

Carolyn Sue Kirn

Interview at Concordia House September 18, 2020

**Sue Kirn:** I am the storyteller. My name is Carolyn Sue Kirn. I'm 73 years old. Today is September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and we're at Concordia House.

**Lynne Haynes:** And I am interviewing Carolyn Sue Kirn. My Name is Lynne Haynes, and I am 52 years old, and today is September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and we are at the Concordia House in Kirkwood, Missouri.

So Sue, just tell me a little bit about your family. Like, brothers and sisters, how big was your family growing up?

**Sue:** I have one sister who's 6 years older. Half-sister. Same mother, different fathers.

**Lynne:** Okay.

**S:** That's it. It was just the two of us, immediate family. I have some cousins on both sides, my dad's side and my mom's side. I keep in touch with the one cousin on my dad's side. She's in her 60s. We grew up together. Basically, those are the only ones I see. I get to see my sister every once in a while. I have a niece and a nephew that are married, one of – My nephew is married. And so, some kids that way, great-nieces.

**L:** Okay.

**S:** That's about it.

**L:** So what was it like with you and your sister growing up? Well, actually, back up. Where did you grow up?

**S:** I grew up in small towns in Illinois. Bethalto, basically. I was – We lived in East Alton when I was born, and then we moved to Bethalto. So since Judy was 6 years older she was always the babysitter. So, yeah –

**L:** Is she a good babysitter?

**S:** Oh, well... [laughter] I was probably a very trying child. 'Cause there's one incident where – my mother never believed me that Judy chased me around with a butcher knife one time, and finally my sister confirmed that, yes, she did, because I wouldn't do dishes. [laughter] And she got a knife out after me. Mom just, she didn't say anything to her about it! She just said, "Oh, okay." I'm like, "Wait a minute!" [laughter] Yeah, so that tells you, I was a little –

**Other:** Brat.

**S:** [laughing] Yeah, I was a little brat. Kind of spoiled and, yeah. 'Cause I lived with – Well, my grandmother watched me when mom, when Judy was in school and mom was at work, mom and dad were working. And so, grandma did whatever I wanted. If I didn't want to eat what she had, she made me something else, and so I was kind of spoiled.

**L:** Gotcha.

**S:** So that didn't work very well. [laughter]

**L:** So what did your mom and dad do for a living?

**S:** My mom at that time worked in a candy store.

**L:** Really?

**S:** It was like a – It was in Wood River, and it was Candy Bill's, and they did hand dipped chocolates. And they had a soda fountain, and booths you know with sandwiches and stuff, and ice cream sundaes and stuff like that. She worked there for, gosh, 20 years?

**L:** Wow.

**S:** And my dad was a truck driver. He drove – I know he delivered soda at one time, drove a soda truck. He was a cab driver at one time, when I was first born. That was mostly what he did, and then he started driving for transport companies. So, that was – he drove that all of his life.

**L:** Okay, so going back to your mom, like did she ever bring home things –

**S:** Oh yeah.

**L:** - from the candy store? Like did you have a favorite thing that she would bring home?

**S:** Um, no, but on Friday nights I would get to go down there and stay with her while she was working. So I would get sodas, and sundaes and stuff like that, and whatever I wanted down there. That was nice. That was fun.

**L:** That's pretty fun.

**S:** I would stay there while she was working on Friday nights, 'cause she worked until a bit later. They stayed open a little later. But I remember her bringing home, like at Christmastime, like a 5 pound box of chocolates, you know, the hand dipped chocolates, and we'd always say, "Well okay, what kind is this one? What kind is this one?" And we would turn them over and poke a hole in the bottom of it and put them back in the box so nobody would know what we did.

**L:** Gotcha. [laughter]

**S:** So she'd always say, "No no no, look at the swirl on the top. The way it's swirled will tell you what kind –" And we're like, oh, okay. So, you know, we were notorious for doing that. Then people would come in and she'd offer them candy and pick it up and there would be a hole in the bottom.

**L:** [laughter] So, like, these were like, when you say hand dipped, they were like the Russell Stovers kind of stuff except for they were, like, homemade at the –

**S:** Yes.

**L:** Wow.

**S:** Yes, the people that owned the business were Greek, and this is what they did. They made candy. They were there for years and years and years, and if you go to Wood River now there's a history museum by the transportation area or something, and they have the cash register and a bunch of stuff that was in Candy Bill's there, and pictures and stuff. And we went over there one time and looked at it, so it was kind of interesting.

**L:** Oh, that is really cool!

**S:** Yeah. They had a huge big old cash register. That's all in there, and some of the tables and chairs and different things are there that was in Candy Bill's for years. So, yeah, it's really interesting. It's fun.

**L:** That is so cool. So you probably didn't play with your sister too much since she was 6 years older, right?

**S:** Nah, she –

**L:** She wasn't too interested in you?

**S:** No. [laughter]

**L:** So did you have friends then? Or like –

**S:** Oh yeah!

**L:** What did you do in your spare time when you were growing up?

**S:** There were kids in the neighborhood my age, and we just – We rode bikes, played in the lawn sprinkler all the time outside, you know, cause we always lived kind of in a rural area. I mean there were neighbors, but they weren't real close. So we rode bikes all over the place, and we, you know, just played paper dolls. You know, had paper – That was my thing. We had paper dolls, and –

**Other:** Did they live in shoeboxes like mine did?

**S:** Yes, they did. Yes, they lived in shoeboxes.

**Other:** Did you ever have Debbie Reynolds ones? Or the Lennon sisters?

**S:** Yes. Had the Lennon Sisters ones. I always liked the fashion part, you know, and you'd have to cut them all out and all that kind of stuff. That's –

**Other:** And the little tabs –

**S:** Oh yeah, the little tabs that went on them. Yeah. Yeah, and the little stands that you put them on. Yeah, all that stuff. Had all that stuff. I always had, and I had all kinds of – I can't even remember now who they were, all of them. I might have had a Debbie

Reynolds, I don't know. 'Cause we got them – We always went to the store on Saturday. My mom worked all week. Saturday was the day we went to the store and cleaned, and I'd always get a new paper doll book when we went to the store. Had them all the time. But we just – We liked to play music and games and stuff outside. We were outside a lot, and there was kids all over that were my age, so we kind of did that. Went from house to house.

**L:** So did you have a best friend there, or was it more like a group kind of thing?

**S:** I'd have to say when we lived in Meadowbrook my best friend would have been Diane W. She lived up the street. She was about a year older than I was, and we made a treehouse in her backyard, and we could climb up in the treehouse. And we lived, like I said, in kind of a rural area, and they put up a revival tent one time on a lot across from Diane's backyard, and we would sit up in the treehouse and watch the revival. [laughter] We would sit up there and listen to them, and watch the revival and everything. Then we would climb back down and kind of go [shrugging noises].

Just kind of interesting. And like I said, we rode bikes all over and we just – Everybody knew everybody in the area, you know, cause they, it was just country. You just kind of knew everybody. Everybody had lived there for a while, so that was that place, and then from there we moved into town, into Bethalto, into a little 4 room brick house. First brand new house my mom had ever had. And I was going into high school at that time, and we moved in there, and our last name was Williams. My maiden name was Williams, and we lived on Williams Street.

**L:** Oh really!

**S:** [laughter] So everybody would say –

**L:** Oh it was meant to be –

**S:** "Oh, they named the street after you!" And I said [laughter] no the street was named before we moved there! But yeah, it was kind of interesting. Then that's when I started walking back and forth to school because we were not far enough for the bus. You had to be a mile from school, and so we weren't that far, and at that time – That's about the time my mom started working for the School District. She started being a bookkeeper. So she went from working in the candy store, worked at a grocery store for a little while, and then she started working for the School District. She became a secretary for the Superintendent of Schools. So that's what she retired from. She did that for a long time, and dad was still driving, and he drove for Viking Freight, which was over here in St. Louis, and had an accident and it killed him.

**L:** Oh wow.

**S:** When I was in high school. I was a Junior, and he – It was around New Athens, Illinois. Was in February of '64. They – It was snowing, and the drivers had been complaining about the loads they'd been having. It was either sheet metal or metal pipe,

and they would shift. They weren't loaded right or something, and his load shifted and he was – Got off the road, was driving along the side of the road and hit a concrete abutment, and he was in a tilt-front cab, and threw him through the cab. We didn't know anything about it. They announced it on the local radio.

**L:** Oh, that's how you found out?

**S:** My brother-in-law –

**L:** Oh wow.

**S:** My sister had gotten married, and my brother-in-law had a filling, a gas station, and he heard it on the radio, and he called my sister. Well, she called the radio station and said the family is not aware of this, you know, what are you talking about? So they told her. Well, he came to the house because I was by myself. Mom was uptown at the laundromat. So Judy, they – Our minister went up and got mom, brought her home, and I never knew this: We got a letter from the radio station apologizing for announcing it, that they thought everybody knew and everything. So, it was kind of interesting, and my sister just found that recently with some stuff and mailed it to me. So I just saw that. Dad didn't – If he would have lived he would have been paralyzed, and that, he could not have done that. He was one of those people that never met a stranger. Could talk to anybody, and was just friendly and everything. That was probably the worst thing in my life, was when dad –

**L:** Yeah, what was your relationship with your dad?

**S:** We got along really well.

**L:** Yeah, I didn't know, did he travel a lot? Was he gone a lot?

**S:** He was gone a lot, so it was just mom and my sister and I. Dad was on the road a lot. I remember when I was younger he called from California one time, and we were having an ice storm at home, and he called from California and was sitting in somebody's back yard eating oranges off of a tree and... [laughter]

**L:** Oh my goodness!

**S:** Mom was a little upset with him at that time. [laughter] She's like, we're in an ice storm, you know, but yeah. But we got along really well. We had a daddy date night at school with our Future Homemakers, and I took him. Mom said, "You need to go." She said, "You need to see that your daughter is no different than any of the other girls." So we went, and we had a ball. We had so much fun. There was a game that they had to play and everything, and then we went afterwards. We went out and got some ice cream afterwards, and so we got along pretty good. So when he died it was kind of a...

**L:** Yeah. How did you get through it? Like, what did that look like for you?

**S:** Kind of rebelled a little bit, and I remember my uncle, dad – Dad was one of four brothers, four boys, and his one brother was in Okinawa. He was in the Air Force at the

time and the Red Cross was bringing him home for this. And I remember, I went to bed and I was thinking it was a dream, and I heard uncle Kenny come in. I heard him talking and I thought [gasp] see it was just a dream, dad's here! I got up, ran down the hallway, practically knocked him over, and then I realized it was not a dream. It was, that was it, and ever since then I cannot go up to a casket. I can't do that. I can go to the wake, but I can't go up and look in the casket. I just can't do that. So that was...

Yeah, I miss him. Because I look at my kids, and I'm thinking, oh my God, he would have loved those kids. You know, I see my youngest son's little girls, and I think of all the antics that they do, and I can see my dad. He would be driving right along with them. He would be right there in the middle of it. Cause that's who he was. We would have Christmases with family and he would be in the middle of the floor with the kids, you know, and he'd be – He was always laughing, he was always telling jokes, he was always, you know, and he'd be stirring things up. [laughter] That was him. It was the way he was. So, and my friends liked him. Sometimes we would be home and we would go to the fairs, different, like Springfield fair and stuff like that, and I would take a girlfriend with me because I was by myself. I'd take a friend with me, and they would always say, "Your dad's so much fun."

He went and bought a new car one time, without mom going along, and he came home with a convertible. Buick convertible, big red one, it looked like a big boat, and my mom was like, you gotta be kidding. She sunburned really bad, and she's like, she hated that car. Him and I loved it. Oh my God we loved that car.

**Other 2:** That's where you got into convertibles.

**S:** Oh, you got it. Yes, and he got it when I was taking a summer course of driving, 'cause I couldn't fit it in during the school year. So, I came out of the course, and there was a little – Across from my high school there was a little store over there, and this big red car is parked out in front of it, and I'm like, okay... and mom had told me, she said, "Dad's here. He's outside" I'm like, okay... and I walked out, and he comes walking out of the store, and I'm like, "What are you doing over there?" And he says, "Come here, come here." And I walked over there and he goes, "This is our car." And I'm like, "What? This is our car?" He goes, "This is *my* car." And I'm like, "Oh, okay." [laughter] I'm like, "Yes!" And mom is like, "No." So, we put her in it a few times and she wasn't real happy with us, you know, but –

**L:** So you were like fifteen about that time?

**S:** I was sixteen at that time.

**L:** Okay, I wasn't sure –

**S:** We got that car when I was sixteen.

**L:** - what the age was.

**S:** I was sixteen, yeah, because I wanted to drive it. I was driving an old '55 Chevy that steered like a log wagon, and then he got this. So I asked him, I said, "Can I drive? Can I drive?" And he said, "Okay, first you have to drive me somewhere, so I can see how you drive it." I said, "Okay." So I get in the car, power brakes, power steering.

**L:** Uh-huh. That's totally different, yeah.

**S:** Practically threw him through the windshield the first time I hit the brakes. [laughter] Went to turn a corner and just kept going, just like, "No! No!" He goes, "Okay, we're gonna go back roads." [laughter] I said, "Okay." Of course we had the top down.

So I took him wherever he wanted to go. So a couple days later he said, "Okay, you can take the car." And I said, "Can I really?" And he's like, "Yeah." And I'm like, "Okay!" So I ran out and got my girlfriend, and we had the top down of course, so it was very well known around town, my car. That car was very well known.

That's the car we inherited when dad died. So that was my car. Mom hated – We got stuck in a hail storm in that car.

**L:** [laughter] Oh my goodness, was the top down at the time?

**S:** No.

**L:** Okay, good.

**S:** No, this was at night. We'd gone to – I was a section officer for Future Homemakers of America. We went to a meeting over in Granite City or somewhere, and we were coming back on 111, and it started hailing – Started raining really hard, so I had to pull over, and it started hailing. My mother was – I had another girl with me, there was myself and another girl, and my mom was down on the floorboard underneath the dash on the passenger's side of the car because it was hailing, and we're in a convertible. We were sitting in between these hills and I couldn't see. There was nothing we could do. So finally it stopped, and I got her up out of there. She was shaking like a leaf. "We're getting rid of this car!" I said, "No, we're not." [laughter] Then we made it home, but that was quite frightening, and she was petrified. She hated that car. She hated it.

**L:** It was a soft top, I'm assuming.

**S:** Oh yeah, soft top.

**L:** So were there holes in the –

**S:** No, it didn't damage it. I mean we were lucky.

**L:** That's great.

**S:** It didn't damage it. I was really surprised. And then, later on in my life after I got divorced, I bought a Mustang convertible.

**L:** Gotcha, nice.

**S:** I had that car for about 10 years. Red. Yep, red, with a white top. Yep. I did replace the top on that once, 'cause I didn't have – I had a car port, and then when I moved in with my mom I had a garage. It was in the garage, but it wouldn't go very well in rain and snow, and I had to get rid of it. I'd had it for about 10 years, I guess. When I moved in with my mom I was responsible for her, and I knew I wasn't going to be able to get her anywhere if it snowed, with that car. So. [laughter]

**L:** And she was going to hate it anyway.

**S:** And no, she didn't like it anyway. [laughter] It didn't have any trunk space, you know. The kids loved it. We all loved it, and we enjoyed it, but you know, mom hated it, so it was like, okay. So I got a PT Cruiser with front wheel drive, so I could get her wherever, to the doctor or whatever she needed to do. So that's what I ended up with, but yeah, that was interesting. [laughter]

**L:** That's awesome. So when did you meet your husband then?

**S:** Um...

**L:** Or who was –

**S:** Senior year. We had just had prom, and I was out with a friend, and we were meeting some other people, and him and his cousin pulled up next to – We were at like a drive-in, where you could eat, you know, and we were back at this drive-in. It was the hangout. So, if you were gonna sit there for a while you backed up against the back row of the fence so you weren't by the building, and if you wanted something you flashed your lights and then the car hop would come out. So that's the way it worked.

So I was with another girlfriend and we were sitting there, and we were meeting two other people. And Stan, my husband, and his cousin pulled up next to us and started flirting, and talking. Well then, the next night we stayed for a while and I got home late after curfew, so I got grounded.

**L:** Uh oh.

**S:** So, I'm at home, and I have Glee Club, so my mom's gonna take me to Glee Club. So we're going up through town, out to the high school, and I see him driving around. I see Stan driving around, and I'm like, oh my gosh, don't even act like you know me!

**L:** I know, right, right.

**S:** So we get to school, she drops me off. I'm outside. I see him come around the school, 'cause he knew where the school was. So I get in the car and we're sitting there talking, and I said, you know, "I've gotta go back home, I'm grounded," blah blah blah, and he goes, "Okay." So I go into Glee Club, mom picks me up, I go back home. I have an English paper I have to write out, so I'm working on that. Stan pulls up in the driveway. So I go out – I didn't invite him in the house, I was very proud of myself. I went outside to talk to him for, I don't know how long we talked, an hour or so. In talking, he

broke my pen. Didn't have another pen with that color ink, and my English teacher was very strict.

**L:** Stickler?

**S:** Oh yeah, she was a miss. She was this old lady that had been there forever. My sister had had her, and she was, oh. She was a good teacher, but she was something else. I mean she was strict. So I'm like, well crap, I gotta write this whole thing on paper all over. [laughter] So I did. I wrote it. Had to write it all over again.

So then, at that time, that was after dad died. Mom had started dating a gentleman that had – I had known him. His wife had passed the November before dad did in February, and they had all been members of the American Legion. So, I'd known him from day one. I grew up with him and his wife, knew them, and him and mom started dating. So she was gone most weekends. So I was home by myself. So I had the run of the house, and I know a couple of times – The thing was, she would say, "Do you have a date this weekend?" And I'm like, "Yeah." "Will you be home by this time?" I said, "Well what time are you gonna be home?" [laughter] And she said, "No, you be home –" I said, "What time are you gonna be home? You got a date too." So that was kind of the conversation for a while.

**L:** Did you bring him home then?

**S:** Um... Sometimes. [laughter] There was nobody there! I'm seventeen and I'm home! I mean, nobody's there, what the heck. Yeah, yeah, I brought him home a couple times, and my cousin would come out and stay with me. She was younger, and she always thought that was cool 'cause she got to run around with her older cousin, you know. But yeah, so we had a few times, you know. Yeah. So we ended up – we dated for about, let's see, I met him in 60... Well he came to my graduation.

**L:** So he was older than you, is that right?

**S:** He was a year older than me. Yeah, he had graduated in '64, and he came – He was from Perryville, Missouri, and he came up to Alton to work in the steel mill with his cousins, and that's – We met at the drive in, in Wood River there, and he lived in Wood River with his two cousins. They had a basement apartment in a house there. And so yeah, we started dating, and we would go to Perryville for the weekend sometimes, and go down to his mom and dad's, and you know, I met them, and we would stay down there and do things with his friends down there. So that was interesting, yeah. We were married for 25 years, and then we got divorced, and I initiated the divorce. I mean, he was having an affair and I found out about it, so I said alright, I'm done.

**L:** That is the end, yes.

**S:** And we had four children. We had two girls and two boys. The oldest one is 51, and Stacy is three years younger than her, and Scott's about three years younger than her,

and then there's a six year gap and then there's the baby, Steven. And they are all married, and I have nine grandchildren.

**L:** Wow, that's wonderful.

**S:** So they, yeah. [laughter] Yeah, I guess. It's kind of crazy when we all get together. Some of the best memories would be Christmases and Easter. When mother and Bob bought the house, when they got married – My stepdad Bob, and they bought the house in, let's see... 70, no 60... I think '66. Yeah, they got married in '65. '66 they bought the house. Lived there for 40 years, and it was an acre and a half of ground out at the end on a dead end street, at that time, and we had Easter egg hunts out there, and it was a lot of fun, and everybody enjoyed it. We had so much fun out there, it was great.

And then Christmas, we all got together there at Christmas, and a friend of my stepdad's would dress up as Santa Claus and come when the kids were little, and he'd knock on the front door. His wife would let him off at the corner, and he'd walk down and knock on the door. We'd send one of the kids to answer the door. My son went out there [laughter] opened the door one time – He opened the door, and he shut it and said, "Mom!" And I'm like, "What?" And he goes, "Santa Claus is here!"

**L:** [laughter] And he left him on the –

**S:** Yeah, he shut the front door. [laughter] Fred knew all the kids. He's standing out there like, okay. So, I said, "Well, let him in!" and he goes, "Really?" [laughter] and I'm like "Yeah!" So he opened the door, and then he wasn't sure how to unlock the storm door, so I think when the girls went, or when I went and unlocked it or something and let him in, and then of course he knew all of them, and they were like, "Who is that guy?" 'Cause they didn't know him that well, but he knew all their names, and mom had things for them to give him. So it was kind of funny, because he'd say, "And you're the one..." That, you know, and they'd go, "How does he know that?"

You know, so on the way home they – It would be hilarious, because on the way home they'd be saying, "Well, that Santa Claus, who's that Santa Claus?" And I said, "It's Santa Claus! What do you mean, who is that Santa Claus?" "Well he knew –" And I said, "Well, Santa Claus knows everything, we told you this."

**L:** Yeah, he's got a list!

**S:** Yeah, he's got a list! Your name's on the list! And they're like, "Eh, I don't know..." So it was funny. Those were really good times. Everybody, all the kids enjoyed those. We all talk about that a lot, about the Christmases and the Easter egg hunts.

Easter egg hunts were funny because Bob, grandpa Bob, was the one that filled up the Easter eggs, him and my mom. So everybody had their name on an Easter egg, and inside would be candy and a dollar. And then he would have one with his name on it, and it would have five dollars in it, with some candy, and he'd tell the kids, "Now you find

my egg and bring it up to me!" And they're like, "Okay grandpa, we'll look for it!" So whoever found it would bring it up. Well then, when they'd open them all up –

**Other:** I missed the whole story.

**S:** He'd say, "I got five dollars." And they're like, "Well, we only got a dollar." And finally, we were coming home from there one day, and finally it dawned on Scott. He was a little older and, you know, he got to help hide the eggs that year, and he goes, "Grandpa fills the eggs, doesn't he?" And I go, "Yes." [makes noise of disappointment, laughing] You know, he gives me this big sigh, and I said, "Why?" And he goes, "That's why he always –" I said, "You got it!" [laughter] He goes, "Ugh!"

Just gotta – So there will be things like that, that were hilarious, that we had so much fun, and my sister and her family would come all the time. And mom always had her Christmas the week before Christmas, the weekend before Christmas. Because my stepfather's mother's birthday was the day after Christmas, and Christmas was her day, and mom said, "I'm gonna honor that as long as she's living." You know, we'll do that, so that's what they did. So we always had it the weekend before, and everybody knew that weekend was when you go to grandma's. And we would have everything you could think of to eat. [laughter] You know, you figure that we were in a four room house, and we had 30 people. 25-30 people.

I know the one year, my oldest daughter had gotten divorced from her first husband, was gonna marry her second husband, and Brad was with us. And my cousin was there, who we were close – Larry was there. He said – He was sitting and he goes, "Now who do you belong to?" And he was looking at Brad, and Brad says, "Well, I'm gonna marry Steph." And he goes, "So you're not in this family." And he said, "You're gonna get in this family." And Brad – [Larry] goes, "You're sure you wanna do that?" [laughter] I said, "Larry!" And Brad started laughing, and [Larry] said, "You know, I didn't have a choice. I was born into this family. You have a choice." [Brad] goes, "Yeah, I'm sure." He was like, okay, so it was hilarious.

That's kind of the way our family things went most of the time, and I know even when we were over there when my stepfather passed away – We were over there for the service and everything, and it was real quiet in the house. I guess it was just the girls and I there or something, and we heard something fall downstairs, and Steph goes, "What was that?" And I said, "I don't know." So she went downstairs to look and she said, "The mop fell over." And my mom immediately said, "Oh, that was Bob, he's just letting us know he's still here." [laughter]

So when Stephanie got married, they were trying to light a unity candle, and we were at Tower Grove Park outside on the court, and it wouldn't light. And so they finally got it lit, and later we were at the reception and I said to her, I said, "You guys were really having a hard time doing that." She said, "That's grandpa." She said, "I know grandpa was – He kept blowing it out, letting us know he was there." She said, "I know why it did that." I

said, "Oh, okay." So, I mean, things like that happen, and you think back... Yeah, you know, okay, they're there.

One that really gets me is – After my mom passed away, Stephen, my youngest son, had his daughters, and Bella was just – She wasn't two yet, and they moved up here from Texas. And I had a picture of mom, and I said, "Stephen, do you want this picture of grandma?" I said, "I've got a couple." He said, "Yeah mom, I'd like to have that, I don't have one." So I gave it to him. They were trying to decide what they were gonna do with it, so they set it in the hallway on the floor, figuring which wall, and where they were gonna put it. He was at work, Daisy, my daughter-in-law, was in the bedroom, and she heard Bella just chatter away and laughing, and thought "What is she doing?" And she looked around the corner, and she was sitting on the floor in front of mom's picture. Just, like, having this conversation with this picture. And Daisy was like, she said, "I got cold chills." I said, "I'm getting cold chills." And I said, "I know mom would have loved all the grandkids." And she would just absolutely love those little girls too. And she said yeah, she said "She was just sitting there just talking away." And I said, "Well, you know, she always said she'd be an angel for them."

So that's, kind of, you know, we all kind of felt that way. Which is, things happen and it's "Oh, grandma's here. Grandma's letting us know she's here." You know, something will happen with the kids, and they'll all go, "Yeah, grandma or grandpa was here. We know, they were doing – " you know, whatever. So things like that – That I guess my mom had a really big influence on me, and the way she treated the kids. I mean, people that married, that had children before, that weren't really our family, that came into it, they were treated just like anybody else. Didn't matter. You know, they got the same thing everybody else got, and that's one thing she always taught us. There's always somebody worse off than you. So, if you're thinking you've got something bad, there's always somebody worse off than you. So you look on the bright side, and you pick yourself up and you go. And that's the way she was. So that – She was probably one of the biggest influences on me.

**L:** Well it seems like there's this legacy of laughter and, you know, and just, I don't know, it's just very warm.

**S:** Yes.

**L:** And that your dad was like that, and then she remarried, and she married –

**S:** Oh yeah, he was very much like my dad. Yeah. That was kind of funny, but he was very much like my dad. He was – Dad was in the Army Air Corps, is what it was called, it wasn't the Air Force yet, it was called the Army Air Corps. He was in that, and when mom passed away my sister, she was the executor, and she had gone through a bunch of stuff, and she gave me this box of stuff that had my name on it. It was my dad's. So I got it out one day and was reading it – The kids, Scott had called, and one of his kids were doing a family tree or something, and he wanted to know the dates of dad's birth

and when he died, things like that. So I happened to be looking through there and I found these papers, discharge papers, from the service. He got medals.

**L:** Wow. And you never knew?

**S:** No! Don't know where they are; don't know what happened to them. He got two good conduct – He got good conduct medals, he got two... something else. And I was like... I was shocked. and I called my sister, I said, "Judy, did you know?" She said, "No, I didn't know anything about them." She says, "Where'd you find it?" I said, "In those papers." And then that's where – Well, she found that letter, like I said, from the radio when dad passed away, that they had announced it, you know, and it wasn't – That nobody else had knew. So, you know, it was just kind of a shock to find that.

**L:** For sure.

**S:** You know, good news. And when I told Judy he got the good conduct medal she goes, "Really?" [laughter] I said, "Yeah, I was kind of surprised too." Because he was – Him and his brothers were kind of well known. They were... characters, is all I can say. [laughter]

**L:** Had a reputation?

**S:** Yeah, they had a reputation. Good reputation around town. Yeah, cause they'd been raised all in the same area, so. For all their lives. So it was, yeah, but I know dad was like that, you know. He was always in a good mood, usually – I don't think, I don't know that, I don't think him and mom – I don't remember them fighting over anything. And, you know, mom came from, she lived in that area all her life too. So it was – They knew a lot of people, had a lot of family living around there, and we do have some history on my mom's family. We have genealogy and information about the different members of the family, and we have a lot of pictures that we've chronicalized [sic] and everything.

**L:** That's cool.

**S:** Yeah, it is. It's really neat to have it. And then I kind of did that with my dad. I have some pictures of dad when he was in the service and that, and I know that he was stationed on Guam, and he couldn't tell anybody where he was at. And when he'd send letters home they'd all be redacted I guess is what it is, and so he was trying to let my grandma know where he was. So when he sent the letters home, each time he sent one he changed my grandfather's middle initial.

**L:** Oh!

**S:** To spell out Guam.

**L:** Oh, so he put code in there –

**S:** So they knew where – And grandma was like, "What is the matter with him! He knows that's not –" you know, but that's why he did it, because then –

**L:** That is smart.

**S:** Then they knew where he was at. Finally figured it out, yeah. It was – I knew that, and then he had a picture, and I think we should have that somewhere. We were looking through a bunch of old pictures and there was one of him and another guy. They loaded bombs on the planes, and the Enola Gay was sitting there behind him, and they didn't know if they loaded that bomb or not, but, you know, they were putting the bombs on the planes at that time. So I remember them talking about that, but he never said anything about the medals. Never. Not once.

**L:** Humble man.

**S:** Yeah. It didn't bother him. He just – “Well I went, did what I needed to do, and that was it.”

**L:** So what about you is like your dad, and what about you is like your mom?

**S:** Personality is like my dad.

**L:** Is that right? Okay.

**S:** Yeah. Mom, I don't know. [laughter]

**L:** You read!

**S:** I read. Mom was a reader. Mom was a reader, yeah. I like to read. Yeah, I think she enjoyed kids, you know, the kids and everything. She enjoyed kids, so I think I got that from her too. 'Cause I enjoyed teaching. 'Cause I taught preschool for almost 30 years, and I worked – I started with infants. I did infants for about 10 years. I loved that. That was so much fun. And then I –

**L:** God bless you.

**S:** [laughter] Then I got to the 4 year olds and that was even – I liked that group, because of the fact that you can show them something and teach them something, and you can see the light bulb go off, and know that they caught on to what it is. And I like being around kids. I like listening to them and talking to them, because they come up with some of the darnedest things. [laughter] You just – So I really enjoyed that, and I miss that. And this, the kids not being around that much – I enjoy my grandkids, for that reason. So I try to talk to them and get them, and see what they're doing and where they're at with everything, and trying to help them as much as I can. Just give them a strong background. And, you know, let them know you're of worth. You're of worth. That's the main thing. So that's, you know.

**L:** And it's been a hard season to get together.

**S:** Yes. Yes, it has been. [laughter] It's very hard.

**L:** 2020 will be remembered for the –

**S:** Yes. A lot of different things. Yes, yes. That was one of the worst, 'cause Easter hit and, you know we usually get Easter eggs and get together and make cookies, and we get together and do the Easter egg hunt... Nothing. And it was like, whoa, wait a minute. You know, I was, that really was hard on me. And them too, everybody.

**L:** Well, and with your tradition of Easter eggs, going back to Grandpa Bob and all that –

**S:** Yeah. Yeah it was really rough this year. That was the first year, what did we say, in 50 years? That we hadn't gotten together for Easter. So that was, yeah, that was tough. And that was when my son, who probably has inherited my dad's sense of – Both of them have inherited his personality. My youngest son came around for Easter and brought everybody a bouquet of – Brought me a bouquet of flowers, and this bag that had a little card in it. So I opened the card up, there's a piece of toilet paper, with a little heart drawn on it, and my – it was one square – and my name. And I'm like, "What in the world are you doing?"

He went around to his brothers and sisters house, and his dad's, left – Oh there was a piece of candy in it, one piece of candy. Each house got a sheet of paper for each person in the house, and a piece of candy for each person in the house, and a bouquet of flowers. And that was Easter. I said, "What are you doing?" And he said, "I saw it on Seinfeld." [laughter]

So my older son has the Ring camera, so Steve was trying to slip up to his house without him seeing it. So Scott saw the video, sent it to Steven and said, "Have you seen this guy running around the neighborhood?" [laughter] Cause they both live out in Eureka. He said, "Yeah I watch out for this guy." [laughter] Yeah. That's my kids.

**L:** So final question, and then we'll wrap it up. How would you like to be remembered?

**S:** I don't know. I'd like to be remembered that I helped somebody. Friendly, fun. I know I told my daughter when I pass away, I don't want a wake. I want you to have a party. I want you to get together. You've gotta play Elvis.

**Other:** A wake is a party!

**S:** Well, no, I want – Not in the funeral home. I want them to go someplace where it's fun, and play all kinds of music and do some country line dancing, and just enjoy themselves [sic]. Have a couple margaritas on me. And just, you know, have a good time. I don't want the down feelings, the, you know, I don't want that. I want you to talk about fun things. That's what I want to talk about. That's what I want.

**L:** That's awesome.

**S:** I want people to remember that. That's the best thing.

**L:** That is the best thing.

**S:** And don't take any pictures of me – Well, I want to be cremated. 'Cause when my dad passed away he was in a casket, and a family friend wanted to know if I wanted a

picture, and I'm like no! I don't wanna remember my dad like that! I wanna remember him sitting in the middle of the floor, telling jokes, beer in his hand, you know. No, I don't want that. I got other memories that I remember. So that's what I want, I want you to remember that. I don't want any sad memories.

**L:** That is awesome. Thank you so much, I appreciate it.