NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
EDITED ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

F. DIANNE BOBKO
INTERVIEWED BY SANDRA JOHNSON
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JOHNSON: Today is October 17th, 2019. This interview with Dianne Bobko is being conducted for the NASA Johnson Space Center Oral History Project in Houston, Texas. The interviewer is Sandra Johnson. I want to thank you for meeting with me today and agreeing to talk to us. We really appreciate it. I want to start out by talking about your childhood and where you grew up and your education and that time period in your life.

BOBKO: I was born in Denver, Colorado, a really wonderful place to live and grow up. I was the oldest in the family. I had a sister who's eight years younger than I, who was born on my birthday, and that was it in our family. Education was incredibly important in our family, so school was actually something I loved. I went to a Catholic grade school, and I went to a Catholic girls' academy that was primarily focused on academics. That was a great opportunity because we did everything, and so we learned to be very independent, very sure of ourselves, and ready to take on just about anything that anybody would give you the chance to do.

I started babysitting. I started working as soon as I was 16 in one of the bakeries in our neighborhood on the weekends. When I graduated from high school, I worked for the summer at the Bureau of Reclamation, typing, and so a lot of work. My family really believed that that was very educational, and it also was very helpful in terms of having some money to spend and really taking on that responsibility.

The school I went to was an amazing school in terms of academics. I had a scholarship to high school; I had an academic scholarship. I had an academic scholarship to college. I

finished in three years and went on to graduate school. I had a graduate fellowship to Jesuit university, Saint Louis University [Missouri], in English literature.

I had met Bo [Karo J. Bobko] when I was a senior in high school, because the Air Force Academy had just opened at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, [Colorado]. They had a social program, and their social hostess reached out to the two women's high schools and the two women's colleges that were in Denver, and a couple of my friends started going out for the dance classes. Then the cadets they met were eager to have their friends meet other people to date. The academy had a formal dance once a month, and they had an informal dance once a month, and a lot of other activities. They couldn't leave the base.

A number of my classmates and I, there were 30 of us in our class, 30 girls, and so there were 15 of us who were really friends and had a potluck. We also had convinced the Jesuit high school to have us become cheerleaders, so we had tried out for cheerleading, and a number of us were now at this point the cheerleaders for the Jesuit high school. But friends had said, "There's this formal dance coming up, and some of other cadets were looking for dates." So a number of us said, "Sure, we'll try that. That sounds like fun."

I had a date with the person who turned out to be Bo's roommate. Bo didn't have a date, and he came over to see what his "roommate got stuck with," and so we had a couple of dances, and that was fine. About two weeks later there was a football game, and one of my friends had set up a dinner party at her house after the football game and had invited a little group of girls and some of the cadets, and people that we had met at the dance. So that was the next time we saw each other, and we just found it interesting, and we started dating.

We dated once a week, because he was very academically oriented, and they could only get out either on a Saturday evening or a Sunday afternoon. So we either did one or the other. But not really out, it was more like I was often going out there. He graduated, and I never even

thought twice about quitting school because that was just too important in our family. My mother had gone to the University of Colorado when she was 16 and education was just—that was it. There was never any chance that you wouldn't finish college.

I graduated and had this fellowship to Saint Louis University, and we became engaged around that time. Bo was now in pilot training, and after a couple of semesters at grad school I realized in English literature you needed a PhD, so I needed to make up my mind if I was going to stay in school another three years or was I going to decide that really what I wanted to do was get married. Bo was very patient, and just waited till I made up my mind, and then we got married. But I made a commitment to myself I'd go back to grad school at some point in time.

Denver was a great place to grow up in. As I said, my family was incredibly supportive. My grandfather was my best buddy and made me feel I could do anything in the world. I grew up with a lot of self-confidence.

JOHNSON: That's great. It's a wonderful way to grow up, and your mother going to college ahead of you wasn't that common during that time period.

BOBKO: Yes, that's right. She was so young when she went. She was at the University of Colorado for two years and then she decided she'd become a teacher. At that time the only other college university that offered—the only one, University of Colorado didn't—a lifetime teacher's certificate, was whatever the school was called at Greeley [State Normal School of Colorado, currently University of Northern Colorado]. It's changed names since then. She transferred her last two years and then got her degree there and her lifetime teacher's certificate, and taught, and then didn't teach when I was very very young. She did at first, and then she said it didn't work for her, so she took time off. But eventually she went back and taught, and

substitute taught and was just an amazing teacher. Again, education, that was just a given, there was never any thought.

My grandfather, again, was so—my father worked very very hard, so you don't have as much time sometimes as you do with a grandparent who has retired, and we were very close.

JOHNSON: That's very nice, and a good opportunity. When did you get married? What year did you get married?

BOBKO: 1961.

JOHNSON: He was already a pilot at that point.

BOBKO: Yes, he was finishing pilot training. He was at Luke [Air Force Base, Arizona] finishing, I don't recall if that was gunnery. We got married, we had three more months there, and then we went to Las Vegas [Nevada] where maybe that was gunnery school. There were just steps along the way, and his first assignment then after that as a pilot was in Clovis, New Mexico, [Cannon Air Force Base] and he was flying F-100s, fighter jets.

But before we were married even, he had told me that he wanted to become an astronaut. When he went to the Air Force Academy his professors were from the active military, mainly from the Air Force but some from the Army as well. But they were the people who were out there. They were already in jobs, either flying jobs or others, and eventually most of them became the heads of their department. They were the ones who started, one of them at least, started talking when he was just there as a cadet about what's coming up, that the future is space. He got very very interested in it, so he had decided then that that was really what he wanted to

do. That was before we were married, that was before he even knew he was going to end up with a jet fighter slot.

JOHNSON: What did you think about that at that time?

BOBKO: I thought it was a crazy dream. I thought oh, well, that's nice. That's nice. But seriously, after first assignment, first three years we were married, he was gone for three to four months each of those years on NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] assignments. We got into our first permanent assignment and he left two weeks later in the middle of the night, and we didn't know where they were for two weeks. That was an interesting beginning. But I always felt like a lot of that too, it puts you on your own right away, and so you look at who you are and how this all works very differently because you're running the house. I leased a house the day after he left and I had no idea they weren't coming back for a long time, but we'd been looking for a house, and we were just in a really tiny apartment, and I remember going out that day and finding this wonderful house, and so I went ahead and signed the lease, because it had to be signed right away. The squadron commander's office came by I think that afternoon, and she said, "Oh, you're new here and you're young, and I think this apartment is a great place for you to stay. It'll be safe."

I said, "I just rented a house." But it was perfect, it was wonderful.

JOHNSON: Was that in New Mexico?

BOBKO: Yes, in Clovis, yes. My grandmother had come and stayed with me, and the furniture had all come that we'd ordered in Denver, and the house was all settled by the time he got back.

JOHNSON: Did a lot of people live off the base? Or was living on the base even an option at that point?

BOBKO: I think there was base housing there, but a lot of people lived off the base because it was very limited. We had no chance as a second lieutenant, having base housing. The next assignment, when we got there, we lived in a little place for the first few weeks, month maybe, then we found a nice house off base. But after I'd say maybe less than a year, we had gotten base housing, which was very nice housing.

Again each one of those years he was gone three months, four months, five months. The first one was a surprise because they just got called in the middle of the night. The second two were planned.

JOHNSON: You mentioned it was very different from the way you grew up, then all of a sudden being this Air Force wife and not knowing where your husband was necessarily or how long they'd be gone.

BOBKO: Not that time, that's for sure.

JOHNSON: Yes. Because it was an interesting time in our history, and a lot of things were going on during those first few years of the '60s. Talk about just for a minute what it was like. Did you interact with the other wives? Did you have clubs? Did you do things together?

BOBKO: The wives always had a wives' club in the military, and so the first three months at Luke in Phoenix, or Glendale, you've gone from graduate school to this environment where they have parties, you're part of the squadron, everybody's getting through this training, they haven't been assigned yet. Actually we didn't get assigned a permanent assignment until after the next stint in Las Vegas. But I remember thinking the women all stood on one side of the room and the men all stood on the other side of the room and I was still used to talking about books and literature, and I thought I don't know. They're all talking about babies and all this stuff, and I'm just going, "Oh."

But you get involved, and you get over that. You get adjusted. I went to all the wives' club things when we were in Las Vegas, because there were also a number of other couples from the Air Force Academy in each one of those, because his class was—so there were other women that I knew, we were all starting out. Most of them, because they'd been married right after graduation, already had children. Since we hadn't, his graduation, I had gone ahead and graduated and then gone to grad school, we were not right in the same sync in terms of—a lot of them had babies, and we were still just getting started.

Those were important. When we got to Clovis, again it was the wives' club, the squadron commander, the major's wife, she was really friendly. Everything we did was part of the squadron. I went home because of those months, I would go to Denver. I became pregnant, and my mother and I went through Red Cross training together in Denver for how to handle a baby.

Then at one point Bo and I, when he was back, we went over to Eastern New Mexico University, which was in the next town, and we took a graduate course in Russian history, just for the fun of it. Half the class were people from the base, and half the class were local. It was quite interesting because we had very different philosophies and it came out in some of the

discussions, because the military group tended to want to see the world and see all this culture and travel all over, and the other people were very adamant about that wasn't important to them at all.

This one major got into a little bit of a—we walked away from one of the classes thinking oh, wow. Very different opinions, very different outlooks on life.

JOHNSON: What made you want to take that class?

BOBKO: Oh, just for fun. I don't think it had anything to do with the fact that it was the Russians or any of that kind of thing. It was just, "Oh, this would be a really interesting class." Maybe Bo heard about it from somebody at work who was taking it, and that was a good way to spend our time.

I remember one of the interesting parts about it was when we came to the final exams, Bo was going to be gone, and so he said, "Just tell him he can give you the blue book, and I'll take the test and turn it in."

I said, "You've got to be kidding me. This is the real world; this is not the Air Force Academy. They do not know anything about the honor code here, and this guy is going to laugh like crazy when I tell him I just want the blue book for you, and you'll take these. You have no idea." Even at the beginning of the class, he wanted to know if we'd just pick up the books in class. I said, "No no, we have to go to the bookstore and buy the books." Because at the Air Force Academy they just gave them their books.

It was a really different experience for him. Nobody believed anybody could be left in an unmonitored room and wouldn't cheat on an exam, let alone take it home and do it at home and

turn it in. That was fun. Just something fun to do that we thought would just add some interesting things. Going to school was, again, always important.

JOHNSON: It is interesting. It is a different mindset. We've talked to some of the other astronauts that came from military backgrounds, and they grew up in the military, then NASA, and in those instances when they find out not everyone lives that way it's always a little eye-opener for them.

BOBKO: Yes. When we got to North Carolina, again he was going there because they were starting a new squadron. We knew he was going to be leaving, and I got very involved in a couple things. One was a music group the wives had because I'd always done music, and the other was the newspaper. They needed somebody to edit the newspaper, and I'd done a lot of that kind of thing in high school and in college, and so I said, "Well, sure, I'd love to do that." I was the editor of the newspaper, and I also wrote a column on books.

I remember going downtown to the local printer and saying, "Now I'm going to be bringing you the print, and I'll do the proofs, and I've got some women set up to proof, and here's our schedule." He just looked at me like, "Schedule?" I, coming from the West, had this sense of you've got two weeks to do this and four days to do that. They just didn't live that way. The printer, that was just not something he could—I worked with him, but I was the one who had to adjust. It was interesting.

Then the next thing that happened was the squadron commander decided that she was going to put me up to run for secretary of the wives' club. She was getting all this pushback because they said, "Captains' wives can't be, her husband is only a captain." She said, "We're having some trouble."

I said, "What in the world does that matter? Who's the best qualified person for the job?" It was really funny.

I was elected, she went to bat for me, and she said, "It shouldn't be about what rank her husband is."

Then from there we went to Edwards [Air Force Base, California], to the test pilot school.

JOHNSON: Is that when he became part of the MOL [Manned Orbiting Laboratory] Program?

BOBKO: Yes. Again, that day when he told me he was going to fly in space and I kind of went, "Oh yes, sure." But the steps he took, he fortunately was able to fly fighter aircraft, which he thought was important. He had some really good and challenging assignments from his squadron commanders, who were very very supportive of him. They really realized that he was capable of a lot. But he knew that the test pilot school was the next big step, so as soon as he really basically could, he applied for the test pilot school and was accepted.

We went there, and at the time there was a joint request for applications from both NASA and the Department of Defense [DoD], and the Air Force allowed them to apply for both. The DoD had stricter requirements for a few things. However, the Navy said, "You can only do one or the other," so some of the people chose one or the other. I don't know about the Marines and the Army, I don't know because there weren't that many. There were Marines at the test pilot school, but I don't remember anybody at that time from the Army.

It was very interesting because the group that came here, Charlie [Charles M.] Duke, and particularly [Edgar D.] Mitchell and [Thomas K.] Mattingly. Mitchell and Mattingly were in the Navy and had applied for the MOL and not NASA. When they weren't chosen for the MOL they said, "Well, that's not fair, because we should have been able to apply for NASA as well."

NASA picked them up. NASA said, "Okay, we choose you." They came here, and the group went to MOL and then eventually came here, half of the group.

JOHNSON: When you went to California did you find the same kind of structure as far as wives' clubs?

BOBKO: At the test pilot school, there was a wives' club. But we had a second child as well at the time. I remember that time mainly having another baby, being sick every time we drove into Palmdale because I couldn't ride in the car without getting sick. I started substitute teaching, so I was teaching in the high school at Boron, and that was very interesting, because kids were just starting to do drugs. Then when Bo was selected for the MOL we got to move up to the better housing, which was also another neat part.

Yes, the wives' club, but I wasn't actively involved as an officer. There were just so many other things going on in my life. I remember more our daughter starting to take ballet and doing these little four-year-old dance things. Then we moved to Palos Verdes for the MOL. When it actually started, then he went back and forth for, I don't know, five or six months, drove down every week, and then we moved down there, and it was wonderful. It was just a beautiful place to live.

JOHNSON: Yes, it's quite different than other places, that's for sure. Especially around Edwards.

BOBKO: Yes, Edwards is very different. I remember someone telling me how gorgeous the Joshua trees were. Oh, that's very different from what I expected. But he was very busy. We were really excited to be there. We had another child, we're doing all these things, and one

spring the desert bloomed, and so it was not an unhappy time at all. It was a very busy time. But we moved from there to the ocean. We lived on the ocean side of Palos Verdes, and the [Robert F.] Overmyers lived on the city side of Palos Verdes, and we were the only two that lived in Palos Verdes. We just loved it there.

JOHNSON: Much different environment. How much did you know of what he was doing in that program?

BOBKO: Basically nothing. It wasn't that you didn't—it was announced, it was public. I remember our daughter came home and across the street there were two children, a boy and girl who were about her age, and she'd gotten to know them pretty well, and she was going into kindergarten. I don't remember who, the wife or husband or both, they said, "Your daughter said that her dad was an astronaut and we said to her, 'No no no, honey.' Of course any kid thinks their dad is an astronaut. But the more she talked about it, the more we were wondering. Is your husband an astronaut?" We said, "Well, yes, he is but he's not in the NASA program, he drives up here to Space and Missile Systems Division [Los Angeles Air Force Base] every day." That was interesting.

We had wonderful schools there. The kids, from the time they were in first grade, carried their violins up the street. The schools in California at that time were amazing. Just amazing. I substituted in the high schools. If you had a graduate degree you didn't have to do any of the other stuff. Kit Overmyer and I for a while took care of each other's children, and then Kit found it was getting hard for her, so she just took care of my children and I kept substituting in the two high schools in Palos Verdes for quite a long time and got very involved in the community.

We were very involved at our church. I was doing a lot of music. I was doing some things around the diocese in terms of teacher training and upgrading people for Vatican II. It was just wonderful living there. It was wonderful.

JOHNSON: It sounds like you were very involved in the community.

BOBKO: There was no Air Force wives' club there, and everybody was scattered all over. You automatically became involved in the community, which was really nice.

JOHNSON: Were other wives as involved as you were in community?

BOBKO: I don't know. I have no idea. Kit and I were doing substitute teaching at the same time for a while, but then it got a little hard. I don't remember if she'd had her third child by then or not. It worked better for me, and she was willing to keep my kids, once or twice a week. It wasn't every day. It was just enough to feel like you were still doing something with your mind.

But I was very very involved in the community, and also started giving seminars and training around the whole archdiocese of Los Angeles. I had this woman who was from the archdiocese office who was a friend, and I'd do the driving and we'd show up at different places on a Saturday. That was fun too, because I got to know the city really well, and she and I enjoyed each other a great deal.

JOHNSON: Did Bo have time to be involved at all at that point?

BOBKO: Not in those things. He was not doing a lot of those things when we were there. We didn't really know what they were doing; that was very very secret. But you could say, "He works at Space," you knew where he was going on a daily basis for that part of his life.

Some of the interesting things recently, because the NRO [National Reconnaissance Office] had them come up, it was June, when they had a big celebration of the historian who has written a book about the MOL. They had those who were still around, alive, and could make it come, and they had a daylong program primarily for the employees. I learned a number of things about it after that even. Just some fun things, just things they talked about. They had a panel, and they answered questions. That was interesting. Came home with a wonderful citation.

JOHNSON: That's interesting. Did you or Bo have any inkling that they were going to cancel it?

BOBKO: No. Absolutely not. They did not know a thing. They went into work, and I remember him coming back home around eleven o'clock or ten or something. I went, "What's wrong?" Oh. It was over. They went in, they called them all together, and they said, "Burn everything and go home." That was it. It was a big shock to all of them, a really big shock.

JOHNSON: That was 1969 when it ended.

BOBKO: Yes. It should have been, because then NASA made the decision that the seven youngest could come, and Bo was the youngest, so that, we thought, was great criteria. What better than just take the seven youngest? But it also meant that [James A.] Abrahamson was right on the—he was the next one and that was something he always talked about, how we would

really rather have been in that. [Robert T.] Herres the same way. But especially Abrahamson, because he was the next one.

JOHNSON: How long did you know before he was going to be going to NASA? Was there a few weeks or months?

BOBKO: It was a few months is the way I remember it. Sometimes those things are—once it's passed it doesn't seem that long. But it was at least a few months they were waiting. In the meantime he had applied to USC [University of Southern California] to grad school because they weren't going to let them go to Vietnam.

JOHNSON: I was going to ask you about that. Was there any talk about them going at all?

BOBKO: No no, they were not allowed. Their security clearance was too high. They couldn't risk that they'd get captured. That was more the issue.

JOHNSON: I hadn't thought about that.

BOBKO: Most of them were fighter pilots, so they would have gone as fighter pilots. That precluded any assignment like that, which was fine.

JOHNSON: It was probably fine with you, right?

BOBKO: Yes. Very fine. Besides that, they all wanted to be, and they all were, astronauts. Then this dream is shattered. It was really wonderful for the seven who got to go on and go to NASA.

JOHNSON: They allowed him to go to school.

BOBKO: Three of them had already applied for school, [Donald H.] Peterson, [Henry W.] Hartsfield, and Bo, different places. But he was already accepted. They had a special program they'd actually put together for him, so he had more astro than just aero. He said, "I've already been accepted, and can I do this?" They said yes, so he got his master's in a year. That was a pretty intense year too.

JOHNSON: I can imagine.

BOBKO: He was studying a lot.

JOHNSON: Especially with a couple little ones at home.

BOBKO: Yes, and doing it so fast. But it was great, he was very happy, and that was all good, and we knew he was going to go to NASA so there was even more incentive. You knew that that was the next step, back to the space program.

JOHNSON: Talk about coming down to Houston. How did that happen? You said it took a few months, so you knew eventually you would be coming down here. Did you have a chance to come down and see the area or look for housing?

BOBKO: We did, when it was getting close. It was probably the early summer and Bo still had to finish a couple classes and his major paper. We came and we looked at houses. The [C. Gordon] Fullertons were here and the Overmyers were already here. They both helped. I think we stayed at the Fullertons' actually. We looked around at houses and we bought a house, and that gave us about two or three months before we were to move in.

We moved here in August, which was a great month to move here.

JOHNSON: I was going to say you picked the absolute worst month to move.

BOBKO: From the ocean side of the coast in California where the fog rolled up at 4:00 in the afternoon, always having the windows open and the birds singing, to moving in where you had the air conditioning on full blast and the windows couldn't open and you were sweating anyway.

I got the house settled, because I think he had to go back then even after we'd moved here and do the final stuff at USC. We had sold our house there, and then it all started. I think I remember the biggest thing was that it was like okay, we're here, wow. And there was nothing like a special sign on the car when you went through the gate or anything. It was just like okay, you're here.

The kids in the neighborhood would say, "Oh no," to Michelle, "your dad is not an astronaut, my dad says no, your dad is not." Again Michelle would have to go through this thing about "Yes, my dad is an astronaut." Little kids, and she was in second grade then. Those were interesting things.

JOHNSON: What neighborhood did you move into?

BOBKO: We lived in Timber Cove.

JOHNSON: Timber Cove, that's a nice neighborhood.

BOBKO: Yes, we liked it. We really did like it. We were on the woods. That was very nice. I got very involved in St. Paul's [the Apostle Catholic Church] immediately. Even before we moved here, I'd introduced myself and told them what I was doing in California, so I was involved in reshaping and running part of the religious education program, and music. I started directing one of the groups and eventually I became the music director. So we got very involved right away. I got very involved, got very very busy. We were excited to be here, and so happy after all of that with MOL getting canceled. That made it all such a positive thing to be here.

JOHNSON: You lived in Timber Cove, and there were other astronauts living in Timber Cove, but in most of the neighborhoods around here, the majority were involved in NASA in one way or the other. Talk about that neighborhood a little bit. When he came in the Apollo Program was still going on.

BOBKO: Yes, and they expected to have missions to the Moon. They were told that that was how the schedule would go. Then they canceled as you know some of the Apollo missions. Eventually they canceled a Skylab or two, I don't remember now exactly how many they planned for Skylab. That changed things pretty dramatically because they had really thought they would be flying, and so did NASA at the time.

I think if they'd known that those were going to be canceled, they probably never would have taken the MOL group because they would just have had a lot of extra people. There was this whole process of getting ready and trained and having assignments. I was busy with things, especially getting involved at St. Paul's and getting involved in the music. It was just a really busy nice time.

Timber Cove was a very safe place to live because it was so contained. The children could go out, and you didn't have a lot of concern that they'd get too far away when it was dark or anything like that. They'd be back, they were just out in the neighborhood. The disadvantage was there weren't many other children. There weren't a lot of other children. As they got older then their friends were other places. That was a bit of a disadvantage, I think. It would have been nice to have been in maybe one of the larger neighborhoods where they would have had more friends that were just right there. Our daughter ended up with a friend in Seabrook. Her best friend was in Seabrook, so that meant driving. I know Paul sometimes I think felt a little lonely because most of his friends were in Clear Lake Forest, and when they're really little they can't be running off to Clear Lake Forest from Timber Cove.

JOHNSON: We've heard about the Apollo wives had a group. Did they welcome you in as part of that group?

BOBKO: Yes, they did. Especially Louise Shepard and Marge [Marjorie Slayton]. They invited us to meetings. I remember going down to the Conleys' [phonetic] house one time for a party. They were very welcoming. It wasn't as strict as a military wives' club and wasn't as big as a military wives' club. But yes, absolutely, they welcomed us. Our group, Bo had been in the Fullertons' wedding. Bob [Overmyer] had too. We knew Kit and Bob from Edwards. We knew

Gordon and Marie. So we knew each other, the three of us, and so we tended to be I think—that was a little bit of—even though we didn't live in the same neighborhood at all, but because of that previous bond we socialized more together.

But really, we all got involved in our communities. They got involved in Nassau Bay, Bob and Kit, swimming big-time. You had the swimming clubs in the summer, so all the parents [supported that] so you really got involved very much in your neighborhood and knew a lot of the people in your neighborhood. It wasn't necessarily astronauts [only], it was a lot of other people, which was nice. Because I was so involved at St. Paul's, I interacted with a lot of people.

JOHNSON: It wasn't just NASA-centric all the time for you.

BOBKO: No, it was very little truly.

JOHNSON: Being in Timber Cove, like you said, it is more of an isolated and safe environment, like being on an Air Force base in that there's one way in and one way out.

BOBKO: That's right.

JOHNSON: You said everybody got involved in their neighborhoods. Did they have events or block parties? The swimming pool was always fascinating to me because it's shaped like a [Mercury] capsule. I know a lot of things happened there.

BOBKO: When your children are young, so many things you do around there. Because we lived in Timber Cove our children went to school at Seabrook. That puts you in a whole different community as well. They went on the bus. They went to grade school in Seabrook, and they went to intermediate school in Seabrook, and then they went to Clear Lake High School [League City].

Because of Timber Cove in a way we also lived in a much bigger community than we might have if we'd been in one of the other neighborhoods. The neighborhood had some fun things that they did. Christmastime we always had luminarias, and so that was a big event. Everybody was involved in that always, and it made it special to be in Timber Cove because of that.

The astronaut wives did some socializing to some extent too, but it wasn't like you had a wives' club as much, and that got less and less as time went on.

JOHNSON: Do you think it was because so many more astronauts were coming on?

BOBKO: Yes, and because people were doing different things and living in different places, more spread out. I think some of us just really—that kind of structured organization—just didn't seem to fit, because a lot of us were working, and so we just didn't see ourselves as women, not everybody, but some of us especially, that we needed that kind of hierarchy. Because the military wives, again, as I mentioned before, is so structured on the military hierarchy of your husband's job. I think that eventually there really wasn't a wives' group at all, until after the [Space Shuttle] *Challenger* [STS-51L] accident.

JOHNSON: Also that time period, early ’70s, like the early ’60s, there was a lot going on in the world in that time. Of course Vietnam was still going on, the women’s movement, cultural changes. Like you said some women were already, “Okay, it’s my time, I’m going to get my education, I’m going to work outside the home.” Was there still that group? Like you said, not everybody was doing that. There was still a group that was more like they’re the wife, they’re going to support their husband.

BOBKO: Yes.

JOHNSON: Then there was the group like you that were more interested in branching out.

BOBKO: I just have a drive to do a lot of things. I did a lot of volunteer work at first. Most of the things that I was doing at church was all volunteer, I wasn’t getting paid for that. Until we got the system changed and said, “This isn’t right, you need to start paying these people.” We got that instituted there.

Cody Truly [wife of Richard H. Truly], she was a nurse, so she was working. Marie had been a nurse, an Air Force officer and a nurse. I know she was working part time. They didn’t have children for a long time. There was all this mixture already. Kit and I had been already teaching in California.

I didn’t get involved in that here because I got so involved in the church and the music. I can’t remember if Kit did some substitute teaching here at all or not, I just don’t remember. But she got very involved in a lot of other volunteering. A lot of us were busy, but we were volunteering.

I don't know about some of the other wives. I don't know if they were home and they weren't working and maybe were just—I don't know if maybe they were volunteering too but in different communities, you're not always keeping track of everybody.

JOHNSON: Some of the women that we've talked to felt like when they first came in with their husbands—and it depends on the time period I think when they came in—they felt like NASA itself basically ignored the wives and families.

BOBKO: Yes. That's true.

JOHNSON: You didn't have the support maybe that they should have been giving.

BOBKO: No, they didn't. When the next group came in in '78, there were some real needs. Because at that time I was teaching music at the Episcopal school, the pastor there knew me and came to me a couple of times saying, "What is NASA doing? I've got some wives here who need some real help."

I said, "They're not doing anything. They're going to have to find some help on their own." He was trying to step in, trying to work.

There was a time there when I think there was a big gap. A big gap in what NASA was doing versus what I seemed to have learned from some of the early Apollo wives, too much control of the wives, telling them exactly what they could and couldn't do and how they had to support their husbands and all this stuff, to then nothing.

I don't remember NASA doing anything to welcome me. You went to the medical office, and you knew their nurse, and you'd have all your medical care there. But I think our

group was just sort of independent. The next group was larger. There were a lot of scientists in the group. They hadn't been in the military. They came in thinking they were just these incredible people. We'd been through that knowing you don't have a program anymore. I think we came with a different sense of things.

JOHNSON: A different attitude.

BOBKO: Yes, and a small group, and some of us had known each other for several years and we had our own independence in a way. But it became very very apparent that NASA wasn't providing the support that was needed, and that was why after *Challenger* June Scobee [F. Richard "Dick" Scobee's wife] had come to me—we were good friends—and she said that people needed something, and would I try to get something going.

We talked to a few people and I said, "I'll have a gathering at my house, and we'll have anybody who wants to come. You don't have to come. If you want to come and you're interested." Because people were shocked. The wives were shocked, some of them, that the Shuttle had exploded. I remember people saying things like oh, and I thought it was so safe here, and thinking, what? There was such a mixture. Spouses who came home and talked about things all the time, and spouses who didn't talk about it at all. Some of the wives were really not very knowledgeable about spaceflight, and so things were quite a surprise. Then there were other things going on in their personal lives.

I remember having people come to the house, and I said, "What do you want to do?" There were some people who thought we shouldn't be doing that, getting a group going. I heard about that. But I said, "As long as people want this, I'm happy to help it get organized." What

we did was we got some of the astronauts and other people. We set up classes. We formed sort of a wives' group, and it's the one now that they've incorporated.

At one point one of the wives said to me, "It's still going, Dianne." It's a fully functioning group. I was traveling then with work, so this was really hard to squeeze in, because I'd gone back and got my master's, my MBA [Master of Business Administration], and I was working with clients in different parts of the country, and gone a lot, so it was a little hard to work in. But it was important, especially because June was such a good friend. I think that made a big difference.

I think that they found their own voice, the wives did, in a way, and it's gotten strong from what I can see at this point. They tend to have a very strong voice about who they are and what they need and what support they need from NASA, and I think that's good. At the time it was more let's educate them so that people aren't surprised or shocked or didn't even understand what a spaceflight was like. We did a lot of that. A lot of classes, a lot of experiences, a lot of that kind of thing.

But then I was just too busy to keep even really being actively involved in it and gone too much. But like I said, it's now the group that they have, and that was the beginning, and I think it was important.

JOHNSON: Yes, it is important. We spoke with Gratia Lousma [wife of Jack R. Lousma]. She was talking about that too, and that they started I guess a support group with one of the doctors out there, Terry McGuire.

BOBKO: Oh yes.

JOHNSON: They had that support group, because again, even in the early years there were so many accidents. But you coming from a husband in the Air Force with a test pilot background, you probably knew the dangers more than maybe someone that wasn't coming from that background.

BOBKO: Absolutely, because when Bo went to fly F-105s we went to North Carolina, the other version of the F-105 was blowing up in midair. When we went to Edwards, I remember down the street, five houses down, crashed. People would say, "Oh, this is so much safer here." I'd think, that was because they just didn't know how not safe it was. But also the people who hadn't flown had no idea. The scientists. They'd not lived in that world at all.

People would say to me, "Weren't you scared?" I went, "No no, it was gradual." Because when your husband is flying these jets that are blowing up in midair and all this stuff, you have to finally say to yourself early on, "Okay, that's not where I have to concentrate. I have to concentrate on everything else in my life and what I'm doing and what the kids are doing and what he's doing, but I can't be thinking about today is the day he's going to crash."

One of the things I did, and I talked to a few others later on, we talked about it a little bit. But I didn't say to him, "Well, what time will you be home? I want to have dinner on the table. What time will you be home?" I'd just say, "And you're going to be back when?"

"Well, Thursday probably." If he'd said, "I'll be home around seven o'clock," and they don't come home at seven o'clock—I mean in California even on the freeway you'd go, "Well," and so you have to get over that too.

I think that for me it was a gradual kind of thing. It wasn't that it wasn't dangerous or that I was stupid. It was just that it was gradual. For some of them it was oh my goodness, I thought spaceflight was so safe. Oh, I didn't think this could happen.

A lot of the education, a lot of the things we did in that first year after *Challenger* was to just make sure that the spouses, especially the wives, were aware. At least they knew what things were, and they could ask questions, and they could stand on top of the roof and not think oh, well, this is great, and then be totally shocked that something was not working.

JOHNSON: When *Challenger* happened, that was almost 20 years after Apollo 1 [fire]. People had forgotten.

BOBKO: Yes, they had. We were at Edwards when Apollo 1 happened, so in a way that was not real for us either because we didn't know those people at that time. After we got here it was more apparent. There's a group of wives that gets together from the early days. Anybody who's still alive from Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo. Because when we got here, we were in the Apollo group, we've always been included. I had hosted that. Marie and Kit and I had hosted it last year where I live. That's why I say hosted, because it was in my town.

Even that, I've learned a lot of things just by going to those events that we have, about some of the things that they went through early on. I know Gratia really well, and she's always been a really super person, special person in my life. I just think that this need for support has always had to be there. My sense is that some of the early spouses, NASA looked at them not as liberated women but as you're there for only one purpose and that's to support the program and to support your husband, period.

Some of the stories it's very clear, that I've heard from some of them, that there was just no doubt about that. That was the primary focus of NASA. Any interaction they had was certainly not about who they were. It was about how they didn't make anything hard for their husbands. It's interesting hearing some of the stories.

JOHNSON: The culture, like you said, NASA wasn't concerned with you unless you were supporting your husband. But the culture was changing so much during that time period too.

BOBKO: Oh, it was.

JOHNSON: Like we said, the women, and the whole women's movement and feminist movement. It's not like you were in a bubble and you didn't know what was going on in the world. I imagine that also caused some issues during that time as far as women wanting to express themselves and maybe not feeling like they could.

BOBKO: I would suppose that would be true. I think, again, I grew up in a very—

JOHNSON: A different family, yes.

BOBKO: I grew up in a family of a lot of strong women, going back to my great aunts. Just a lot of strong women. I don't think I ever thought of myself as more than anything not—but I do think that for a lot of women—I remember when we were there at Luke. I'm making this transition from graduate school, and this one wife at a party was so excited because her husband had taken her out and bought her a new dress. I was just astounded. I was just like, "What?" That was '61, I guess, it was right after we were married. I'm going, "What?" Her joy, she was so joyful. I'm going, again, "What?"

The spectrum was large from women who—and women who were already—going to a girls' school, just the whole thing. My friends still are all very very independent women, from high school—we get together. When we get together it's just a whole different world.

For a lot of people that was a huge time of transition. I don't think that the feminist movement meant too much to me in terms of impact on me. Because I just didn't see it, I didn't feel like I needed to be liberated. But I certainly saw it as I got into business. Not only from me personally but how few women move, and still, move up in organizations.

I would say in the '90s and I would say in the early 2000s you think that women have made progress, we're fooling ourselves. We're really fooling ourselves. I will often say NASA is one of the few places where I even see a group that's half-and-half or close. I will be in so many companies all over, and still, where there are 2 or 3 women out of 25, and certainly not in the upper echelons, and certainly not in Silicon Valley, which is a big issue out there.

It certainly was an interesting time. When the people from '78 came in, you had the women astronauts coming in who were professional women, who had a history of having accomplished all these things, and then you had wives who for some were not there in their own development. You had this really big, big mixture.

JOHNSON: I was going to ask you about that, because that class broke some boundaries, and some people thought it should have happened a lot sooner. But in '78 we did have the women astronauts that came in, and they were going to be flying with men astronauts. Was that an issue for some of the wives, dealing with that?

BOBKO: I don't know. I really don't know. It just was such an exciting thing, we're going to have women astronauts. That was the way I saw it. I don't know if it—the only thing is two or

three years ago I was on a bus someplace with one of the Apollo wives, and she said to me—because she'd written a book about some of the issues in her marriage and her time here—and she said, "I really think they should not have to work with women right there. It's just too tempting." I just about fell off the seat.

I said, "Well, I don't agree with you. I think that people can set barriers." I have worked all over the world where I have been staying in a place where it was all men and myself. You just set barriers. Now that doesn't mean that some of the industries, movies, and all the stuff that we're hearing about now, people go way past people's barriers. But both people can set their—and I just feel like you can't just say, "Well, then all women ought to stay home because they're going to tempt people's husbands." But I suppose people felt that way. Because now I look at it, and I think whoa. She still really thinks that.

I think she felt her life would have been much better if there hadn't been, not astronauts in the workplace but women in the workplace.

JOHNSON: That's interesting.

BOBKO: It is interesting. But to tell you the truth, when they all came in I don't know. I do know that there were marriages breaking up, and there were lots of marriages breaking up in that particular group and I guess the next group. But I don't know that that was what was in people's minds at all. Nobody that I knew—because my friends, Kit, Marie, the only ones I really interacted with to any degree socially were those other two people.

JOHNSON: How much socialization, because your husband was an astronaut and at NASA, do you feel like you were required to do? Were there certain things being the wife of an astronaut that you had to do? Like if he had to go certain places then you had to?

Some of the wives we've talked to—and it may have been depending on when their husbands were astronauts—but just buying the clothing. One wife we talked to made all her clothes. Some of them had more money and they could shop at the nicer shops. But there was a certain expectation that they would go to certain social events and be there no matter what. Was that ever something that was expected of you? Or anything that caused any worry on your part?

BOBKO: No. I think you experience some of that a little bit more after flights, because you do some of these social events. Depending upon where you are and what they are, unless you have your own story, you're there and it can be very boring. For some of the wives it was I know extremely boring.

Now when we went to Washington, DC, after the first flight—I think it was the first flight.

JOHNSON: STS-6?

BOBKO: I'm trying to remember which wives I was with. I think it was Bo's second flight [STS-51D] when he was commander. We got there and they said, "Oh, we've got this." It's Barbara Hoffman [wife of Jeffrey A. Hoffman] and Karen Griggs [wife of S. David Griggs] and myself and Kathleen Garn [wife of Edwin J. "Jake" Garn] and Charlie [Charles D. Walker] was married to somebody else at that time. We get to Washington and they're telling us they've got these shopping trips planned for us, and we went, "What?"

We said, "No, no shopping trips."

"Well, that's what all the wives."

"No, no," we said, "no shopping trips. We're going to go and sit in on the congress, wherever they go we're going to go—we want to see how the country works. We're here in Washington, DC, why would we want to go shopping?"

I think there was that transition there too somehow. Even in Europe we'd find that. I think again the women themselves changed a lot of that. The dressing and stuff, I don't know. That doesn't ring a bell with me at all. A lot of things were fun to get dressed up for.

We thought the NASA trips wherever we went, they were wonderful. We had great experiences. The clothes thing, I like clothes, and so things like that would not have been a burden; it would have been just fun.

JOHNSON: His first year, in your husband's interview, he mentioned that he thought he was going to be fired twice, because they told him that.

BOBKO: Oh yes, they told him a couple times, yes.

JOHNSON: That things were not going to work out. Then he got involved with SMEAT [Skylab Medical Experiment Altitude Test], and that was different.

BOBKO: That was interesting.

JOHNSON: He was gone a lot since it was in California.

BOBKO: They were 56 days, 57 days, 56 or 57. He decided that why didn't we talk about my taking the kids on a trip. I said, "Well, that sounds good. Go back and visit our friends in California." The day after he was locked up, the gas line broke in the backyard, which was typical. I said, "Well, we have to get that fixed right away because we're leaving tomorrow." My sister was here, and she rode with us as far as Denver, and we picked up my mother, and my sister came back, and we picked up my aunt who was a nun. My aunt, my mother, and the two children and I drove from here to—well, we went to Salt Lake and we went to—but I'm used to road trips, I grew up as a child driving on road trips all the time, to visit my aunt, and then later on driving, because my grandfather made me drive in the big cities, had me drive. I loved it.

We drove across the country. We drove down the coast. We visited our friends in LA [Los Angeles] and then we drove back. We were gone the whole entire time he was in. We would call and talk on the telephone. We had a wonderful trip, it was wonderful. We have great memories of Michelle having this gorgeous little straw hat with lace all over the front of it, and we went into the chapel at Carmel [California], the mission church, and she had forgotten her glasses, and at that time they were just new, she really couldn't see much at all. She didn't realize it till we were, I don't know, Amarillo [Texas] or someplace like that. At that time you couldn't get glasses just anywhere, so she spent the whole trip kind of fuzzy.

But she went over to the candles and she's looking at the candles that are burning, and she sets her hat on fire. We have these funny—it was half dangerous but half—anyway, that was great. That really was Bo's idea, he said, "Why don't you go back and see our friends in California and take the kids on a trip? It's summer, it's going to be fun," and it was. It was great fun; we had a great time. My mother and my aunt, they had a great time, we had a wonderful trip.

JOHNSON: But you did talk to him? You were allowed to talk to him?

BOBKO: Yes, we could call, he would call. From SMEAT he would call. Not from space.

JOHNSON: I want to go back and talk about Timber Cove and the communities, like you were talking about a little bit. When you moved in, was Timber Cove pretty well built out at that point? Because you were there later on?

BOBKO: Yes.

JOHNSON: Were there other people in your immediate—like on your street that were not NASA-related? Were people moving into those neighborhoods that were from other industries maybe, oil and gas?

BOBKO: Trying to think if there was much of that yet. It was really later that the neighborhoods became more diverse. At the time it seemed like almost everybody worked for NASA in some capacity. Probably not everybody. But later on when we even still lived there there was a lot more diversity in the community.

For us, the [James A.] Lovells lived there. We carpooled to preschool. Their youngest son and our son, she and I were in the carpool together, which was a lot of fun. We brought them to St Thomas [the Apostle Episcopal School] for the preschool there. By then the [Charles "Pete"] Conrads still lived there, but they were on the verge of beginning to leave. They went to Colorado I think from here.

The [John H.] Glenns had already moved out. I'm trying to think who else, what other astronauts were there. I think that was it. Then the [Michael J.] Smiths moved in. When they moved, they moved into Timber Cove, Jane, and their kids mowed our lawn. After Bo's flights the community had these wonderful parties always on the esplanade [on the road into Timber Cove], and welcome home and all that. The community really supported—and gave him something at the city council meeting, because Timber Cove had its own little government. It was always nice to live there. You didn't know everybody, but with your children, you knew a lot of people. Like I said the swim classes. Then a lot of people I knew from St Paul's who lived there as well.

JOHNSON: Were they involved in scouting, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, or anything like that?

BOBKO: Yes. Michelle was in Girl Scouts. I'm trying to think. Paul must have been in Boy Scouts, I don't remember, because I remember in Girl Scouts Bo and I both took them on one long weekend on one of their little outings and that was fun. But I wasn't a scout leader, Bo wasn't a scout leader.

Bo got very involved at St. Paul's also. He was on the liturgy committee and he was doing a lot of things. He got very very involved there with me, but he was doing different things than I was. Our social group was from there. That was really where our social group came from, most of the music people from St. Paul's.

JOHNSON: Was there a lot of NASA people there too?

BOBKO: Oh, in the church?

JOHNSON: Yes.

BOBKO: Oh yes, absolutely, and in the choir, yes, a lot of them all worked. In the different music groups I had, actually I had one group that was from Notre Dame. Pete [Peter] Hasbrook, he and his wife are still here. They're at NASA. Mike [W. Michael] Hawes now runs the Lockheed Orion Program. Mark [J.] Ferring, he told me the other day, has retired and moved away. There was this little group of guys, and Annette [Hasbrook], who was also from Notre Dame, one of the first classes of women. They were part of the group. It was really a lot of people in the church community and in the music groups that were from NASA.

JOHNSON: You mentioned the schools in California and how wonderful they were. When you came here and your kids were going to Seabrook at first because of the elementary or preschool, can you compare the schools? Were they as good as what you were used to in California?

BOBKO: No. Partly because California offered so much else, like this whole music program for children from the time they're like I said first grade, walking down the street with their violins. It was just amazing. The schools, they were rated first or second in the entire country. Then they passed Proposition 13 in California, and it has truly ruined the school districts. We struggle in our school district for money. We have a big parcel tax thing coming up again, and the last one passed by something like 10 votes.

The California schools were absolutely amazing. They offered a wide, wide spectrum of things like that. The arts as well—but we had no choice here. I at times looking back had wished there had been maybe a private school option that was really just an academic private

school, not a religious private school, but an academic school. But those were all in the city [Houston], they were too far.

Not that our kids didn't get a great education. Gosh, Michelle went to Columbia University in New York. They got a good education, but they would have gotten a better education in California at that time. But those things change. California is way down at the bottom in terms of schools now.

JOHNSON: The Clear Lake area was still relatively rural when you got here first. It wasn't as rural as the early '60s, things were building. Being close to the water, a lot of the families, the kids were on the water all the time, they were doing different things. Like you mentioned because Timber Cove was a little enclosed neighborhood, you felt like they were relatively safe. But were there any instances that you can remember of wildlife, storms, anything as far as the environment, any anecdotes or anything that you can remember? One person we talked to, the kids would come home with snakes and bunnies and all these different things. But was there anything like that that you can remember?

BOBKO: Snakes were a big deal, because we lived on the woods, and then right on the woods to the water in Timber Cove. So yes, snakes were a big deal. As a matter of fact they were very traumatic in a way. We had copperheads. I had to learn to kill snakes right away, because within a week or two we had snakes, and I really almost—I said, "Why in the world? How are we going to make it with little kids here?" We became very educated. Our daughter, that frightened her.

But living on the water was fun. She had her own little boat; it was a Starfish or whatever it was. She loved that, sailing out on the lake. She loved swimming. She's always

loved swimming. She'll ever be a fish. Paul was a great swimmer, he was on the swim team at the high school—at [college] rather.

The storms, we went through the '83 storm [Hurricane Alicia], and we had a tree fall on the house, and we had our tree fall on our neighbors' house, and we were without electricity. We still talk about the water and the hurricanes. That was different. How we all evacuated or didn't until 2005 even. We were still evacuating when Bo had already moved to California.

Those storms, the climate, the storms, they were different. If you grew up in Colorado very very different. The climate was hard. But you get used to it in a way, and you're excited you're here.

The city had great arts, so we had opera tickets, season tickets. We had symphony tickets. We went to the theater. We were in the city a lot. Even for our children, when we first got here, I had them down to the science museum [Museum of Natural Science], the art museum [Museum of Fine Arts] every summer. People would look at me. I drove them in by myself when we went down there. But we had lived in a much bigger environment in LA, so going an hour somewhere in LA, that's okay.

There was dance here for Michelle. There was music, the symphony. Paul took violin from a symphony player. So, for me driving into the city was not a big deal. I didn't feel like we were missing the cultural things that they needed. It wasn't the schools were bad, I never felt they were bad. You asked me were the California schools better, and at that time they definitely offered a lot more.

But I made sure they got to everything that we could that would be fun and interesting and that would make sure that we were expanding our horizons, and so we did all those things, and they were here. They weren't here, all of them, but they were in the city. We could get to everything.

JOHNSON: Some of the people we've talked to, they took advantage of the fact that Houston was there and others not so much. They stayed in this area and did everything here. You were more likely going into Houston.

BOBKO: Yes, as soon as we got here, we were going to the art or science museum. We'd switch back and forth. When we left here, the man who had built the Houston Grand Opera, such an amazing company, moved and took over the San Francisco Opera. We got there and we ran into him and said, "We've been with you in Houston for years."

The city has always had a lot to offer here. It's not as incredible as New York or San Francisco but it's a place where you could live and have a great high level of the arts, which is wonderful.

JOHNSON: I agree, it's one of those things that we're very lucky we live so close to it. During that time, especially in Apollo, and you were there during those years, a lot of tour buses, they would bring people through these neighborhoods.

BOBKO: Yes, that was all over.

JOHNSON: Was that over with by the time you got there?

BOBKO: Yes. There were no tour buses.

JOHNSON: Since he was brought in at the end of Apollo, was your group involved with the *Life* magazine contracts?

BOBKO: No, it was over. They could still get the cars, and we decided Bo didn't feel comfortable doing that. Having come from the Air Force Academy, it didn't seem right to him. I think there were two or three of us in that whole—not just his group, the science group—who said no to the cars. But for the others that didn't seem to be an issue, but he just didn't feel comfortable, and didn't need a car that badly for him to feel he needed to do that. He didn't have a Corvette or any of that.

JOHNSON: You mentioned when you were in California that you and your friend were watching each other's kids while you worked. Did that continue here as you went about your activities and your volunteer work? At some point you went back and got your master's. I'm not sure how old the kids were at that point.

BOBKO: They were grown up. Paul was in high school and Michelle was in college when I finished.

JOHNSON: But when they were still young as far as childcare?

BOBKO: We had the kids in the neighborhood babysit. For school, I could do without having to have a lot of extra childcare. Rhea Seddon flew on Bo's flight, and they had—because of both Rhea and Hoot's [Robert L. Gibson] being astronauts [and married], but if you both were having

that kind of a career, they had live-in nannies. They had au pairs. They had to. You couldn't call up at four o'clock and NASA has just told you you're going to fly to Florida.

But for us it was fine. I used to say Bo was away the first half of our life and then I was gone all the time for the second half of our life, and now I'm not gone that much, and he's not gone that much. We're just traveling.

JOHNSON: Did it ever bother you at first? You had that adjustment when you first got married that you didn't know when he was going to come back. Did you just get used to that?

BOBKO: I think you have to make that decision. Do you not have some moments here or there where you go, "Gosh, he should be home by now"? I still do sometimes. He drives from [NASA] Ames [Research Center, California]. Three times a week he goes to Ames and some nights I'm going, "He should have been here 20 minutes ago." I'll call him and say, "Where are you?" He's on the hill.

But I don't think you can live with that. I really felt that for me you just can't let that become a part of the way you live. I think if you do, you're going to be scared all the time, because they're flying, the weather is bad, they're late, all of that. I thoroughly enjoyed his launches. Other wives said to me, "I hope I get to a point, Dianne, when I'm not just scared to death."

It wasn't just me. When we left here it wasn't that I controlled it and made it happen, but I was able to just really enjoy it. Michelle, our daughter, she found the launch hard, she was really glad when he stopped flying. Paul was kind of half-and-half. To me it was so special. It was just so special that I wanted to be sure that we didn't have a—there were two things I thought were really important. One of the things was that for me. I've talked to a couple of

other wives who said that was really important to them too. Not that sense of I know exactly where you are and exactly what time you're going to be home, and then if you're not I'm going to get all worried. Because you just can't do that.

Then the other thing is one of the things I really felt was important when we started that group after *Challenger* was I felt it was really important to share with the group what I thought about our role as wives. One of the things I said that was, I thought, important for them to think about was that it's not your career, and if you think it is your career you're probably going to be pretty disappointed, because by then I had seen enough and heard enough of little comments by different wives from Apollo groups.

I said, "I think it's important that you find your own role in the community, who you are. Whether it's work or volunteering or whatever it is you do. But it's not your career. You're part of that, but it's not your career. If you're going to go to these events and nobody's going to talk to you, it's because it's not your career. But if you have your own sense of worth and you fit in somewhere and you have a role that's important, your role as a spouse, as a parent rather, is always going to be there, but in very different ways, and that's only one of your roles."

I just said, "I really think it's important that you consider that the ones who are being divorced all of a sudden, their life is—all of that that happens." I just felt that, whatever it is, for the men it's going to be easier, just because of the way society is. They're going to have their job, or they think they're really really important anyway, whatever. Or they're going to be willing to go along with their spouse and they'll find another job, for a few of them.

But the wives tend to, especially at that time I think—there were a lot of those things happening where all of a sudden this wonderful life was now going to be going away because the spouse had found somebody else, or people weren't interested in you when you went to a party, or any of those kinds of things.

Bo would laugh sometimes and he'd say, "More people know her than they know me." But that was just because I had a role here in the community that was very visible, so yes, I could walk in a store and I would hardly know who the people were, but everybody knew who I was. But that wasn't what was important. It wouldn't have mattered whether they knew me here in this community. It was that I had my own role somewhere that I was valuable as me, and not as—

JOHNSON: The wife of Bo Bobko.

BOBKO: The wife, yes. People would say to me, "You don't want us to tell people that your husband is an astronaut?"

I said, "Well, no, it's okay but that's not the most important thing I want you to tell them about me." If you're going to introduce me, it's not that her husband is an astronaut.

JOHNSON: It's you.

BOBKO: It's me. I felt for the wives that was an important—I felt for the spouses, any of them, that that was something to think about.

JOHNSON: Do you think it was something that a lot of them hadn't thought about? Were they receptive? Or was that okay with them?

BOBKO: No no, people were, and I had a couple people come to me and say, "I went back to school then. That was supportive, I felt good about it," and if it didn't, it didn't. But I think the

group from ’78 and I think even ’82, was that the next group? They came in feeling really gosh, really important. Their expectations I think were different from when we came. I think for the women maybe those expectations were even less in sync with reality. Because you’re not the spouse. Not the women astronauts but your spouse’s career is not yours.

JOHNSON: You’re not the astronaut.

BOBKO: You’re not the astronaut. It’s going to be wonderful, and it can be wonderful, and our life has been really really special because of it, but it’s not your career.

JOHNSON: When you were forming that group after *Challenger* was it with the blessing of NASA? Or were they aware that you were doing that?

BOBKO: No, not really. Again, some of the wives in the group were not happy. I got messages that I shouldn’t be doing it. Why was I doing it? I said, “Well, as long as they come, they’re the ones. It’s for them. If they’re here.” What made me think that this would be successful? I said, “The only thing that makes me think it would be successful is if they still keep coming and they want to do this. If they don’t, they don’t.” I was too busy. I did it because there was a need and because June really felt there was a need.

I was too busy to really say, “Oh, this is so important to me, I’ve got to do this, I’ve got to do this.” I remember when [Daniel C.] Brandenstein became head of the Astronaut Office his wife called me and said, “Oh, Dianne, I don’t want you to think that I want you not to do this.”

I said, “Jane, I don’t think that way. I don’t think because he’s the head of the Astronaut Office you’re the head of this. But I don’t care if you are or not. I’m too busy. I am happy to do

whatever. If they still want to do this." Really like I said after a while I was just too busy to be involved, but they kept it all going because they felt it was valuable.

JOHNSON: They needed that support.

BOBKO: Yes. It seems very strong today. I was very impressed two years ago when we came here for the Apollo wives' group. We were here.

JOHNSON: It's about three o'clock. Why don't we stop for now? But I appreciate you coming in. We really appreciate you talking to us and getting some more information.

BOBKO: I'm happy to do it, I'm always happy to talk.

[End of interview]