn't have happened when I was going to school.

TM: Do you remember the name of that Mexican restaurant you all would go to?

SB: Oh. I talk about it because it was open even after I graduated from college. Or while I was at ASU, it was still open. Wow. I can't remember. It was just towards town maybe two blocks, three blocks, and walking from the campus it was on the left. I'm not sure right now.

TM: Walking toward campus, it was on the left or walking toward town?

SB: From campus, toward the town?

TM: From campus, yes.

SB: As we're going on one of the streets going up, it would have been on the left of that street.

TM: And maybe that was going up Santa Fe?

SB: Possibly.

TM: And it would have been maybe El Charro.

SB: It was, and that was our big treat. Like I said, if once every three weeks, once a month, depending upon who ended up with money in their budget at the end, we would go over and have a nice meal on a Saturday.

TM: Nice. Fun. And did you write letters home at that time?

SB: I did.

TM: Nice. On a weekly kind of basis or—?

SB: You would have to use a pay phone, and it seemed like I ran out of money, because once you start talking, there's so many things you want to say. And it's, like, alright, that's getting too expensive, so I started writing letters. But then they weren't quite as much and so my dad or mom, probably my mom did it because she had more time probably to do it, would be sure that I got rolls of quarters. and that way I would call more.

TM: Nice. I must have missed you. Nice, but that's a good way to keep you connected is send you quarters.

SB: *[Laughs]* Yeah, well, I wasn't going to use mine.

TM: And your parents were paying for your tuition?

SB: Like I said earlier, I made enough money to pay for a year with what I needed. But that left really almost nothing extra, so I frequently got little care packages. Or I had a checking account, and with my

mom working in the bank, of course, she could see my account anytime and see if I was running low on money or something, so they would send me money just “just because” money. You know, just so you want to do something fun. I had the money to do what I needed to do instead of having to pay the university, but that didn't leave a whole lot of El Charro money. So, they would send me money.

TM: Got it. Well, that's nice. But you were basically carrying yourself lock, stock, and barrel, as they say.

SB: Well, I could make that much, but then if I wanted any extra it came from my folks. They were very, very kind with me.

TM: Yes, and they were helping as best as they could.

SB: Yes.

TM: Very nice. Lovely.

SB: So, I would guess, I would guess, Tom, that my parents probably gave me money, sent me money when, probably, they didn't have very much to do that with just because those are the kind, that's the kind of people that they were. They didn't have a lot. They didn't— My mom said, “We don't need a lot.” I'm sure, probably, she needed things that she would never admit. But when I said something about the money, she said, “Oh, we don't need that.” You know, well, probably, but I didn't have access to their checking account.

TM: [*Laughs*] That's funny. Well, their joy was looking out for you, and you've passed that forward, I'm sure. So, it's a— That's very fun. So then, off to Phoenix.

SB: I think that we did kind of do that. My husband, as well. He was a basketball player and on a scholarship. And I wasn't smart enough to get a scholarship, or I was too lazy of a worker. I don't know which it was. But we both could earn what we needed. But it was the extra money, and probably neither family had much extra. But we were talking about how we both got care packages or a little extra money here or there. And we tried to do that with our kids. And they both worked super hard and got amazingly good scholarships, but then we did just deposit money because we were on both of their accounts then and with their permission. And so, once a month we just put some money in, you know, so they would be sure and have the spending money if they wanted to go out to dinner with friends or whatever they wanted to do.

TM: Right. Your husband's name is Chuck. Is that right?

SB: No, it's Richard.

TM: Richard. I'm sorry.

SB: Or Dick. However.

TM: When did you meet Dick?

SB: In California when I went out there to teach.

TM: Okay, so after you completed your studies at ASU? Your master's?

SB: Yes.

TM: Okay. And during that time, through NAU and then to ASU, master's, and then moving on as a teacher, it sounds like you weren't looking at Page the way you look at it now.

SB: Well, I never thought to come back here. It was just kind of like I have a job. I have money that I know how much I'm going to get every single month. I wanted to do something really different, and of course, the

grass is always greener, and I wanted to be someplace by a beach. So, the only place— Because I never was there. I mean, we didn't vacation on beaches or anything, and so I only interviewed at places where I would have been close to a beach. And it seemed like the dream come true, and oh, this is just an answer to all things. And as it turns out, it was not. It was no different from any other town, and I actually didn't spend that much time on the beach. And you know, it— I don't know. It was just a young girl kind of thing that I had to work my way through.

TM: Makes perfect sense. How did you meet Dick?

SB: On campus. He was a teacher at the same school I taught at. He was two years ahead of me, age wise and education wise. He went to Tucson for his master's, but I didn't know him then. It was— I met him, actually, on my first day after a faculty meeting my first day of teaching in California.

TM: Oh, Okay. Where was that in California?

SB: In Oxnard.

TM: Okay. Was he a good dancer?

SB: Very. [*Laughs*] Yes. That was probably the main draw because, you know, you don't know a person that well that quick. But I did know that he was fun, and he was a really good dancer.

TM: That's important. Because you like dancing, so—

SB: Yes.

TM: That's a good deal. Yeah. At what point did you then kind of turn your sights back on Page?

SB: Well, we were fortunate that we had a double salary, and we bought the house in Oxnard. It was an older house, but it was a three-bedroom house. Well, I had already purchased a little, tiny condo, and that's where we moved in once we got married. And then when we had—and it's just ironic—had our first child, surprisingly enough, with the stuff that comes with the baby, a two-bedroom house was not big enough. By the time we put the crib and the dresser and the changing table, the bedroom was full, the extra bedroom, and then the swing in the middle of our tiny, little living room took up most of it. And so, we bought a house in North Oxnard, and it was an older home and well loved. It was in good shape, but very much older. And probably we had things stolen or broken into three times, and went “Okay, that's it. We're done.” And we moved to Camarillo to a beautiful home that probably was more than we should have afforded, but it was right over the back fence to what was considered then the best elementary school in the district. Three houses down from the Community Center was an amazing park. And in the course of living in there, our house has broken into twice. Both times the people were caught. We got all of our stuff back, but you go to court and everything. And then the final straw was the kids were playing at the park, and some perv on a motorcycle comes up. And he doesn't really reach for any of the kids, but you know, he's hassling them and all this kind of stuff. And they came running back to the house, doing exactly what they were taught to do in school, thank God. Because I said something, “What did you do?” And there's a way that you link arms, hands, wrist to hand. I couldn't tell you. It's supposed to be— It's something the school taught them that keeps them safe because then one child can't be picked up and singled out. So, they did right thing. And Dick and I just looked at each other and went, “Done. We're going to go someplace much smaller.” And he was from Colorado, so we looked in Colorado because he loves it so much. And we thought that would be great, but the wages there were so low. Technically, I would have been working for free because it took two of us to equal his one salary. And so we then came to Page where the wages were much better. And that was before the equalization and everything. And he had already been in Page. He ran the river here for a couple of summers before we were ever married. We were dating some, and he did the downriver trips for a couple of summers. And so, he knew he loved it here, and of course, I loved it here. My parents were here. My sister was here. And we came back and never regretted it. It was probably the best thing we ever could have done.

TM: Nice. So, what year did you and Dick get married?

SB: '72.

TM: Okay, and when did you move back to Page?

SB: '83.

TM: Okay. All right. Sharon, what am I missing? What have I not asked here in this oral history series about Page, the early years, I guess we're going to title it that, um, what have I not asked you that you're thinking, "Oh yeah, I want to talk about this"?

SB: You know, I can't think of anything else, and I've kind of been trying to do that while we were talking, so I probably sounded disjointed at some point because I would think, okay, what else do I need to say? Because I can't say enough nice things about this town. But I've said them, you know, and how fortunate I was to grow up here. My kids even say that, that they're so happy. My grown kids, not my grandkids. They were so happy that they had the opportunity to go here. We're a smaller town. They knew most of the kids in high school. I mean, at least they knew everybody by what their name was. They had good friends. They could walk to each other's houses, you know. If it was a Little League practice, I'd just say, "Get on your bike and go. We'll come up to watch in a few minutes." So, they got the small-town experience in a different way than I did. Still, they got to have that small town experience, and they loved it.

TM: Nice. Because Page had grown up some. I mean, the rough and tumble days of the first plywood shack—

SB: Oh, totally!

TM: —and tin building was so different by the time your kids were then going to grow up there. Yeah.

SB: Oh, beautiful new buildings. And you know, they had— We have the big auditorium where they could have truly professional plays, if they wanted to. And we did have some different troupes come in that— Up with People one time, and you know, different musical groups and stuff like that performing there. So, we had way more art stuff than when I was there. When my kids were here, they had a nice, nice band, super bandleader, great, you know, CAB building for plays. And it changed a lot from when I was here, but the feeling of the town was still pretty much the same.

TM: Okay. And then, just looking forward a little bit, you would have seen— Well, you might have missed that. Just thinking about the times. You came back in '83, so you would have missed the construction of the Navajo power generating station.

SB: Right. We did, and that's when Page went at its very lowest, population-wise, but we weren't here for that.

TM: Okay. And now the generation station has been removed, and the lake behind the dam is very low, and yet Page seems to be growing. It seems like there's always a new hotel being built. The tourism to the southwest seems to be an unquenchable thirst.

SB: Well, we still have a lot of people here. We lost a lot of students in our schools with the plant going down. The people just retired. Now, they were close enough, it's like, "Okay, no. I'm not moving. I'll take retirement." Some of them took SRP up on it. And these are my words now, not SRP, but I was told by people who worked there that SRP told them, "If you're willing to go any place, we can get you a job. You know, you don't have to be unemployed. We can transfer you. You can't choose where you want to go, because obviously the same opening is not always going to be there." But we lost quite a few students to that. Being out of education, and I should be ashamed to say this, I don't know what the population of our schools are now. How many in high school and how many in each of the elementary schools. I know it's down, but I don't know how down.

TM: Right. It'll be interesting to see, I think, in the years ahead, how Page adapts to the new economy.

SB: I think if we could get water again, it would be amazing. You know, enough for the lake to be viable. Right now, I don't think anybody should go out on that lake that's not an experienced boater. I think it's too dangerous. There are so many rocks that are just below the surface. And people who don't know what they are doing drive way too fast. and we're going to have some bad accidents. We don't even want to go out, and my husband knows that lake like the back of his hand. He was out a lot, and he's just flat said, "You know, I'm going to go fishing a couple of times now while it's good, but I don't want to be out there in the summer with the people who are not experienced boaters doing things that are not safe. However, we still have a lot of tourists because of Upper and Lower Antelope and because of Horseshoe Bend. We still get a lot of people who come to town for those things. And a change that I don't particularly like, but we're getting more and more homes bought up to be VRBOs. I'm lucky in that I still feel like I live in a neighborhood. All of the people around me are residents. It's not VRBOs, and I really like that.

TM: Yes. It's interesting because the reservoir still has water in it and will still draw tourists. And a low reservoir is revealing landscapes that people want to see, so that'll bring in tourists. It's a fascinating time.

SB: Yeah, we have friends that are actually have rented— A group of people have rented a houseboat and are taking another boat, a runaround boat, with them and going up the lake. Up, like, to the top of the lake, because it's going to be stuff that none of them have ever seen before because none of them lived here, like, back in late '60s. And so, it's going to be— The upper part of the lake is just going to be a brand-new place to see. And that's cool, but I feel really bad that that is exposed because we're so low on water.

TM: That's right. Well, Sharon Buck, this has been a lovely, lovely interview series. Thank you so very much for taking the time to speak with me about your recollections of Page and your parents and growing up there. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this interview?

SB: I can't think of a thing.

TM: Okay. Well, with that, this will conclude Part 3 of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Sharon Buck. Today is Friday, April 29, 2022. My name is Tom Martin. And Sharon, thank you so very much.

SB: Thank you, Tom. It's been fun visiting with you.