NASA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
EDITED ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE CAROL HOMAN
INTERVIEWED BY JENNIFER ROSS-NAZZAL
HOUSTON, TEXAS – JUNE 14, 2023

ROSS-NAZZAL: Today is June 14th, 2023. This interview with Carol Homan is being conducted for the NASA Oral History Project. The interviewer is Jennifer Ross-Nazzal. Thanks again for driving down here this morning. I really appreciate it. I wanted to start by asking if you would give me an overview of your childhood before you started working out here at NASA in '72.

HOMAN: I was born at a naval hospital, while my dad was in the Army, in Chicago. I have no idea what Chicago is like. We moved from there when I was still a baby to Wichita, Kansas. My dad worked for Boeing there. We lived there with a lot of our relatives. Both of my parents came from really large—really large—families. My dad had 10 brothers and sisters, my mother had 14, so I had lots of family there. We moved to New Orleans in '63, I think. My dad went to work at the Michoud [Assembly Facility] plant that's now Stennis [Space Center, Mississippi]. We lived there for about three years, and then went back to Wichita to Boeing. Then we moved to Syracuse, New York, for a very short time. On Halloween of 1967, we arrived in Houston, because my dad was going to work for Boeing with the Johnson Space Center.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's a memorable Halloween.

HOMAN: Yes, it really was. Moving here was really interesting then, because by '67, there were a whole lot of people here, but construction of homes, the neighborhoods, hadn't caught up with

that at all. We stayed in a little apartment in League City for a little while. Then we rented a small house in Webster for a little while, all the time my parents [were] trying to buy a house, but there was nothing that you could just buy and move into. We finally moved into Webster in a small house, a new house, and lived there for a while, over near Clear Lake Hospital [HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake], and then moved into Clear Lake City in about '69, maybe.

I went to Clear Creek High School at the time. That was before Clear Lake High School existed, so it was the only one. Again, it was growing like crazy, adding on buildings and adding on people. Most of the people I got to know were also NASA people's kids. It didn't seem like we even met very many of the people who grew up around here. There just weren't that many. Everybody came from somewhere else. Graduated from Clear Creek High School [League City, Texas] in 1971, and then made a deal with my parents. I started at San Jac [San Jacinto College, Pasadena and Houston, Texas], because I wanted to go to Baylor [University, Waco, Texas], and we didn't have resources for that kind of tuition. So the deal they made with me was that I could go to San Jac for two years and then go to Baylor. By the end of that year, my first year there, I was planning to get married, and I needed to go to work, so I started looking for a job.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How did you find out about a job at NASA at that point?

HOMAN: I went to what is now the Texas Workforce Commission. I don't even remember what they were called back then, but it was basically the same agency. This was where they sent me. You had to take a civil service exam, or I did, and I had typing and shorthand skills that I had gotten in high school, and I had taken some at San Jac as well. I didn't go to interviews

anywhere else or do anything else. It was a temporary job when I first got it. I think I only had 90 days to start with.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I thought that was interesting, because it was right in the middle of a RIF [reduction in force].

HOMAN: I still don't understand that. I have no idea why I would have been hired right in a reduction in force.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's what I was curious about.

HOMAN: Like I said in my story there, walking in the building with this one person, the one woman that I met, she was really in a bad mood, because she only had a few days left. I can't imagine what it was like for her to have somebody come in and say, "I'm here to work as a clerk typist," when the branch secretary was losing her job. That was memorable, how it happened that way.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What sort of training did she give you?

HOMAN: Oh, none. She didn't know why I was there, and she didn't have any authority over anything, so she just pointed me into another office where I could wait until somebody came that did send me where I was going.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What sort of training did you participate in at that point?

HOMAN: That worked out well for me, because they put me in the Math Physics Branch of the Mission Planning and Analysis Division. Sally [A.] Sanford was the branch secretary, and she was really good at her job. She was very dedicated, and she worked very hard. I got training from her. The center was just good about training. I don't remember specifically what training classes I had then, but starting out, I think I had some, even that early.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's interesting, for a temporary person to receive some sort of training classes.

HOMAN: Yes, and maybe that did come later. That far back, it's hard for me to remember exactly. But I was going through my records, and I was surprised that I saw some training that seemed to relate to that that I didn't remember doing. I do remember the professional secretary's training that I did later. I wrote about that here. You could get a certified professional secretary, and I wanted to do that, because I was ambitious. I was probably about a GS [General Schedule]-4 by that time, so that would have been after I'd been there a few years. Those are the classes that I took. They taught you some things, like the GPO [Government Publishing Office] Style Manual, letter format, and that kind of thing. Some of that I had gotten in school.

In one of the classes, we had a model who came and taught us what we should wear, and how we should do our hair, and how we should fix our makeup. I was so aggravated at the whole thing. I was obnoxious, I'm sure, about, "Why were we doing that?" We were going to be taking a test to get our certified professional secretary, and I didn't want to waste my time on

things that were not going to be on the test. But we had that kind of training as well. I don't know if anyone asked for that, but we got it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were men and women teaching these classes, or were they completely female instructors?

HOMAN: No. I don't remember if there were men who taught any of the other parts of it, because it was different sessions on different days. The one that always stuck out in my mind, though, was the one with the model.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I bet. Do you have paperwork from that?

HOMAN: No, I don't think I have anything going back that far.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was fascinated by that, because so many times when women were in the workforce, that seemed to have happened; you can't just be a woman working. You have to make sure that you're pretty, and feminine, and maintain that in the workplace.

HOMAN: Yes. I believe, just from what I remember of my history and being there, it helped your career if you looked good. If you came to work well dressed, and your hair done well, you were more likely to move ahead than if you didn't.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was there a dress code at that point when you were hired, do you recall?

HOMAN: I don't recall one. I most always wore dresses and heels. I was really glad to give that up sometime later, but it was usually dresses and heels.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That was around the time the pantsuit for women became very popular or in vogue.

HOMAN: Yes, I started wearing pants later on.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was curious about some of that. You had also mentioned that you were working in a branch with one female mathematician and very few female engineers. Did you get to know the other women very well when you first started out?

HOMAN: Well, Sally is still a good friend. I still talk to her occasionally. Flora [B. Lowes], I didn't get to know her as well, but some. She was helpful to me on some things down the road. Her husband was a lawyer, and when I needed one for a divorce, she helped me. It was just nice to have another woman around, because there weren't all that many.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's what I've heard from so many women, that they just didn't see other women. One woman I interviewed years ago said she didn't know of any other women, like she was the only woman on her contract, and when she came to the center, she didn't even see any secretaries. I thought that's telling. One of the engineers, Ivy [F. Hooks] talked about how the secretaries really supported her and she supported them. They were cheering for one another.

They were a sort of support group. Did you find that that was the case? Was that your experience?

HOMAN: I think so. I felt that way about Flora, and I know that Flora and Sally stayed in contact for a long time. Sally left and became an entrepreneur. She started her own business after I don't know how many years. She must have worked at NASA by then maybe 15 years or so. She and Flora stayed in touch, because they had grown pretty close. But I think it was that way, that the secretaries were happy to support the women that were there, because there weren't very many of them. I think they probably tended to treat us better than men that were there. Not that the men necessarily treated us badly, just differently.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you expand on that?

HOMAN: I would say that the women tended to be more collaborative about things. If they would bring you something, they would be asking for your help. When men would bring you something, they would be putting it on your desk, telling you when it was expected, and that was it. So I think it was more like that. I think it has more to do with a sense of power balance. The women that were there were not in charge in the same way and were experiencing, my guess is, some of the same kinds of differences in treatment.

Sally told me the story about Flora being told that although she was in line for promotion, she would not be promoted, because there was a man who had a family to support in the same category. They had to have been experiencing a lot of those same kinds of things, probably the expectations about their work compared to the work of engineers. I would imagine that that was

so. I don't remember ever talking to any of them about that specifically, but I would imagine that that was true, and there certainly was a different sense in the way you related to them. I was always grateful that Dave [my husband, David J. Homan] worked for Ivy, because I think his experience having a woman as a supervisor made him a different kind of husband than he would have been if he had not ever had that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I bet, I bet.

DAVID HOMAN: It's amazing?

ROSS-NAZZAL: You said that you tended to collaborate with women. Can you give an example where you collaborated? I'm guessing the men wanted you to type up their technical memos and reports, but what sort of things were the women asking you to collaborate on?

HOMAN: The engineers, it was usually the same kind of thing. When you would interact with them, it was in a more comfortable, friendlier way. That's the only way I can think of to explain it, really. The best relationships came from the women that were, at that time, also secretaries. There were several of them that were a few years ahead of me and grade-wise were ahead of me. I learned so much from them, both personally and professionally, everything; they were just willing to be helpful. Most of that time, there wasn't a lot of competition between them. Generally, as I recall, they were willing to help each other get work done. If somebody was out, then somebody else could be asked to help, and that was expected and everybody did that willingly, it seems like to me.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Everyone was willing to pitch in?

HOMAN: Yes, which I think is part of the way NASA, or JSC, anyway, is, for the most part. A little less so with engineers. My memory of the way they worked was they tended to each have their own narrow path. "I work on this." They didn't want anybody else messing with what they worked with and didn't do a whole lot collaborating with each other. That might have just been some of the areas I worked in and some of the people I worked with. I don't know how much reality there is to that perception, but that's how I perceive it, anyway.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You did say in your writeup that the people that you worked with and the work that they were doing was fascinating, and I wondered if you could expand on that.

HOMAN: I liked working in Math Physics. That's what I remember the most. When they would bring you things—the one I always remember the most is Bob [Robert T.] Savely, who worked there for such a long time. His handwriting was horrible. It really was absolute chicken scratch. Trying to figure out what he was saying was hard.

But with all of them, the typing was tricky, because it was easy to type words fast, but it wasn't that easy, especially then, to do all of the mathematical equations and symbols using a traditional typewriter. We had little plastic things that you had to put over a key to enter a symbol. Sally taught me that because she had done a lot of it. It always made things more interesting than it would have been just typing out memos and things.

Then the formality of it. That has changed so much, because this was before any emails, so the way everybody communicated anything officially, it was like a formal letter. We always did carbon copies of everything. I don't remember exactly why. I think because approval signatures were kept on the carbon copies, and we always had those, even if multiple copies were going out. Some things were going out for wide distribution. Maybe a hundred people were going to get copies of the memo, so that required making physical copies and, in some cases, stapling them and putting them in envelopes to send them out, and marking them, whose copy is whose. All those things were really time consuming then, and those are things that no one would be doing now.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I don't think people really realize that. Most people do their administrative functions now. They handle all of that, but they don't realize how much paper that involved, and like you said, it's just time consuming. Was there a Xerox copier back then, or was it still mimeographs?

HOMAN: There were Xerox copiers, but it seems like there weren't very many. It was a big copier in one room on the floor or on another floor in a big space, in Building 30. So you would go find those or get in line. If it was longer and had more copies to be made, then we sent things to the printing plant to get copies there, originally.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I'm not even sure that exists anymore.

HOMAN: It may not. That was a whole part of Management Services Division when I was working there with Bill [William A.] Larsen. I never thought about that, whether that exists anymore. But yes, all of that stuff took time. If you made an error, you would have to either start over, usually not, but we had a lot of correction fluid to fix the typing and get started again. It did take two of us to support a group of about—I would guess it was maybe 25 to 30 engineers or mathematicians. It took two of us, because of the amount of paper that was generated through there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I can understand that. Were you also doing things like travel and filing, as well.

HOMAN: Yes. All of that. Hadn't thought about it, but yes. There were five-drawer file cabinets lined up against the wall, so there was quite a bit of that to do, because we kept everything in hard copies. There was a lot of that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Thanks to the secretaries, from what I understand, we have the historical records that we can go back to now, because you kept that and what would be retained. Did you get training in records management?

HOMAN: I believe so. That seems like one of the things that was in my training records, that that was something that we had. The other thing that ended up being very time consuming, as well, was if anyone in the office was going to be traveling or if there was correspondence that needed to be delivered in a hurry. You did that by going for a walk anywhere in the center; a lot of times from Building 30 to Building 1, that trip back and forth, because you were running errands.

Now, one thing that I don't recall happening very much there at all—secretaries, at my level, anyway, were not asked to do personal errands. But any work-related errand, we were the ones who did that, pretty much. They only went somewhere if they were going to a meeting or to do something They didn't go get their own travel or take copies to another office. That was always what secretaries did.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you do any purchasing for the office?

HOMAN: No, those you would just send requests for supplies and things. If they wanted supplies, then you would fill out a supply request, and those would be delivered to the office, as I recall.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Like I said, it's a very different world now when you see an admin.

HOMAN: Yes. The other thing is, answering the phones was just so different then, because there could be as many as 8 to 10 people calling in on a single line. We answered the phone for all of them, and then transferred calls to them or took messages for them if they weren't in the office. That was before there was voicemail. When somebody got a call, you wrote down the message and phone number and took it to their desk.

That was the other thing, mail distribution. Since everything was done with hard copies, when the mail came, we were the ones who sorted the mail, and took it to their desks, and put it on the inbox on their desk for each person in the branch. All those things took time, too.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What about schedules? I was thinking about that. Did you keep everyone's calendars, or was that something that they would handle?

HOMAN: No. They had to do that individually. Maybe the branch chief—and Sally did more work directly for him than I did—could have been, but I don't recall that as being much of a part of it, keeping track of that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were you doing a lot of shorthand and stenography work?

HOMAN: Almost never. No, I did more of that later. When I was co-opping, I went to work at U of H [University of Houston]-Clear Lake, and I did some stenography there. Even with that, I ended up—he would record it, and I could type it faster than I could do the stenography. It was easier to type, and stop, and catch up, and type some more.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What was some of the technology that you were using? We talked about the Xerox copier. What sort of typewriter did you have, and what type of phone systems?

HOMAN: We had electric typewriters, which was better than I had had in high school, so that helped.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, you had a manual?

HOMAN: Yes, we had high-end electric typewriters, so we had some of the best ones, the newest ones made at the time. But even so, they were large, and they still had individual keys. None of that had changed by that time. In fact, as far as I know, that was still the case by the time I quit being a secretary. I wasn't really using a desktop [computer] until probably the '80s, and that was just becoming a thing then. Yes, maybe by the '80s. I'm trying to think about whether or not we were even doing that much in Procurement when I started there, because we didn't have a typewriter, and we did have assistants, but I don't remember how much we were able to do by computer then. I'll have to think about that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That is interesting, because that was one of the questions I did have when we get to Procurement. Were you a member of the National Secretaries Association? Was that something that you belonged to?

HOMAN: No.

ROSS-NAZZAL: No? Okay. I was interested in that.

HOMAN: No. I did pass the test, and I was a certified professional secretary, but I did not join an organization then.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You said you were encouraged to become a member. That was something that folks at JSC thought was important?

HOMAN: No, we were encouraged to get the training and the certification.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I misspoke. Okay.

HOMAN: I don't remember there being much membership in the area. It could have been and that I just didn't do it, but I don't remember that being much of a thing.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you get a bump in pay as a result of becoming certified?

HOMAN: Not necessarily. I don't know how true it is across the civil service, but it was really true in JSC, and I have a great appreciation for it. If you do your job well, there's an expectation of what the promotions will be like, and if you've got a year in grade and you're doing your job, you can expect to get a promotion after about that length of time until you reach the plateau for your profession or the type of job you have. It becomes a more competitive thing beyond a certain point. From the grade two up till I became a branch secretary, that moved along at a pretty steady pace without me having to really pursue it all that much. There were opportunities available, and the promotions were there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's nice.

HOMAN: Yes, that was nice. It helped me a lot.

ROSS-NAZZAL: When I was reading your summary of your time there, I thought it was interesting. You had some great descriptions about the social and cultural environment at JSC. I wondered if you would talk about that some more and expand on what you experienced, especially coming in right out of high school. You wanted to be a minister, but you couldn't, so what impact did your religious background have on your thoughts about what you were seeing and experiencing?

HOMAN: Yes, that really did have a big effect on me. I was so young, and the atmosphere there at that time—I think that there was a bunch of things that came together. One of them was the Apollo Program was ending. I was working with mission planners. Well, there weren't, in that moment, in 1972, a whole lot of missions to plan, because the Shuttle Program wasn't approved yet and wasn't moving forward. ASTP [Apollo-Soyuz Test Project] wasn't anything terribly new or different from what they had already done, and it was only a single mission, so there wasn't a whole lot there. I think this probably was true across more of JSC than just MPAD [Mission Planning and Analysis Division], that there just wasn't as much work to do.

It really was a strange environment. I mentioned there that when I arrived at 8 o'clock—and that was the [start of] work hours—there weren't many people there. That had become sloppy. The inspector general noted that a few years later, and things changed. The craziest story was, one day, there were several of us that went to lunch. We left about 10 o'clock, because we went and got on three planes and flew to La Grange and had lunch—because somebody knew there was a good burger and steak place at the airport in La Grange—and flew back. Our lunch started at about 10 and ended at about 2. There were no questions asked about that. We weren't taking vacation time to do that. It was the same with going to Maribelle's or

any of the other places, because there weren't that many places around here. Do you know anything about Maribelle's?

ROSS-NAZZAL: A little, but why don't you put it on the record if you feel comfortable? Yes.

HOMAN: Down in Seabrook on the water, with seafood, but it was mostly a bar. They did have some food, but it was mostly a bar. The reputation was that it had been started by a local madam, that it was a house of ill repute. That was the thing for me, going to bars. My parents didn't drink, and I didn't grow up with friends who drank. The people I was closest to were also Baptist, and Baptists then did not drink. That's not so much true anymore, but it was true at the time. That was something. It just seemed like we were—we, when I say that, the workplace. There were parties, or we would go out for lunch, and we went to places like local bars, like Maribelle's. I just didn't know much of anything about that.

I didn't drink for the longest time, but [guys] kept offering me [drinks. I was barely of legal drinking age at the time, 19 or 20 before the law changed it to 21]. Most of the time, I would say no. Then I learned to like strawberry daquiris at a place—there was a bar that opened on NASA Road 1. It was at the top of an office building that's still there. It was like a library inside, and I really liked that bar. You could play backgammon there. I learned to like a strawberry daquiri. But then I got a daquiri at Maribelle's and found that Maribelle's put a whole lot more alcohol in them than Jason's did, so that was a different experience, too. I got over it and never did it again.

But I think it was the coming together of not having so much work to do and the hubris that was the result of all those young men having done something that had not ever been done

before. They were really stuck on themselves. That affected the way they did everything else. They had the world in their hands at that time. So it was fun, and it was flattering, and a learning experience, but all of that part was different. I said in here, and this is true, that they all seemed so old to me, older, but now that I look back on it, my guess is that the average age was probably in the low 30s, that most of them had come straight out of college or straight out of the military to start their jobs. There were a few that were older that had come out of military, out of NASA's origins in Virginia. But for the most part, the biggest number had been fresh out of college and come to work there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: When you're 19, everybody seems older.

HOMAN: Exactly, yes. That was true.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you attend any of the splashdown parties for the few missions that had been going on?

HOMAN: Yes, I did.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Do you want to talk about those?

HOMAN: I just remember going at Ellington Field [Houston, Texas]. They had those parties at the Officer's Club. Yes, that was such a new thing, the whole idea of celebrating, that was new to me, to have that experience with them. There was excitement about splashdown. It seems

like we had parties before flights, too, that there were just parties for—again, I think because they were young and because things had slowed down. They had worked so hard in the ’60s before I got there. The ones that were already there had been working so hard to make that happen. And I think that coming down when there wasn’t so much going on, when it wasn’t as intense, I think that just made that easier. The combination of the youth, and the pride, and the less work to do made a big difference.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you follow any of the missions like Skylab or ASTP while you were working there, or was that just in the background?

HOMAN: Right, yes. I wouldn’t have been in a position or even personally been too worried about going to a launch or anything like that. I had been to a launch when I was a kid, and again, it all just seemed like part of what life was like in high school, anyway, going to school with astronauts’ kids. I wasn’t close friends with any that were [assigned flights] at the time, but we knew they were there, and it was just part of the atmosphere in the area. That wasn’t something that I thought was a big deal, that I would have gone to a lot of trouble to find out about. There may have been other secretaries who were more fascinated by the space program overall. I, at that age, was more involved in my own immediate circumstances than anything like that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You were also married, and you had a family?

HOMAN: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I did find some of the stories of sexual harassment in your story of interest, because most women that we've chatted with just say, "there were things happening, but I stuck it out, and I held out longer, and wherever I would have been, it was happening there, too." That's the discussion. I wondered if you would talk about that a little bit more. You gave some examples, but I wonder if there were others and what you witnessed, what other women went through.

HOMAN: Yes. It's interesting to me. I don't recall women ever talking about it very much to each other. Maybe we did and I just don't remember it. I can say that one of the things that was a shock to my system when I was that young was how open affairs and that kind of thing were. There were some that you knew who and who. Some of those came as a surprise, because some of them were the parents of people I had gone to church with and gone to high school with. That was a shock to the system. I did say in there—and now I'm surprised—I did not hear any stories of sexual assault. When you think about the numbers of people there—I worked with a women's shelter after I retired. Knowing what I know now about how common that is and how many women experience it, I'm actually surprised that I don't know of any cases like that.

Usually it was pretty mild, and it was pretty easy to shut down. At least that was my experience with it. I can recall things like being in the copy room and having somebody walk in and put their arm around me when it was somebody that I didn't know all that well. But I did know that they were married and had kids. There was one time when a man about the same age as my dad, who had a whole lot of children, asked me to go out to lunch with him. I thought it was a thank you kind of a thing. Then once we got there, the conversation took turns that were a little different than I expected, and I realized, "Oh, that wasn't thank you." I didn't do that again.

Like I say, most of the time it was pretty mild, and sometimes, to me, it was just amusing. Sometimes it was ew, but survivable. I didn't have anything that I thought was really problematic.

The biggest problem was the one that I wrote about there. It was the power issue. It was really more than harassment, with the man whose mentally disturbed wife was calling. She was calling several times a day, and as soon as I picked up the phone, [she] would start calling me all kinds of names and saying a lot of things to me. That went on for a while. I could just transfer the call, or I could even hang up on her if he wasn't there. But the strange thing was the way it affected me physically. I got to where my vocal cords would just lock, and I couldn't speak. I couldn't get out the words, "Flight Analysis Branch." I still remember that's what I was supposed to say, because it was so hard. The words would just choke. Then she would make fun of me for that.

I kept complaining, asking them to move him, because the way the phones were arranged, I answered the phones for some of the people, and then there were people who sat a little more distantly that were on a line together, so I didn't have to answer that phone. I answered for the branch chief and the supervisors but not for all the staff. So I asked that he be moved. Well, the branch chief didn't want to do that, because he would have had to dial four numbers to get to his extension as opposed to one if he was on the same line. So he wouldn't move him. Then it got so bad that I couldn't even answer my own phone at home. When the phone would ring, my vocal cords would lock, and nothing would come out. I finally had to go and see an ENT [ear, nose, and throat doctor], who sent me to a speech pathologist, to finally get over that and get him moved. It took going to two levels of management to have it changed to

where I didn't have to answer that phone. I had threatened to call security. I said, "I'm going to have to do something about this, because this isn't working." That was probably the worst of it.

I mention in there the nude posters on the wall for the one office. There was really only one [individual] who did that. I don't remember that being a very common thing, but there were no rules against that at the time. There was nothing that told him he couldn't do that. It was just uncomfortable to walk in there. It was every wall. When you walk into [an office to see] someone who's seated—their eye level is at a different place. It was just uncomfortable every time I went in and out of there. I can remember saying at one time—that was about the time that—was it *Ms.* magazine? One of the ones that would have a male foldout in it. *Playgirl*, I think, came out about that time. I said, "What if I brought one of those in and put it by my desk? How do you think that would be received?" Now that I look back on that, I think that probably that might have been considered an encouragement. That might have been taken a different way than I would have intended. I never did do that.

But that atmosphere really did start to change by the late '70s, when they finally—I mentioned it in here. I still remember the pink sheet that came out. That was the way we got information that was center-wide. Everybody got a copy; every person got a copy. When it started explaining what sexual harassment was and that that would not be tolerated, it was at that time and with that acknowledgement that I think things started to change.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, I was curious about that, how you think things changed for women over the course of the '70s. You were in an admin role, and I was wondering what your thoughts were on that.

HOMAN: I think that was very deliberate. First was that pink sheet. I really do remember that. The other was the opportunities that we were offered. They were making a very deliberate, very thought-out effort to promote women administratively into higher positions. There was the program that they started. I was a branch secretary at the time, and I was going to night school. I was going to San Jac, trying to finish my undergraduate degree, and that was going very slowly. They came up with a program. I wish I could remember what it was called, and I couldn't find anything on it in my records. When you were at lower grade levels, you could take classes during the workday on a local campus if you were already enrolled. So I could take one day a week, and I think I probably divided it up into two half days, because that's the way the classes were offered.

That helped me, because being a single mom, I could still take night classes, but I didn't have to take as many, and I could get more hours in a semester. I was so determined to finish getting a degree. I didn't necessarily have a professional career in mind. I just wanted the education. I had a notebook, and I was constantly—I had the numbers [of hours I had completed], trying to figure out, "Okay. If I can take three hours in the spring and three hours in the summer, then that will get me to this many hours." I was trying to figure out what I could do to get there quickly. Being able to take hours during the workweek to go was just such a wonderful thing for me. I started that program. You could do that for two years, and I think—I'm pretty sure that I ended up only doing it one year.

I was a GS-5, and I had applied for a couple of GS-6 secretarial promotions and not been the one chosen. It was Bob Jones, I think was his name, from the Personnel Office, that suggested becoming a co-op to me. I still appreciate him for having done that, because I never would have thought of it. I hadn't thought about it at all. He encouraged me to do it, and that

ended up making a big difference. So I had two years in that [education] program, but I believe I spent only one year in it and then went into the co-op program in ’79 instead. I had some savings, and I knew I was going to have to be out not working for at least one semester out of every year. I was prepared to do that, but in the fall of my first work assignment, Dave and I got married, and that made it easier for me to finish college than it would have been if I had still been single when I was taking those semesters off.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How young were your children at this point?

HOMAN: I only had one at the time, and she was four. Yes, she was born in ’75, so she was 4 when I started. I had been taking her to school with me at San Jac. It was wonderful that San Jac had a daycare center. She would tell people that she went to college with mommy, because I could take her there with me. That helped both of us. They had good childcare there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, that’s nice. That doesn’t happen very often.

HOMAN: No, it doesn’t. That was a great thing for me. The co-op program ended up being a great thing. Going into Procurement wasn’t what I had in mind. I didn’t know what Procurement was. I had wanted to go into Personnel, because when I first started college, I wanted to get a degree in psychology, and I thought that that was a good fit with Personnel. But it turned out there were a lot more positions in Procurement for co-ops than there were in Personnel, so Procurement was what I went into. That ended up being so much better for me than I even thought it would be, first of all, because I shared an office with Debra [L.] Johnson.

First thing when I walked in the door, she was one of the ones I shared an office with, and Lyn [Lynda J.] Gordon-Winkler. Having them be the ones who supervised me, who taught me, and became my really good friends, that just was huge. That was the start of networking. I wouldn't have known that word or thought about it at the time, but it was.

Seeing how women, as they advanced, helped each other, that is one of the things that I attribute to the whole pathway that I think more people ought to understand. At the time, in the late '70s and the '80s, when JSC was promoting women and working it in these various ways through co-op programs, through educational advancement, and things like that, I thought everyone was doing that, that it was part of the law and that that was going on everywhere. It wasn't until much later I realized how far ahead of the game NASA was. I don't know if that was government wide. I don't know how much of it was JSC, but I certainly know that JSC was doing that. It made a difference for me and several other friends that I have who, like me, started out at more low-level administrative or clerical positions and advanced over time because of things that JSC was doing.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What other lessons did you learn from Debra and Lyn?

HOMAN: Lyn, yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: We were talking, before I started recording, about the key to the men's room. Were there other things that Debra had passed along that you thought were invaluable?

HOMAN: One of the things I gained from working with Debra is about race and cultural diversity, because she was the first person of color that I had worked that closely with. There were very few people of color working in MPAD at the time I was there in the '70s. I knew them, and I was friends with some of them, but sharing an office with Debra I had the opportunity to get to know her better personally. That means a lot to me that I had the opportunity to work that closely with her, and to know her so much better, and gain so much appreciation for who she was and what she brought to the job. That was important to me.

Both of them, they were just good at training me to do the work. I think part of it was just enjoying, again, that sense of equal power, that it didn't seem like there was as much of a gap, even though there was, grade-wise. They had both been around longer than I had. Debra was my age, but she had finished college at a younger age, and she had co-opped like I had, but she already had a professional level by then. I think it was that. It was that acceptance, feeling like I was more on level ground, on a level playing field, than I had ever felt before. I think that's the biggest thing I got out of that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were there many men in Procurement at that time, or was it primarily women?

HOMAN: Yes. Yes. In fact, there would have been more. There were no women in management in Procurement at that time. Again, that was a place [where] they were hiring more women. In college, there weren't that many women coming out of engineering, anyway, so they weren't bringing in that many new women in those positions, but they could hire more women into those administrative-type positions. So Procurement was one where there were more women being hired. So a lot of them were coming in at about the same time I was, but I was a

little bit behind as a co-op. They had hired more women out of college into Procurement positions then as they came open. My guess—I don't know about this for certain. When I think about the ages of people in Procurement, I'm thinking that the hiring in the '60s and '70s for people in Procurement may have come more out of other government [agencies] rather than straight out of high school, so I believe there may have been a lot more retirements going on to fill positions in Procurement. That's one of the ways they were able to do that. They could hire more women because there were more positions coming open.

I really did appreciate the variety of work that was involved. I mentioned that here, that as I was working on my degree; I was working on a business degree. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, because I liked accounting, and I had thought I wanted to be involved with personnel management. I had to declare, not as a major, but as a concentration in my business degree, and I was having a hard time deciding what that should be. Procurement really did help, because I loved the way it drew on so many different things. Accounting was helpful, and management courses in personnel was helpful, and economics, all of it fit into that. I really did like the work there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What did you start out purchasing?

HOMAN: Let's see. I did work in small purchases for a while. I must have been doing small purchases in my first co-op experience. I can't remember all that much what I did as a co-op. But I do remember that one of my first experiences once I was hired—Lyn was my supervisor at the time, so she had been promoted, and I ended up going to work directly for her. A lot of what I was doing at one point was working with grants. I believe it was when I was working for her

that I did my first negotiation. She helped me through that, figuring out where to start, and how to approach it. She coached me. The contractor, I think, thought that it would be easy to put one over on [me]. I don't know how much the female part had to do with that, but certainly somebody that was new. She really coached me through the whole process. It was a great experience to finish that and feel like I had done well and accomplished the goal that I had set, even though there was some pushback and some adversity to that. I really did feel more powerful with that experience than I ever had before.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Would you talk about that? Because I think sometimes when we think about Procurement, we just think that you are acquiring something. You're paying for it. I think it's interesting that you had to negotiate. Would you talk about how that worked and, if you feel comfortable sharing, who you were negotiating with?

HOMAN: Well, let's see. Earlier on, the first one would have been a smaller contract, and it was for computer services of some sort. It was relatively small. I was probably looking at something in the hundred-thousand-dollar range. I can't remember whether we were buying services or new equipment, but there were people who took different positions on negotiations. The contractor would tend to come in high, to make as much money as they possibly could make. There were some buyers that would really work to go in with a very low [price]. "This is all we'll pay you for that," and try to negotiate that way.

What I believe Lyn and Debra helped me see, and what was a part of my personality anyway, was to do the research and look at the facts and try to arrive at a mutually successful agreement. What could we do that is fair to both sides? What is within the budget, and meets

the requirement we have, and makes it worth the contractor's while to offer us the service or the product? I still feel good about that as an approach. Because I like numbers, I would enjoy doing the preparation in trying to get as much data as I could on, is this an accurate cost? Are there areas where there could be savings? The ones I worked with were really good about encouraging me on that and helping me with that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How did you pull together research? Nowadays, it's so easy. You just go to Google, and you could probably type in how much things should cost. But back then, again, you'd be dealing primarily with paper. How did you find those items?

HOMAN: That's a good question. I think some of it would have been going back to other contracts, similar contracts; going back to previous contracts with the same one to look at what they were doing; and working with the engineers, because we were always buying something for someone else, so working with the engineers to get as much information as I could from them. That was one of the things I liked about it, too, was that you weren't working just with other Procurement people. You were working with a much broader [group of people]. You're working with the contractors, and you're working with the engineers who want the product, and I liked that kind of collaboration and working together part of it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It sounds like an interesting position to be in.

HOMAN: I thought it was. I really did like it. It was funny to me that I did enjoy it so much, because when they told me that I was, as a co-op, going into Procurement and not Personnel,

because that was what I had asked for or what I was hoping for, I was disappointed, because I thought, I don't know what that is. I don't know what they do. Once I got involved with it, yes, I really did enjoy my time there.

In fact, I liked the work so much that that was one reason why I moved out of Procurement once I got to a certain level and had an opportunity [to move up], because I was a GS-12. I started out as a GS-7, and through the pretty natural progression of things, I was a GS-12. In Procurement, you got 80 or 100 employees who all have pretty much the same skill set. When you get to a certain level, at a GS-12, then it was time to compete for [promotions]. I'm not a terribly competitive person. Besides that, at the next level in Procurement, instead of doing the negotiating, doing the research to come up with the price, what you tended to be doing was reviewing other people's work and signing off on it, and probably mentoring and training them, too. But I wasn't terribly enthused about doing that.

I wanted to get promoted, and I wanted to make more money, but I was less enthused about that being my work. In Procurement, I also stayed on the institutional side, meaning I was supporting engineering services, the medical and center services, and I was not drawn, like many others were, into the program procurement. Program procurement, you're a tiny cog in this huge thing. It's so much money, it is so driven by management and the engineers involved, that that was less appealing to me than doing the center things and the more institutional work, because it had to do with people and getting work done, and it was more in your face. It was daily work, as opposed to projects, where something is going to happen out there someday, and you're going to be this tiny little piece of it. I liked working the center stuff, because then it seemed like you got to see a broader context with a more immediate result, if that makes sense.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes. What were some of the most notable or interesting things that you helped to procure?

HOMAN: The best was one with—Lockheed was the company at the time—for engineering services. That was the biggest one I ever did, so it would have been about 100,000,000 a year, and several thousand employees. That meant I had a price analyst who helped with the numbers, and I was answering to the technical person involved. You'd have to know him. He was a big, much older than me, a very gruff engineer that a lot of people did not like working with, because he was very opinionated. He had been doing his job for a long time. He knew what he was doing. We got along great.

One of the things I remember is really kind of silly, but we were negotiating 100,000,000 for 10 years, so a billion dollars. That was the biggest thing that I ever worked on. It was very contentious. We had met a bunch of times with Lockheed about it. I don't even remember what the contention was about, but I remember that we had met with them a bunch of times, and that we had had a hard time. We got into the negotiations at Christmastime, and I was six months pregnant, and leading this team with this group from Lockheed. This was in '84. I still remember sitting in this conference room. I was very big pregnant, even though it was only six months. The guy from Lockheed, the manager from there that was representing him, he would have been a fairly high-level Lockheed person for that much money. He came in and kissed the top of my head, and I thought, "What?" He thought that was okay, since I was pregnant, I guess. That was the most interesting and most memorable, for that reason, kind of experience, and because Odenwalder, after it was over, sent a really nice letter to my management saying that he thought I had done a great job in leading the team, and that the negotiation had gone well, and

they got what they wanted to out of it. So that was the best one, to know it was going to be long term, it was going to affect that many people, and that it took that kind of a team to get the work finished.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How long did that negotiation take? Do you recall?

HOMAN: I don't remember, but probably a few weeks, just the negotiation part, several different meetings. The preparation to get to that point takes a lot, takes several months to put everything together.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You're really on the cusp of moving to a desktop, like '85, '86. How were you handling this type of procurement?

HOMAN: I wish I could remember. Well, by the '80s, we did have desktops, I think. Yes, I don't think we would have had all that stuff typed up. Do you remember? Hm. That's a good question.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were you still using mainframes back then?

HOMAN: No. No. We must have been using desktops by then. Well, let me think, because when I was working on my master's, I had a desktop at home, so I think we would have had desktops by then, but probably not laptops at home or anything like that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I'm thinking it's a lot to keep track of, just using paper.

HOMAN: Yes, and the work then would have involved several different people. Like I said, the Pricing Office would have worked on some, and I would have worked on some. Yes, I'm trying to think how we even—yes, we must have been working from desktops, because—

DAVID HOMAN: I don't remember that.

HOMAN: In the '80s?

DAVID HOMAN: Yes, because it was in '90 when they came up with that FTS [Federal Telecommunications System] or whatever, NASA's or government's version of what would have been the Internet.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I didn't realize that.

DAVID HOMAN: This whole sharing documents—I mean, it would take hours to load this thing up. That was the first. I don't remember having desktops before.

HOMAN: Yes, I don't know. I know we weren't typing up our own. I didn't have a typewriter on my desk in Procurement and typed up my own documents. But it could have been that I was turning stuff in for somebody else to type it up at the time. I just don't remember that for sure.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were there any challenges working in Procurement?

HOMAN: Let me think. Well, like I said, the one thing that for me personally was a challenge was competition with other people to move farther ahead. I was more ambitious by that time in my life—or I think I was always ambitious, just for different things. I was interested in promotion and getting ahead. Again, because everybody had the same skill set, people were looking for different things. It wasn't always about promotion. Sometimes it was about assignment.

I still remember the conversation one time with the division chief, so I must have been about a grade 11 then. There was an opening in the Pricing Office, and he talked to me about that. I had mentioned that I might be interested in that, and I could have moved into that work. That would have been really specific, doing pricing on different jobs. I didn't like to have pricers do mine, because I thought I did a better job than they did. So I thought about moving over to do that. He had said, "Yes, you can do that," but then he offered me the Lockheed contract specialist assignment instead, and said, "You can have whichever one of those you would like," and I said, "Oh, I'm taking the Lockheed."

There was competition for assignments as much as for anything else. That was the thing, too. There were a lot of people whose goal was to move over to programs, but that was not ever something I particularly wanted to do. I just wanted the bigger assignments, and I got those.

I started out doing grants, and that was small amounts of money to a lot of different colleges. They just irritated me after a while. I still remember having a not all that pleasant exchange with someone who later turned out to be the first woman center director in my grant's days. The lunar rocks were given to universities all over the country. Different ones got

different rocks. I don't know ~~for~~ this for sure, but I think that those gifts probably were associated with some personal contacts. There was no reason why they wouldn't be. There would be different NASA people assigned, who were responsible for that gift. I was new at the job, and I took it pretty seriously to look at those grants and see what they were supposed to be doing with their rocks. Most of the time, they were supposed to be studying their rocks, and they were supposed to be sending a report on what they were studying. What I found, as I went through all the files, because the grants had been put in place before I got there. They were just handed to me. I started looking through some of those, and I didn't see their reports. I didn't see what they were doing with the rocks. So I started going after them. Where are your reports? I remember a phone conversation with her to leave them alone. This is the way it works. Okay. I quit worrying about it after that. That was my early assignment.

What I enjoyed later with the Lockheed contract and other assignments that I got was working with the contracts for human services, for labor contracts, where there were just so many different aspects involved in doing that, like a contract for safety services, where one of the earliest ones was a women-owned business. I liked that atmosphere and then some of the assignments, like the Lockheed assignment. One of the reasons why that was an interesting one was because those were cost-plus-award fee contracts. You had to look at the cost, but the contractor was only paid profit based on their performance, so there was a process associated with that that was interesting, as well, where you pulled together the evaluation of the different tasks that the contractors had and made awards based on that. So we could be part of that team and part of that decision. I liked that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I don't know enough about Procurement, and probably readers don't, either. Were you sitting on source boards, then, as well, or was that something different?

HOMAN: I did during that time. I'm trying to think about whether I was on a source board prior to leaving Procurement or after I went back there. There was a reorganization in the mid-'90s. I went to Management Services, and I did the Center Ops work there. Then I got transferred, not by my choice, back into Procurement, because there was a reorganization, and there were slots there. They were trying to lower the numbers in Center Ops. Because I had the Procurement background—I wasn't the only one; there was another one of us that got transferred back. I know I was involved on a source board during that time, right before I left.

One of those was interesting, because I ended up evaluating a proposal from someone who, in the early '70s, had made a pass at me that I had denied, and then ended up heading up the procurement team for a company founded by that person. That was satisfying. To be a part of that was an interesting process. I loved working on the source board, again, because it's so intense. You bring people together from a lot of different disciplines and areas, and work on that. I did enjoy that work.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How did the two of you meet, if you don't mind sharing, just a little personal [story]? It's interesting to have a NASA couple in an interview.

DAVID HOMAN: Remember Sally?

HOMAN: Yes, do you remember Sally?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Okay.

HOMAN: He was dating Sally. I was working in another division at that time, and still married at that time. I met him when he was there with her. I honestly thought he was sort of strange, but he was there to see Sally. "Yes, hi." I talked to Sally about him a couple of times after that. That was about the same time that I ended up getting divorced. We may have already been separated by then. I'm not sure about that.

DAVID HOMAN: No, because I remember seeing you in the grocery store one time with your—

HOMAN: Okay. With my family?

DAVID HOMAN: With your family.

HOMAN: I got promoted after that back into MPAD. I was out of MPAD, and then I got a promotion that put me back in MPAD. He wasn't dating Sally anymore, I don't think, or not very much. He was working with somebody in my branch, so he was in and out of the branch every now and then. So we saw each other more then. By the time I was back in MPAD, I was divorced, for sure. Then we saw each other more, and we started dating after that.

So yes, we actually worked in the same office. I was the branch secretary. He came into that branch. And for a very short time, like two or three months, because he came in there in the

summer, and then it was in the fall when I started the co-op program, so I was out of MPAD, but I was his secretary for a short period of time.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That seems to have happened to a few folks that I'm aware of.

HOMAN: Yes. You know, it's such a big place. You get to know the people you work with, so not too surprising. We still have friends that are a lot of couples that both worked there. They didn't always meet there, but they both worked there. So yes, it's not unusual over there. What I tell people a lot is, especially about my work with Management Services, it's like a small town. You know? So many people there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That is very true, yes. So you married in '79?

HOMAN: Yes, right after I started. I started in the co-op program in August or September, and we got married in October. We had already been dating a couple years by then.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You had mentioned in your writeup that you were feeling very confident and comfortable in your position and decided that JSC needed a daycare. You had one child. Childcare was a problem for you. Would you talk about that? I know it didn't come to fruition at that point, but how did that all work? Was this just a small little project you had, or was it a big effort on your part?

HOMAN: Yes, yes. There are parts of it I really wish I could remember, because I remember the first of it. They built the Gilruth Center, and there it was, out in a park. It was so big, and it had a gymnasium, and it had all these other kinds of rooms in it. It was the neatest space. We'd have meals out there. They had a big kitchen. There was a playground out there, because the baseball fields were out there. All of that was there.

At the time, there was one place that I looked at childcare, and it was in a strip center next to a liquor store. I just thought, "Kids don't belong here. They belong there in that park with the playground." This is the part I wish I knew. I don't know how or when I found out that there were several other centers that already had childcare centers. I know KSC [Kennedy Space Center, Florida] did. Some of the ones on the East Coast did. But there were several other centers that already had childcare. So it was that combination of things.

It was the Employee Activities Association [EAA] that was connected to the Gilruth Center. A lot of their things went on there. I thought they were the ones to maybe talk to about, "Why shouldn't there be childcare here?" Another part of that was because of my procurement experience. What I could see was the cost of retail, because I was working on costs all the time. Childcare has to be expensive if you're in a retail space, because retail space is expensive. But if you have land that's a part of what you already own, and JSC is so big, and you have facilities there, and you have the money to build them or add to them, then it makes more sense that you could have childcare at a cost where running it is low. You could put your money into workers, so you get better workers. That was my argument at the time.

So I went to the EAA, and I talked some other people into working on it, too. We went and looked at space out there. I still remember looking at a space in this tiny little temporary building and saying, "Well, maybe we could do something here, even though it was really

small." It was working with the EAA. I wish I could remember more about how we put together this meeting, so I remember the meeting. There was somebody from Safety, and the head of the Legal Office happened to be there. Somebody from the Center Director's Office, but I don't remember who that was. It might have been the associate director. And the head of Procurement was there, and maybe somebody from Security. I don't remember for sure about that, but anyway, it was a pretty big group there.

I presented this whole idea. The EAA could do this. Here's about how much I think it would cost to do it and all the advantages to doing that. I still remember the argument, because it was really funny. Some of them had certainly already come loaded. They had already been told what the answer was. I feel certain of that. There was one argument that, "We couldn't do that, because we would have to add personnel for safety to make sure it was a safe facility. We'd have to add more people to do that." Then there was the legal [argument], "Oh, and we'd have this legal liability if we had children on the site."

My response to that was, "You realize that you could maybe do one or the other, but you don't have to worry about both, because if you're going to do all that stuff in Safety, there's no way anybody's going to win a suit against you. Figure out which one of those arguments you want to go with, but both of those aren't going to work." And pointed out that there were daycare centers at other NASA centers that had a greater risk. KSC, they blow stuff up. You know? JSC doesn't blow a lot of stuff up. I still remember the head of Procurement walking out.

When they gave me the arguments and I made my response, the director of Procurement turning to one of them and saying, "I told you not to mess with her," or something to that effect.

Apparently, there had already been some discussion about the arguments against [the facility]. Anyway, that was fun, to have had that experience.

But when I look back on it, I wish I could understand or remember better. I would have been maybe a GS-11 by then, 11 or 12, maybe, which is relatively low on the totem pole. I certainly wasn't in management. I wasn't even close to that at the time, in the early '80s. I had not even been out of college or out of the co-op program all that long. There weren't all that many other people gathered around me. There were some people who said, "Yes, this would be a great idea." But how I ever talked myself into talking to people at those levels of management when I was at that grade level. I certainly wouldn't have done that in my secretary days. I don't really think I would have.

But yes, that was a neat experience, just being a part of it, even though it was turned down at the time. I still remember the room I was in. I don't remember what I had on my charts, but I remember doing the presentation and getting the response. I've been looking for it in my files and not able to find it. For the longest time, I had the memo addressed to me from the center director saying no.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, yes, I'd love to see that.

HOMAN: I wish I still had it. Yes. It said, "We're not doing that." But then I have the award that I got later for being on the team that got it started. That is really satisfying to me, when I think about that still being there after all this time. I didn't even remember until I was going through my file here that there was originally, and may still be, a board of employees that

oversees the childcare center. I was on that. I don't remember what we did, but I was on that board when it started out. That was exciting.

Then we had a push in the mid-'90s, I guess. There was an argument over spending some additional money on the childcare center. By that time, there was a waiting list of about a hundred wanted to get in. Some of us were working on what can we do to expand? There was a pretty influential person who came in that, that person's own children or child were at the daycare center, and their push was for spending money on making the center a better place for the children that were already there without addressing the waiting list. That took another pitch to senior management to go the other way, to spend the money on expanding, and that's what they ended up doing, expanding that, so I was glad to be a part of that, too.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I know it's great. We didn't send my child there, because it was very hard to get into. There's always a waiting list. I think over the past few years, I've seen where there have been openings. There are never openings at that place. It's very convenient, too, if you're onsite.

HOMAN: Yes. We have three kids, and only one of them actually went there, but she did go.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Since we're talking about it, how and why do you think it was successful in the '90s? Why do you think Aaron Cohen was more open than Gerry [Gerald D.] Griffin?

HOMAN: No clue.

DAVID HOMAN: I thought it would have been Aaron Cohen.

HOMAN: It was. It was when Cohen was there. It was Griffin who said no.

DAVID HOMAN: Oh, okay.

ROSS-NAZZAL: He came on board in ’86, he was center director.

HOMAN: Yes. It might have even been when Carolyn [L.] Huntoon was there that we did the expansion.

DAVID HOMAN: Because I thought it had something to do with him having grandkids.

HOMAN: Could have. That would have been the expansion, though, not the opening.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you change your arguments? Were there more women who were pushing for a childcare center?

HOMAN: No. I think that it actually came the other way when it got started, that we started with the request, and it was turned down, and then it may well be that the willingness to do it and the work to make it happen might have come top down. I wish I could remember that. I don’t remember exactly how that happened.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's interesting, because I can't remember how many years ago, but they had renamed the childcare center for Aaron Cohen, and I remember reading the note that they had wanted to send up to Headquarters to get the approval. I was looking at some of the other people who were involved, and I was like, "It would be nice to name it after some of the women who were involved in this, instead of the center director." I understand why people would have wanted to. Of course, the women that I recognized, they all said, "No, no, no. Really, Aaron was the driving force."

HOMAN: Yes, that's probably what it was. It may have been a top-down thing. I wish I could remember that part, but I don't remember how it got started when we finally did it. They may have put together a committee, because it looks like, from my files, that I was part of that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned expansion. The building that it's in now, was that the original building?

HOMAN: No, I don't think so.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It's a nice facility. They have solar panels outside now. It seems very nice.

HOMAN: I'm very proud of that. There weren't a lot of other people pushing for it to start with. Certainly it was popular as I brought it up, but it took a while for that to happen, and just being a part of it at all. I just can't imagine where I got the courage to be that loudmouth about it that long ago, but it happened.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Dave, did you encourage her to put together the idea? Was that something you were talking about over the dinner table? No?

HOMAN: No. He wouldn't have discouraged me, but no.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Do you think in some way you were influenced by changes that were happening at JSC, in terms of more women coming on board, women's movement, feminism, all those sorts of things?

HOMAN: I think I was just more driven by what I could see in my own need and the needs in the area. I still remember, because it was so disturbing to me to see a childcare center right next to a liquor store, in a retail space, with a tiny little playground next to it and a parking lot. That wasn't where I wanted my children to be. And I think it was, too, the knowledge—this bothers me even now. I think one of the reasons why child care in our country is so expensive is looking at the way that has become a corporate venture, because looking at the way corporations operate, when you've got a whole lot of overhead in the cost, and you're using expensive properties to do it, you've got a lot of money going places that doesn't really help the children all that much.

I wish more churches would do it, more workplaces would do it, even public schools. Our son was special needs, and he was in the only campus, I think, in the Clear Creek School District that did year-round school for a while. Because they did year-round school, that made childcare issues different than it was for the surrounding area. This was an experiment that they did at the time. It was wonderful. You'd have two weeks in the fall, two weeks in the winter,

two weeks in the spring. Summer was only six weeks or a month, or something like that. So we had childcare that was right there at the school. You couldn't beat that. They could do it at low cost with good workers. It was a great atmosphere for the kids, because it was their usual place of being. All of that made a great deal of sense to me.

I think part of what drove me to push for it, too, was seeing how great that was for me at San Jac, where I could take her with me, go to class. It meant we could spend a little more time together, because you spend that time on the road. Again, good workers, because it was right there in the facility, so you were getting people that were being trained well to do the childcare at the same time. When I found out that other centers had it, I thought, "We really should have that here."

ROSS-NAZZAL: Do you remember how you found that out?

HOMAN: No. I wish I could remember that. I don't know why. By the '80s, in Procurement—

DAVID HOMAN: Was that when you went to Smith College [Northampton, Massachusetts] and all that?

HOMAN: No?

DAVID HOMAN: With all those other people?

HOMAN: Yes, Smith would have been later. It must have been Procurement, getting to know people from other centers with different Procurement [Offices], because there were some things like that that we did, some training that involved people from other centers. It may have been that way. I wish I could remember that, but I don't.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, I find that whole argument about having kids to be a problematic issue for the center. Because that's when you could come onsite and do your own tours, so you definitely had a lot of kids onsite already.

HOMAN: Yes. Yes. There would have been. So yes, because it wasn't until, what, 9/11 [September 11th attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon] that people couldn't just come on the center pretty easily. We had visitors coming in.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It's hard to get people badged anymore.

HOMAN: Oh, yes. The argument about safety was—

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, kind of a lost cause.

HOMAN: It was funny, because I knew one of the guys from Safety pretty well, and I had gone out to the site to look at it with him and talk about some of it. He had already indicated that it wouldn't be a big problem there. What's funny, too, at the same time, there was playground equipment out there, and he was the one who pointed it out to me, I think, or someone else did.

There was some play equipment that was out there by the baseball fields, softball fields, that was part of the Gilruth Center that was really unsafe equipment already. We said, "You're worried about safety. You better do something about that." They did.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's interesting. Well, I'm glad, now, that we do have a childcare center. I think it's great for so many of the women at the center and even dads. It's such a great resource. I think a lot of times, we talk about childcare and say it's for women, but it's really a family issue. We all need childcare if you have children. One of the things I did want to ask, because I like to ask people about it, is about the [Space Shuttle] *Challenger* accident [STS-51L]. You were working at the center, and we had this traumatic event that happened. What are your memories of that?

HOMAN: The *Challenger* accident?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, yes.

HOMAN: Let's see. I'm trying to think where I was then. What was the year?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Eighty-six.

DAVID HOMAN: Eighty-six. You were at home, probably, though, at that time?

HOMAN: Okay. Yes, that was about the time I was in Management Services, I think, because I remember [President Ronald] Reagan coming [to Houston].

DAVID HOMAN: It was whenever you were there with Dee [Deidre A.] Lee.

HOMAN: Okay. Okay. So that would have still been in Procurement. The one I remember more than *Challenger*—I remember [Space Shuttle] *Columbia* [STS-107] better, more than *Challenger*, because with *Columbia*, I was working on a source board, so I was in a remote building. I can just remember hearing about it then and walking into that building in shock.

DAVID HOMAN: What do you mean source board? You weren't working out there then.

HOMAN: I was out there for some reason. I may have been checking on somebody else's, but I was out there for some reason, because I remember physically where I was when I heard about it. I was out somewhere.

DAVID HOMAN: We were in Friendswood, and Rod and I were going to a Special Olympics training thing, and you came over to eat breakfast.

HOMAN: It might have been that Safety source board that I was on at the end.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I always like to ask people, because I think that it had a fairly big impact on the center itself, so I'm just always curious about that. One other question, and then we can take a break for lunch. Your husband mentioned going to Smith. I assume that means Smith College.

HOMAN: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What were doing up at Smith College?

HOMAN: There were several different programs that came out of training, out of the Personnel Office, different opportunities. The one that I went to was for women, it was for the advancement of women, so Smith Management Program is what it was called. It was like getting a mini-MBA [master's in business administration], so it was a great opportunity. We went for summer for three weeks. It wasn't great for you. [Dave] was with kids at home. Went to Smith in the summer for three weeks, stayed in a dorm there, and had professors from Ivy League colleges that were teaching intense MBA courses. We had that for the first year.

We did a project in between, and then we went back the next summer for another semester-like of courses. That was really a great experience. NASA sent a fair number of women there. I got to know some women from other centers. There were 36 women in the program total, and we got to know each other over that time we were there; for three weeks you're [together] day and night, weekends.

That actually helped me with San Jac, too, because when I went to teach there—so through JSC, I got a masters. They had that deal going with U of H Clear Lake, so I had a master's in public management from there. When I wanted to teach at San Jac, the classes that I

was interested in teaching was a management and supervision class. They said, "Well, normally the person with this has an MBA." I had this women's management thing from Smith in addition to the public management, and showed them that, and they said, "Okay, because it was the same coursework of an MBA." It was just a more condensed version of it.

It was really a neat experience to meet other NASA women there and to meet women from other kinds of positions. They had programs with Harvard [University, Cambridge, Massachusetts], as well, and somewhere else. I can't remember what was the other one that they did. I enjoyed the one at Smith. I enjoyed being in Massachusetts. I believe that the way they chose people for those [programs] was women that they expected to advance even further. I think that when they sent me, that was early '90s, I probably was at first level supervision then, branch level supervisor. I think that was intended as preparation for other levels of management and did end up being a deputy division chief after that. I was Bill Larsen's deputy for a while. The intent was for me to eventually be prepared to take on that job if he retired, but there was reorganization, and I got transferred before that, and retired before him.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Interesting. What a great opportunity and a beautiful campus.

HOMAN: Smith? Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, it's lovely up there.

HOMAN: Yes, it was. The thing that I think is funny about it, though, was when people found out I was going there, they would say, "Oh, you're going to be in Massachusetts instead of Texas

in July. That should be great." I thought so, too. But there ended up being a heat wave there, and we had temperatures right around 100 degrees. We did not have air-conditioned cars, and we did not have air-conditioned rooms.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That sounds miserable.

HOMAN: Yes, the old dorm did not have central air, so you had to find rooms that had some air conditioners in them to be comfortable. So that was an interesting part of the experience. I didn't know much about the Northeast before that. We lived in Syracuse for such a short time. Because we were there for three weeks, we could take weekend trips. I saw parts of Vermont, and Boston, and I really did enjoy having that opportunity. I appreciate that so much about NASA as a whole and JSC, for sure, training people. When I look at companies now and employees at different places, workers, I just think, I wonder how well they train people? I think that's a huge and undervalued part of what NASA does, making sure that people are well trained for the work they do.

ROSS-NAZZAL: This might be a good place for us to stop.

[End of interview]