



## STEVIE ELLER

1930

Honored as a Historymaker 2001  
Partner with Karl Eller  
in Business and Philanthropy



The following is an oral history interview with Stevie Eller (**SE**) conducted by Pam Stevenson (**PS**) for Historical League, Inc. and video-graphed by Bill Leverton on April 28, 2000 at the Eller home, Phoenix, Arizona.

*Transcripts for website edited by members of Historical League, Inc.  
Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Heritage Center Archives, an Historical Society Museum, Tempe, Arizona.*

**PS:** Congratulations to you on being honored as Historymaker, Mrs. Eller. Please introduce yourself and give us your name, birth date, and where you were born.

**SE:** Joanne Stephens Eller.

**PS:** And the name that you are known by?

**SE:** Stevie. (laughs)

**PS:** Where did that name come from?

**SE:** When I entered the University of Arizona as a freshman, I pledged a sorority and there were twenty-five girls in it. Five of them were named Joanne or Joan. There weren't any others named *Stevie* and I had been called that on and off growing up, in my little town. When I got married I used to tell people I was Joanne Eller and Karl acted like he didn't know who that was. So (laughs) I just gave up. It would have been nice to be Joanne but I don't really care anymore.

**PS:** Are you comfortable with the name of *Stevie*?

**SE:** Yes.



**PS:** It's an unusual name; at least you don't run into too many.

**SE:** No, just every now and then there's one.

**PS:** Let's start at the beginning. Tell me when and where you were born.

**SE:** I was born in Paxton, Illinois, August 8, 1930. I grew up there.

**PS:** What kind of town is Paxton?

**SE:** A very small town, a farming community. It's just north of Champaign-Urbana, where the University of Illinois is. We owned the newspaper in Ford County, *The Paxton Record*, the fourth generation to have the newspaper. It was just part of our lives. All of us worked down there at one time or another.

**PS:** How many children were in your family?

**SE:** I have a sister who is older than I and a younger brother. We were like two families; my sister was quite a bit older than I. She started at Northwestern University in Evanston when I started kindergarten.

**PS:** What about your brother?

**SE:** Well, he's two years younger and we grew up pretty close together. We were in grade school and high school together, so got to know each other pretty well. He went with the newspaper after he left school.

**PS:** Tell me more about what it was like growing up. You say your father ran the newspaper?

**SE:** Yes. We had an uncle who wrote for the paper. My Dad did all the business side and the little town where we grew up was the county seat and lots of family lived there. We had aunts, uncles, cousins, so we knew everybody. I mean you didn't just know who they were; you really knew them. It was such a little town. [In 2009 the population of Paxton was 4,525.] For generations Mother knew people who'd lived and died in a fifty-mile radius and about all the farm land in the area. It was a very comfortable setting for somebody to have a childhood.

**PS:** Were your parents both from that town?

**SE:** They were both born in Paxton and grew up there.

**PS:** You have really deep roots in the town. What about your mother? Did she also work?

**SE:** No, no. She was a wife and mother and really enjoyed all the things we did. My brother and I were very involved in school activities, community activities. It was just a way of life. We sang in a lot of vocal



groups. We played musical instruments. We marched in the band. We were in the school plays. I was a cheerleader all four years in high school and grades were important. It was just a world that doesn't exist anymore. Certainly not here. (laughs)

**PS:** Does it still exist in Paxton?

**SE:** Oh, yes. Still just the same. It's really fun to go back.

**PS:** You say it was a farming community. Did you grow up on a farm?

**SE:** No, we lived in the little town; but we owned farms just outside town. We used to go out in the car and drive through the cornfields to see how the crops were doing and (laughs) how much water they'd gotten and talk to the tenants on the farm. It was something. We used to ride around in the evening in the car. It was fun.

**PS:** Your Dad ran the newspaper. What was his day like? Did you see him during the day?

**SE:** Oh, yes. Everybody was about. (laughs) I rode my bike to school forever and a day, to all the schools and home. Every time I wanted to see Dad, I just went down to the office and saw him. Mother was always about. She was great for doing what I guess now is called car pooling. We didn't know the word back then. She took us to all the games and to different events that were taking place in the county. We were in 4H and Scouts. We just did it; we were very busy.

**PS:** Do you have any early memories as a girl growing up, things that stand out in your mind about your childhood?

**SE:** Just everything. We didn't ever go anyplace. Being a second family, my brother and myself, we were always home. We had live-in help and they were always about. But sometimes my folks would travel without us and I hated it when they were gone. I was very involved in the church, too, and sang in the choir. I was involved in the Sunday school and looked after the kindergarten children. Sometimes in the summer I ran a play activity in the recreational area out at the park for little kids who would come by for two hours in the morning. It was just the typical little town existence.

**PS:** How far was your home from your Dad's office?

**SE:** Well, it took me probably six minutes on my bicycle. Not very far. (laughs)

**PS:** You say your home had live-in help. Was it a large home?

**SE:** Well, I thought it was a big house then, but I went back for my high school reunion last year and I couldn't believe how small it was. I remembered it being quite large. As a matter of fact, I don't think there



were any large homes at that time.

**PS:** Was it a two-story house? Describe it a little bit.

**SE:** Well, you walked into a front hall and there was a dining room and living room to the left, kitchen to the back and four bedrooms upstairs. Just sort of typical of the Midwest. All my friends had the same thing.

**PS:** In school, did you have favorite subjects or teachers that stand out?

**SE:** Oh, sure. I loved my history teacher, Miss Bear. Mr. Harrow was the principal and math teacher for eighth grade. I really loved school, and I truly loved history and civics probably more than anything. They taught civics back then. But I really didn't care for Latin and I'll certainly never forget Miss Winford, my Latin teacher (laughs). I loved reading *The Tale of Two Cities* in literature class. I really liked school. It was fun. I liked all my friends. We had a group of four girls and we did everything together. Every place we went, we went as the four of us.

**PS:** Are you still with them today?

**SE:** Well, two are gone. The other friend had her birthday on April 20th, so I sat down and wrote her a long letter. We communicate on birthdays and Christmas to update our lives, because she's still in Paxton and I'm here.

**PS:** You probably had very different lives.

**SE:** Yes.

**PS:** You were talking about some of your activities in your school and community. Tell us about some of the things you were involved with in school.

**SE:** I was in the junior and senior plays and sang with the Swing Band. I sang in a trio. Girls Chorus. Mixed Chorus. I played in the regular band, and the marching band. I played the trumpet and the baritone horn; I also played the piano. The thing nice about a little town, a little community, is that you can do lots of activities if you choose. When I went down to the University of Arizona, the gals I met were usually allowed only one activity because their high schools were so large that everybody had to have a share. But they were glad to have just anybody that would do things in our little town.

**PS:** You say you were in the school plays. What plays were they?

**SE:** *The Christmas Carol* is one I remember, and I was the character, Christmas Present. (laughs) I remember I wore a white feather on my head, whatever that means. I was a cheerleader all four years in



high school so I went to all the football and basketball games. We were in the Wauseka League. That is the name of all the towns in that area where there were games, and Mother was our driver. It was a lot of fun because we met lots of kids from the other schools.

**PS:** What was the name of your high school?

**SE:** Paxton Community High School, PCHS.

**PS:** You mentioned that you were also involved in community activities, 4H and things like that.

**SE:** Right, and during World War II, I had a Victory Garden. I grew carrots and onions and all kinds of vegetables and that was a lot of work (laughs). The weeds were faster than I.

**PS:** Why did you decide to do that?

**SE:** Well, there was such a shortage of food. It was hard to get food into that area during the war. Of course we didn't have much in the way of frozen food. Everything was either canned or fresh. We had wonderful summers, because then everybody had gardens. On our farm we grew sweet corn. We usually had forty acres of sweet corn. We ate that till we were sick. But in the winter time there really wasn't that much. I can remember at church during Christmas time what they gave us from Santa Claus was either an apple or an orange. That seems so funny now, because out here they fall off the trees, but an orange was a real treat.

**PS:** Tell me a little bit more about your 4H Club. Was the Victory Garden part of your 4H activities?

**SE:** No, it was separate. In 4H a lot of us had animals. Some of us had gardens and everybody helped out on the block where we lived. The Victory Garden was really separate and apart from that. We had the garden during the war, just to provide food.

**PS:** How big a garden was it?

**SE:** It was probably fifty feet long and eight feet wide. (laughs) Big enough.

**PS:** Was there a group of you that did it?

**SE:** Yes, some of the neighbor kids helped out who lived nearby.

**PS:** Tell me again some of things you grew in the Victory Garden.

**SE:** Well, onions, carrots, tomatoes. We had trouble with birds and rabbits and stuff, so everything had to be covered or you were out there shooing a lot. We had pecan trees and walnut trees in the backyard. Lots



of flowers.

**PS:** And in 4H you say you had animals. What kinds did you have?

**SE:** Well, we had goats and some lambs in the neighborhood. It was fun to feed them. That was about all.

**PS:** Did you ever think about growing up and becoming a farmer?

**SE:** No, I'm an asthmatic and it was a lot of work to be outside and be around animals. We had lots of cats and dogs, too. But I don't think we knew that much about asthma to understand that people with asthma shouldn't be around animals at all. It's sure been better since we aren't.

**PS:** What about your other 4H things? Did you do sewing or cooking?

**SE:** Well, a little cooking. But it was difficult because I had so many people around there to do it. I had never really cooked at all except to do a 4H project, until I got married to Karl and it was scary. To think, three meals a day! I knew I could do one a week and have it turn out great. But the thought of three meals a day. I mean, other than put cereal in a bowl, I just really hadn't done it.

But I did a ton of needlework. I used to spend my weekends with grandmother. The *Nickel Plate Railroad* ran from Bloomington, Illinois over to Hoopston. We would flag the freight train down and I'd get in the caboose and ride to Clarence where my grandparents lived. It was six miles east and they'd wave the train down to stop it in Clarence and I'd get off. I would spend the weekend with my grandparents and then they would come into Paxton to attend the Congregational Church on Sunday morning. So I had the weekend with them and we spent a lot of time together. I learned to do needlepoint and crocheting and knitting and made rag rugs with Grammy. I did this from the time I was three or four years old. She taught us to do all sorts of needlework. I still like doing needlework a lot.

**PS:** Do you quilt?

**SE:** Oh, yes, but I never liked quilting I kept poking myself with the sewing needle and bleeding and then it got all over the fabric and I was never really very good at it. But I really loved needlepoint and knitting and did a lot of it. I really loved it. Needlework was one of the most fun things I did.

We had another friend who lived down the street who had one daughter, the same age as my sister. I would go over to her house and practice the piano because we didn't have one at home. I loved going over there because they always told war stories and those stories wouldn't have been allowed to be heard in my own home. So I used to love to go down there after school and practice and listen to all those terrible tales they told.

**PS:** Were you also involved with the church?



**SE:** Yes very much so. We went to Sunday school and church every single Sunday unless we were sick. We were never gone, so I enjoyed that a lot.

**PS:** You mentioned flagging down the train. Didn't you have a train station in Paxton?

**SE:** Yes, but freight trains didn't stop at Paxton. They would be on a long haul across country. They would stop to pick up mail or something special that needed to go to another little town if there were anything, and sometimes it was I. It was really fun. I loved it. Can you imagine doing that today?

**PS:** What about chores that you did as a girl? You say you didn't have to cook. Did you have any responsibilities?

**SE:** Not really. I can't think of anything that I really had to do. I remember Herbie had to mow the lawn and always had asthma when he did it.

We did the dishes. Herbie and I did them after every meal. We did do that. And we would set the table. But as far as chores as I think of them, like the ones I assigned my children, when they were growing up, I really didn't have any. Don't tell them! (laughs)

**PS:** What about helping out at the newspaper? Did you ever do that?

**SE:** My buddies and I did. Dad paid us twenty-five cents an hour. They would only have made fifteen cents if they had worked at the local Five & Dime. We went down to the newspaper office and assembled books, stapling them together. We didn't run any paper cutters, but he did a lot of printing for commercial businesses throughout Ford County and also up into the Chicago area. Did a lot of church work. And did some things for the county, since we were the county seat. So my friends, my three buddies and myself worked there and my Dad used to come in to see how we were doing because we talked faster than we worked. The conversation was rampant in our little group. We really loved doing it and could make a couple of dollars that we thought was big money.

**PS:** Was that your first paying job?

**SE:** Yes. When I was fifteen, though, I worked at the local grocery store. It was an A&P where I was a checkout girl. Can you imagine? I shudder every now and then when I think of it. How many groceries? It was different to do then; you didn't have computers. Anyway, it was an experience, kind of a horrible experience. (laughs) Bob's gone and I can't even go apologize to him. He was the manager.

**PS:** Well, did you ever think about working for the newspaper as a reporter or photographer?

**SE:** I did do that in high school some. But I was so busy with my school activities and other things that I



really didn't have the time. What I'd do is, if I thought of a story about local people or activities in the high school, things like that, I'd sit down and write it up, turn it in and see if they used it. Sometimes they did and sometimes they didn't.

We didn't have any expenses. I had two skirts and two pairs of shoes, probably two sweaters and a heavy coat and that was it. And a rain coat. You just didn't have any use for much. I remember the movie theater had to advertise in our newspaper all the time so people could see what movie was playing. The movie theater people never had money to pay for the ads, so we always got in free. I didn't even need the ten cents to go to the movies. (laughs)

**PS:** Do you remember any of the stories you wrote? Were there any special ones that stood out?

**SE:** They were usually about athletes. There was usually some boy from the farm who'd come in and was quite good at football or basketball and even quite a star. I would write about him and his family, that kind of thing.

**PS:** Did you get a chance to meet them that way?

**SE:** Well, you knew everybody up front there. Anyone who walked up, we sort of lined up and said "Hello," deciding if they were in or out. Isn't that awful? Oh, gosh. Terrible! That's the bad news about a little town. But it was a very comforting place to grow up.

**PS:** What made you decide to come out to Arizona to go to college?

**SE:** I was an asthmatic, as I said, and I had applied to Northwestern, Michigan and Wellesley. I hadn't decided where to go. Girls' school didn't appeal to me too much. I liked Michigan because we used to go down to Illinois to see the sporting events, basketball and football, and they had such a wonderful band. I thought, what a deal to go to Michigan and play in that band. Northwestern was so close and was so good academically. If I wanted to be near home, it was a good school to attend.

But my Dad came home one day and said "Would you like to look at the University of Arizona?" I'd barely heard of it. My life was right there in Ford County and we'd never even traveled, never been anywhere really. Dad and I took the train to Tucson and got there probably at 12:30 or 1:00 o'clock in the morning. We got off and it was the first of June or the end of May. I had never, never felt such heat. It was like jumping into an oven. It was a shock. I hated the Illinois summers when we had high humidity and high temperatures; it can be awful. We used to sit in the basement because it was so hot. But the heat in Tucson was a shock.

We went to the Pioneer Hotel and the next morning we took a cab to the University campus. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. I'd never seen anything so beautiful. It was really, really thrilling. It was good size, you know, five thousand students, I think, and I loved the look of the campus. At first I missed all the





trees and bushes, but I got rid of that soon. I met Mr. Lescher, the Dean of Admissions. They said they'd look into me. (laughs) But he didn't give me much encouragement. He said that I was from a little high school, sixty-two in my graduating class, and that it didn't matter if you're valedictorian if you're in a class of only sixty. So I really hadn't much hope. It seemed crazy to get accepted at those other schools and be denied admission to the UA. At the time I was just devastated to think that. But about two weeks later, they accepted me and I went out there to go to school in August. My folks drove me out. I didn't know a soul. It was like going to the moon.

**PS:** That was a pretty big decision.

**SE:** All my friends were going either to a Big Ten school or any of those little private schools around Paxton. Everybody was staying up there. I was the only one going away. I cried the first thousand miles. I thought I'd lost my mind. (laughs)

**PS:** What did your friends think?

**SE:** I don't know. I do wonder now and then what they must have been thinking that I went so far away to school. But when you do something for health reasons, everybody's pretty supportive.

**PS:** You say you were shocked when you got off the train and it was so hot. What made you change your mind and how long did you stay in Tucson that first trip?

**SE:** We were there probably three or four days and I really liked the heat. I felt good. By the way I didn't have asthma the four years I was at Tucson at the U of A. That was wonderful. Like a gift.

**PS:** Didn't the heat scare you off?

**SE:** Oh, no, no. In fact, I loved it. I really love summer in Arizona. It's gotten a little bit much now. But I can also remember it pouring rain; I mean it was coming down in sheets; that isn't very often, as we know. I'd have my little radio on and it would say the humidity, and it would be only eight or ten percent. How could it be pouring rain and the humidity be just eight or ten percent? So that made a difference, not having a lot of humidity.

**PS:** You say you were impressed with the campus when you first saw it. What did the campus look like back then?

**SE:** The center campus is still there but it's just mushroomed around the periphery for I don't know how many miles. It seems like a lot. When I arrived I saw that the buildings were brick. I loved the palm trees and the desert flora that was all around. I thought it was wonderful. The dorm, where we would get to live, looked marvelous. Doesn't look so marvelous today. I was down for homecoming and I went into Yuma Hall where I lived. I couldn't imagine that I lived in that little room with that single closet. (laughs) But it



was more than enough then.

**PS:** What year was it that you started college?

**SE:** 1948.

**PS:** You drove out. What was that trip like?

**SE:** Long. I hadn't realized how far it was. On the train when I first went out, we went through Los Angeles and back into Tucson. I'd never seen that country except in John Wayne movies. When we took the car to Tucson, they had me drive which gave me a whole different perspective, driving to Tucson and seeing all that different terrain. It was really an experience. On the train track too. In those days, the road wasn't always right next to the track, like it seems it always is today.

But, I was just so shocked at Kansas. Then New Mexico. We went through some funny little town in Colorado. I'd never been to Colorado in my whole life. All this was a new experience. It got better after we got further from home and I realized I was really going.

**PS:** What route did you take to get from Chicago to Tucson?

**SE:** I remember going through Fort Scott, Kansas, went down through part of Missouri, Colorado and down through New Mexico. We came up through Bisbee into Tucson. That's an experience to actually see a copper town, a copper mine. That was fun.

**PS:** Let's back up a little. You said you did well in high school. Were you the valedictorian?

**SE:** I was in the top three. I think I was second. It's hard to remember back then but the four of us were all one, two, three and four in grades when we graduated. So I'm not sure, when we were only a thousandth of a point apart. But we did everything together. We all liked school and were all pretty good students.

**PS:** When you decided to go to college, what were you going to study?

**SE:** Well, that got to be a bit of a problem after awhile, but I took the classes I wanted my first two years. A lot of them are assigned; you don't have a choice. There was English, and for science, I took geology and absolutely adored it. Going out on those field trips, breaking open a rock and finding a trilobite fossil or brachiopod marine animal. After soy beans and those corn fields in Illinois, they were really a shock.

I really loved college. I think I liked everything. I loved English. I took history. When I went home after my sophomore year, I was about to drive back to school when my Dad said, "You know, I really want you to be an education major." Of course, I just went ballistic. I was hysterical. It came down to this: "If you are going to Arizona, you're going to the education college." That was devastating, because I had planned



on being a geology major by then, I loved it so. But I decided that the U of A was more important than worrying about geology. So I actually graduated in the education college.

**PS:** Why were you devastated by that?

**SE:** Have you ever taken an education class? Worthy Home Management. We had a professor who used to say, "How many think this is a beautiful thought?" It was okay, but it wasn't really what I wanted to do. I wanted something more stimulating than that, and I'm sure the education classes today are more so. I just wasn't crazy about it.

I had so many hours in history, English, science that I had to take almost everything my junior and senior years in the education department. That's terrible to say; isn't it? But I really wasn't crazy about education. My dad's reasoning was, "You have no idea who you're going to marry and some day you may have to make a living for yourself and children or even your husband. None of us knows what's ahead for us." At the time I thought he was crazy. How could anything ever be a problem? His idea was that I would only work eight months a year, which teachers do, with a month's holiday during the year, three months during the summers. So, I'd be able to be with the children during the time when they needed somebody at home. It turned out to be a good thing I was an education major, because I think when Karl got his first job he was only making \$180 a month. So my salary was an important thing in our life.

**PS:** Did your dad encourage you to come back and work for him on the paper?

**SE:** I suppose Karl would have been delighted. He did offer my husband a job to come back to that little town and work for the newspaper. But, actually I think my father felt it wouldn't really be fair to Herbie to have a son *and* a son-in-law working together on the newspaper.

**PS:** Let's go back and talk about college. What sort of activities did you get involved in at the University?

**SE:** I was in a sorority. But during my freshman year, everyone lived in dormitories and that was a lot of fun because you got to meet everybody. There were a lot of upper classmen on the floor where I lived, mostly Kappa's, but some Gamma Phi's. I was a Theta. It was a lot of fun to be with all those gals, go to school and be interested in their lives and their activities. Gosh, what all did I do? I can't even remember. I was very involved in the sorority. I studied a lot. I dated a lot. (laughs)

**PS:** You got involved with the sorority. Did you live in a sorority house?

**SE:** Yes, I moved there my sophomore year. I think out of the twenty-five girls, only three sophomores were accepted into the house and I was lucky to be one of them. We went in by grades and I didn't let them down by my grades either. It was fun.

**PS:** Tell me about the first year when you came out to Arizona, driving across the country with your



parents and moving in. What were your thoughts as you were getting settled?

**SE:** I was terribly excited. Television was new. They didn't have TV in Paxton. They had some television cameras there showing all of us unpacking the cars and moving into dorm rooms. I had a darling gal, who was my freshman roommate. She was from Fort Smith, Arkansas. She was pretty and so tiny and so smart. (laughs) I just adored her. In fact, Karl dated her before he dated me. We got all our stuff and she had so many clothes. I just found that fascinating. I'd never heard of a cashmere sweater. They didn't have cashmeres in Paxton. Everybody in the dormitory had cashmere sweaters. It was fun to learn about that. There were so many interesting things that I learned once I got out to Tucson. I'd never seen an artichoke. I had never seen an avocado in my entire life. They didn't have them in Paxton. The grocery stores didn't bring that stuff into those little towns.

There wasn't a problem in getting all the classes. It seems as though kids today are taking more than four years to go through school, but all of us went through in four years. No summer school, no other classes, correspondence or anything and we all graduated in four years. I don't know if perhaps there more classes available for whatever your major might be.

**PS:** You were in the band and sang in high school.

**SE:** I didn't do that down at the U. I wasn't in any plays there either. I know one thing I did, I was a member of Orchesus and I tried out for the Dance Honorary. I studied dance, too. I did everything. I played field hockey because I'd never played it before. It was so much fun to do that all that stuff. I swam; there was no swimming pool in Paxton. There was one in Champaign; we used to go down once in a while for our birthdays. I was in the Dance Honorary and made that for the four years that I was at the U. It was a lot of fun doing that; we had performances twice a year.

**PS:** What kind of dance was it?

**SE:** Modern dance. I remember Martha Graham coming one year and we all got to dance with her. I loved it. I loved the music, music I had never heard before, *The Grand Canyon Suite* by Frede Grofé. So much of the music was new to me. I found that real exciting. [In 1999 Stevie Eller received an honorary doctorate from the University of Arizona and is a past recipient of the University's Centennial Award and Distinguished Citizen Award.]

**PS:** Did you have plans for what you were going to do after college?

**SE:** No, no thought of it. We really didn't talk very much about what we were going to do when we left school. Mostly everybody was getting married. We were having showers and people were planning weddings and so forth, but I hadn't really thought about it. I guess I assumed that I'd probably go back to Paxton because I had so many friends there.



**PS:** Did you get involved at all in the community in Tucson?

**SE:** No, I was isolated. I never even went off campus much, which just seems crazy today. There was a little clothing store on Park Avenue, I remember. Once, maybe twice, a year I went down there when I needed something. There was also a drug store on the corner of Park when I needed something. But I really didn't need much. I had everything I needed right there at the school.

**PS:** Did you ever do any sight-seeing in Arizona?

**SE:** Only a little but mostly I would go over to California for the holidays. The first Thanksgiving I went to San Diego with a gal in my hall who was a Tri Delt. I'd never seen San Diego. It was exciting. Her Dad worked for Signal Oil and during the following Easter break, he sent the company airplane, I think it was a DC3, over to Tucson and had about eight of us flown to her house. When I went to San Diego another time, we all drove over and stayed with a bunch of friends there. Mike Fletcher, a Phi Gam, who is still a close friend of ours, was in the group. We went out every night and saw all the sights in town.

During another spring break, we went to Newport Beach with my friend Marsha Lee March. She was just a darling girl. We had the best time. Her house turned into a dormitory. Sometimes there were fifty to eighty people in that house which was right there on the water. Oh, it was marvelous! I'd never known a life like that. It was truly fun.

**PS:** Tell me about how you met Karl at the UA.

**SE:** I knew who he was. The UA was like Paxton, about the same size. So you knew who was active on campus and who played sports. Of course, I was interested in sports in college, having grown up being very interested in sports at home. I remember in geology class, it was like a tunnel or an amphitheater, Karl sat directly across from me because I was Stevens and he was Eller. I thought he was pretty cute.

You knew who he was because, when we were registering for classes, I don't know if he told you this, but he would come around pulling a little red wagon with cokes in it. You paid him a nickel for a coke, because you stood out in the sun in all that heat when you were waiting to sign up for classes at the beginning of each semester. There he was in his stolen property of a University of Arizona tee shirt and Levi's, selling that stuff. After that, he put a little commissary up on the sorority and fraternity lawns and in dormitories. I think he lost money on those. It was an honor system, but I don't think it worked too well. He had so many odd jobs. That's what he was about.

**PS:** What did you think when you first met him? What were your first impressions?

**SE:** Oh, dear. We were up here in Phoenix. I had a date with a really cute guy. We were up here for the ASU game around Thanksgiving. And after the game we went to Central Drive-In on Central Avenue to get a hot fudge sundae. I love hot fudge sundaes still. When we came out while our dates were paying for



our treats, Karl and Freddie Hodges came out and wanted to know where we were staying, asking if they could come by later. “Oh,” we said, “No”. We didn't think that was a very good idea. But Karl called me in the middle of the week after we got back to Tucson and asked me to go out and have a coke, which we did.

**PS:** What did you think of him?

**SE:** I thought he was just a darling guy and fun to be with. I didn't know people were that poor. It was really a shock to me. He had a bicycle that was always breaking down. He didn't have any clothes. I mean none. I had two of everything. (laughs) I just couldn't imagine anybody being as poor as he was. He hadn't lived with his family for years. He'd lived with his sister for a while in high school. But she had moved to Florida or someplace and so Karl had been living in Ferdeena's carport during his senior year so he could stay and play football and basketball at Tucson High. I couldn't imagine anybody without a family; he seemed kind of lonely.

**PS:** He mentioned his mother lived in Tucson and had a boarding house.

**SE:** That was when he was in grade school and probably the beginning of high school.

**PS:** Where was he living when you met him?

**SE:** He lived in the dorm. It used to be the stadium dorm and now it is where they make those huge telescopes that they ship all over the world. They gave him stolen property, the U of A tee shirts (laughs) and that's all he wore.

**PS:** So it was a lot different from your background.

**SE:** Oh, yes. I couldn't imagine life without a family. All the aunts, uncles, cousins I had. You know, a brother and a sister and a mother and a dad and I had grandparents. I couldn't imagine it.

**PS:** When did you first start getting serious about him? You said you dated a lot in college.

**SE:** I did. That's true. Well, he offered me his pin in the spring of sophomore year. That would have been 1949 and I took it. Did he tell you about picking peas in Rochelle, Illinois during the summer? He had all these crazy jobs. He picked peas with his friend, Roman DeSanctis, who ended up being the world's leading cardiologist who graduated first in his class from Harvard Medical School. But that's another story. When these guys were picking peas they worked eighteen-hour days.

**PS:** How did they get their job of picking peas?

**SE:** A bunch of Phi Gams who were from Rochelle, Illinois were driving a truck for the summer and they got these guys jobs out working in the fields (laughing). It was really funny. When Karl and Roman get



back to the barracks where they slept at night, Karl said he was so tired he couldn't even sit up. He said Roman was memorizing all the medical dictionaries so he could go to Harvard Medical School. He would prop a book up in front of Karl and then he'd recite them, but Karl always fell asleep. "Eller, you know, you can't do that; you've got to watch the words." I mean, Roman was trying to get into Harvard. Karl said, "He never makes a mistake anyway." This is what they did one summer.

I worked during the three summers I was at the U of A, after my freshman, sophomore, and junior years. My junior year I was the head of College Board.

**PS:** Tell us about College Board.

**SE:** In those days there were girls who attended major universities all over the country who worked at Marshall Fields, Stevens, and Carson Prairie Scott department stores in Chicago during the summer. I was at Carson Prairie Scott and we would work four weeks before we went back to school, putting wardrobes together for girls going to school out of state for the first time. I did all of the Southwest for girls going to San Diego in California, Arizona, New Mexico. Sometimes, they'd have someone from Colorado or Utah help them. But if they didn't, then I would try to do that for them, put together a wardrobe for them to wear. Our group, College Board, made a lot of money doing this in the summertime. It was a lot of fun; we met a lot of girls. In fact, a couple of the gals eventually pledged Theta and we are still friends today. Here we had met each other when they came in to buy clothes at Carson's to go out to school and go through Rush. That was fun.

**PS:** Had you done that when you were going to go to the UA?

**SE:** No, I didn't even know about it. My sister found out about it because she lived in Evanston. So I went out and applied and was accepted and I really loved it. I got to know a lot of the girls that were on College Board and they were from everywhere. There was always somebody from Stanford and all of the Midwest, Big 8, Pac 8. In those days a lot of people from the Chicago area went East and to the Southeast, or Texas. Anyway, I dealt with everybody, but I was better at advising people going to the Southwest.

**PS:** Did Karl come back because you were there?

**SE:** Yes, I think so. That might have been the reason and he always tried to get a job in that area. Did he tell you about building a pipeline across Northern Arizona for El Paso Gas during the first summer I was dating him?

**PS:** No.

**SE:** Well, that's what he did. I had just gotten his pin. I can remember opening one of the letters and a bunch of rattlers fell out of the envelope. He would go out early in the morning when the sun was first



coming up and kill all the rattlers that had fallen into the pipeline during the night, so they could continue with the digging. I was sent those rattlers in envelopes (laughs) when we were communicating while I was back in Paxton.

**PS:** Were you suitably impressed?

**SE:** I let out quite a shriek with the first envelope. From then on, I opened them over the waste basket, (laughs) after the first experience.

**PS:** When did your family meet him for the first time?

**SE:** When he came back in the summer I had him come down to Paxton. Then my folks came out to Arizona and spent a week in the spring and a week in the fall at the Ghost Ranch Lodge in Tucson. I had a car at school so they would use it during the two or three weeks or four weeks they were there. They loved Arizona, too. They had met Karl by then and watched him play football. He didn't play basketball, after his freshman year at the UA, I don't think.

**PS:** What was your family's first impression of Karl?

**SE:** Oh, I think they liked him a lot. When it got pretty serious I don't think they were too pleased with his family background, with no parents and so forth. People didn't get divorced in Paxton. You have to understand that was a different world. It was just unheard of. His mom and dad had been divorced but, even so, my parents liked him a lot.

**PS:** Did you say one summer he was putting in pipeline in Arizona and then the next summer he picked peas in Illinois?

**SE:** Rochelle, Illinois the next summer, yes. I think when Karl and Roman came into Chicago though, they mostly spent all their money. They were both mad when they finally got back down to the U of A. They really didn't feel they had much extra spending money.

**PS:** So did you see him much that summer when he was in Illinois?

**SE:** Yes, on weekends, but not always. Sometimes worked and then drove all the way in. It takes a couple of hours to drive all the way from Rochelle to Chicago. Maybe they would stay overnight, and then drive back. Another thing was fun. Karl was a FIJI [a member of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity] and a lot of the Phi Gams lived in that area, so I would get all the gals on College Board together. We'd go out Saturday night. There would be five or six FIJI's and I'd get five or six gals that were from all parts of the country to go out with them. That was fun. It was a nice life.

**PS:** What kind of things did you do for dates?





**SE:** Mostly went to bars. For somebody that doesn't drink, there was music, dancing, that kind of thing. There wasn't a lot else to do. I don't remember ever going to a Cubs game.

When the Cubs started playing baseball, my grandfather who had been with the Paxton newspaper when I was growing up, moved to the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago and lived there through the whole Cubs' season. We all went back and forth on the Illinois Central Railroad. He didn't come back to Paxton until after the World Series, or before if the Cubs were out of contention, which they (laughs) always were. It was a big part of his life; he just loved it. I always thought that was so strange. If the Cubs were traveling out of town why, he'd come back to Paxton on the weekends. It's kind of fun to think about now that we have the Diamondbacks in Phoenix.

**PS:** When you were dating Karl back at the UA, what sort of things would you do on your dates?

**SE:** We went to games, we went out on beer busts. We studied together at the library or at the Theta house. We went to all the college activities together. The University of Arizona was really my life when I was down there. We went to everything and did everything. There were dances there. I remember Les Brown came one time and it was fun. That part of it.

**PS:** When did you make the decision that this was the man you were going to marry?

**SE:** He asked me to marry him in the fall of our senior year and gave me a ring. I was delighted. I thought it'd be neat, because we did things well together, I thought. I felt very comfortable with him. It was hard senior year though, because I was carrying twenty-one hours, doing practice teaching, and was president of my sorority. I had such a full load, I didn't have a lot of time for social life. I did not do much else other than study and go to the things I needed to go to. That was a hard year.

Then we decided to get married. All his friends were in Tucson. He felt it would be lonely getting married in Paxton, so we ended up getting married in Tucson two days after graduation. Then we went back to Paxton for a reception and had all the Paxton people come to that. So I was also planning a wedding. I had a lot to do.

**PS:** When he asked you to marry him, was there any special ceremony about that?

**SE:** No, he was so sweet. He just gave me a ring and asked me and I was delighted.

**PS:** With everything else your senior year, you were planning a wedding. Did your family come out to Tucson?

**SE:** They came out about two months early and helped with stuff, but I had already had to book a place. I'd never done that. I was social chairman of the Theta House at one time, but that was as close as I'd come. In



Paxton, you'd call up everybody you knew and they would all pitch in. But half the senior class was getting married, all my buddies so they weren't too available to help me plan my wedding. I ended up having to do a lot of it myself. Some instructors at school helped. Everybody was kind, and Mother and Dad were great once they arrived in Tucson.

**PS:** How big a wedding was it?

**SE:** It was pretty big. Well, I guess it wasn't big, when you look at weddings today, but I thought it was big. I think there were about eight-eighty people there. We got married in St. Philips in the Hills in Tucson, a little Episcopal church out on River Road. We had the reception on the evening of Memorial Day. In those days Memorial Day was on the thirtieth of May, which is our anniversary. Everything was closed. Santa Rita Hotel was closed. I mean, every place was closed, so we ended up having the reception in Mrs. Hartford's home. She'd been head of ROTC at the University. So we ended up having the reception at her house. That was neat, too. A lot of my friends and family came from Illinois and Karl's brother came. I think he was living in the San Francisco area at the time. It was a long way to travel in those days. It seems strange I think, because today we would go back to New York just for a dinner party, but in those days we didn't even go to Phoenix for a dinner party. It was costly to travel. People didn't do it.

**PS:** Did you have a honeymoon? Where was your first home after you got married?

**SE:** No honeymoon. We just went to Paxton for the reception. Then we lived in a little apartment behind El Rancho, the grocery store on Speedway in Tucson. Well, that's not true. When we first got married, Peg Mosely, a friend from college had a home across from the Arizona Inn. Her dad was head of the mining operation down at Cananea, Mexico. We lived in their home for the first month, then we moved into that little apartment behind El Rancho. From there Karl got a job in Phoenix. First he leased billboards in Tucson and then we got sent to Phoenix and had a little apartment up here on 14th Street and Oak. Those were our first three homes.

**PS:** What was it like the first months? You were out of college, both of you had just graduated and married and were trying to decide what to do with your lives. Karl was looking for a job. Were you looking for a job?

**SE:** I was and I got a job teaching. I had done my practice teaching at Tucson High and then I got a job at Wakefield Junior High School. That was an experience working there, I can tell you. Our principal used to frisk the kids for switchblade knives when they came in.

**PS:** What year was this?

**SE:** 1952. It was really bad. One of my kids was hurt so bad that they took him out. He and his dad had gotten into a knife fight. They took a hundred stitches in him. He was really a good looking kid, quite a good athlete.



But as far as being married, I had never cooked. The only really bad part of getting married was that I had to put meals on the table. That was a real test. If we survived that, it was good practice for what I had ahead because the rest of it was easy after we had conquered that one.

**PS:** How did you learn to cook?

**SE:** I went out and bought cookbooks and all the ingredients, spent ten thousand hours putting all the stuff together. Learning how to do it, trying to put a meal on the table. Other people at least made peanut butter sandwiches before they got married. Karl got a lot of peanut butter sandwiches, by the way, and he loves them still. But it really was a different world.

**PS:** I imagine you were on a budget, too.

**SE:** Yes, Karl was making only \$180 a month and my salary was just about \$2800 a year for the time I worked. But we were able to do some things and go some places. But not much. Not much. We had only one car. We had only one car for years, so if I needed to go anywhere, I went by bus.

**PS:** Lucky they had buses back then.

**SE:** Yes, but they were sparse.

**PS:** Tell me a little more about your first teaching job in Tucson.

**SE:** I spent a lot of time crying. The only job that was available to me was not in English and history, my majors, but in music and art. I had to do operas and everything with these kids. I remember the materials they had were so lovely. All those beautiful pastel chalks. But those kids would come in and *eat* them in art class, or sit and just break them for something to do. It was a test. It was a junior high class. Keeping order in art and music; that was a challenge. Kids don't come in to be quiet. (laughs)

**PS:** How long did you teach there?

**SE:** I was there a year. I think it was a year. Yes. Then Karl was transferred to Phoenix. I got a job out at Washington School teaching English and history. That was a lot more fun.

**PS:** Grade school?

**SE:** Washington Elementary School on 27th Avenue and Northern. I don't even think Washington High School was built yet, but it may have been.

**PS:** Tell me about the move to Phoenix.



**SE:** Karl had received a new job with Foster & Kleiser. [ In 2009, known as Clear Channel Outdoor, Inc.] In Tucson he was mostly leasing space for signs. In fact, a lot of them are still there. In Phoenix he went into sales and loved it, thought he had died and gone to heaven himself. He just adored it, being in sales and meeting people and selling them billboard space. It was really exciting for him and I was teaching out at Washington. We were here all summer. We were in the Elks Club and I remember I used to go over there and swim. I'd take the bus over to the Elks Club and I'd bring some of my kids that I had taught in school, and we would go swimming. That was a big treat. It was a very simple life.

**PS:** What was Phoenix like when you moved here?

**SE:** We moved up here in 1953. It was a very little town. I remember the Phoenix Country Club being way out. My school where I was teaching was like driving to Prescott, it was so far. Of course I didn't have a car. So I had to depend on another teacher to get a ride to and from school, because I had no transportation.

**PS:** Where did you live when you moved to Phoenix?

**SE:** We were living at 14th Street and Oak, and that's a long ways, south of Thomas, so you know how far it was out to that school. My school had a lot of the workers' kids from John Jacobs. Mr. Jacobs had all the ranch land, farm land around there. When I met him he was a darling guy. I just loved him. The Superlite Block people were out there, too. That was a new thing, just invented.

There weren't very many restaurants. Durant's was there. We really didn't eat out that much because it was expensive to eat out. I had gotten to be a pretty good cook, but I'd rather Karl tell you that than I (laughs). I really enjoyed it. In fact, I cooked clear until our daughter left for the U of A. Then I quit. (laughs) But she's forty now.

**PS:** Did you have an apartment on 14th and Oak? What kind of an apartment was it?

**SE:** It was very small. It had four units. It was just east of North High School. Wouldn't that have been nice to have worked at North High? I pretty much did a lot of my own house work. So that kept me busy.

**PS:** How did you get that first job teaching?

**SE:** I had pretty good recommendations. Can you imagine from that music-art job at Wakefield? I always called it *Wake-atraz*, but don't tell anybody. They were looking for an English teacher. I applied at all of the school districts: Murphy, Osborn, just went from one to another and then got the job at Washington. I loved teaching out there. I really liked my principal and my superintendent. They were just super people, and I liked the other teachers that were out there. It was a fun time. I had to do playground duty out there. I didn't have to do that down at Wakefield, and that's when I started getting asthma again. I didn't realize all those dust storms were not a good place to be.



**PS:** What subjects did you teach?

**SE:** History. Mostly English. I was a seventh grade homeroom teacher.

**PS:** What did you like best about teaching?

**SE:** I liked the regimentation. I liked a scheduled day. I liked the challenge of the classes. Every class was different with the academic levels of the kids. I got so I liked a lot of the children really well. Liked to spend extra time with good students. Work with the poorer students. Then I got pregnant with Scottie, (laughs) I had just gotten pregnant with Scotty in the spring of 1956 and I had morning sickness.

There was a janitor who waited for me every morning about 9:15 am. Out I went from my classroom. I just felt like I wanted to die. (laughs) The janitor would take my class and sit in my place. Just a routine. We didn't tell anybody (laughs). It was kind of unusual. I did that for about four weeks. Oh, it was awful. Just awful. I hated doing that because I felt like the kids were getting cheated having me out of class for fifteen minutes. But the janitor was great and we worked out a program, something special that he could teach while I had stepped out for a minute. It's so crazy because today they have so many aides and the teachers aren't even there. But I never missed a day of teaching. Luckily I had good health.

**PS:** How long did you teach?

**SE:** I taught until the summer of 1956. Karl was given another job opportunity in San Francisco. That brought a lot of tears. I really questioned whether we were sane. To think that I had to go to San Francisco to live. I just loved Arizona. I never wanted to live anywhere else in the whole world. Since then I've been everywhere in the whole world, but I still don't want to live anywhere else.

So we moved. It was a nightmare, living in San Francisco. We were only there a total of seven or eight months. If I'd known that, I probably could have enjoyed it. But all I did was eat. I just went from store to store and ate and ate. I was so lonely. I didn't know anybody. We had an apartment there on 14th Avenue. It was just terrible and there were foghorns all night and all day. There I was in that little place and you could only clean so much. I became a better cook there though. I did a lot of cooking. We entertained a lot of customers there that we took out. So I could eat some more. (laughs) I didn't even tell you how much weight I gained before Scotty was born. It was embarrassing. I'd go to those all-you-can-eat places for \$1.75. Oh! (laughs)

**PS:** At least you had a good excuse, you were eating for two.

**SE:** They had a lot of French pastry shops up there which was bad, too. I don't remember any French pastry shops in Phoenix. A lot of neat delis, but I don't remember any pastry shops. I learned to know them well up there.



**PS:** What was Karl's new job in San Francisco?

**SE:** He was in sales. I think he was an area sales manager and he also did national sales for Foster and Kleiser, so he was gone a lot. He worked a twelve-hour day when he was *not* working hard. So my days were long. Then Scotty was born in November. Mike Fletcher, who had been my friend in San Diego and had married another friend of mine, had been with Sears in Phoenix and was transferred to Santa Rosa which is close to San Francisco, so we saw a lot of them. We spent Thanksgiving with them when Scotty was maybe ten days, two weeks old. Then for Christmas.

Karl got transferred again in January. We went down to Los Angeles and lived in some little funny apartment. The first place we lived in was the Ambassador Hotel. We lived there for a month. (laughs) That was awful. Even if I wanted to fix the formula for Scotty, I had to order room service to get ice to cool it down after I had made the formula. It was hard getting in and out with a baby to drive using a car parker to go anywhere. But otherwise I would be sitting in our hotel room with a new baby all day. They did have TV (laughs) by then.

From there Karl was transferred to Chicago and was made national sales representative in the Chicago area. He didn't even have any salesmen working for him, just a secretary. He did it all himself out of Chicago. Then he worked in Detroit for a while too, for about a year back and forth over there.

**PS:** What did you do when you had the new baby when you moved to Chicago?

**SE:** I was very involved in Chicago. We were there, let's see 1957, for about four and a half years and I was very involved in the community. I had a sister who didn't live too far from us. We were in Evanston. Our daughter, Elissa, was born there. My sister's boys would baby-sit for our two children when we went out. We had a big social life in Chicago. Probably most of it was business but then the people we entertained became friends. I was very involved. There was a junior woman's club in Evanston, which was just tremendous fun. Everybody was my age and from colleges all over the country and I was always very active in that. I was president of the club and I was also very active in homeroom for Scottie. He went to kindergarten at a little church that wasn't too far from home but he didn't like it very much. We lived on a third floor. That was another thing that was not too wonderful, a third floor apartment. No dryer. I had to carry those buckets of diapers for Elissa up and down between the third floor and the basement. The grocery store was across the alley and we still had one just the one car. (laughs) Better bus service than in Phoenix though.

**PS:** Did you think when you moved to Chicago that might be where you would stay?

**SE:** Yes, I really did. I thought we'd probably always be there and Karl had many accounts and was doing very well. His job and the people were exciting. I figured he'd probably be head of an agency there. One time when he went with an agency, they wanted us to move to New York but we decided to come back to



Phoenix to start our own business. Karl really loved doing that, the billboards and calling on all those people. He got to know people from all facets of advertising, even though he was just in the outdoor sector because he was calling on all types of accounts.

**PS:** How did you make the decision to come back to Arizona?

**SE:** Karl went with an advertising agency for two years. Foster and Kleiser named a new president, but he was difficult to work with. He had never been in the outdoor advertising business before. He'd been with a big company at Silver Refrigerators and it was very different from outdoor. Karl decided this was pretty frustrating and not too rewarding, so in the meantime, he'd been offered jobs by all the advertising agencies because he called on them every day. You know, Leo Burnett, also Needham, Lewis and Brodery, all these companies.

He ended up going with an advertising agency and had several accounts like Renault Dauphin, Mars Candy, Morton Salt. He started traveling throughout the country and did in-house brochures for Mars Candy, all that kind of thing. For Renault-Dauphin he went skiing in Sun Valley with some ski stars. In fact I flew on the first jet out of Chicago to meet him in Las Vegas, because he'd been doing filming for Renault with Olympic ski stars. We hadn't seen each other in weeks. So I flew on the maiden jet flight out of Chicago to Las Vegas and Karl was flying in from Sun Valley.

But when we got off the ground, none of the flight attendants knew how to work anything. The stewardesses totally charred the dinner. It was the color of that camera. Black. And they paraded up and down the aisle with all this charred food. To make up for it, they poured drinks for everybody because there was nothing to eat and the passengers were bombed (laughs), absolutely bombed when we landed. There were thousands of people at the airport watching us take off and again when we landed in Las Vegas. Thousands of people wanted to see the first jet come in. It was really fun. Then we did a bunch of the casinos and went to dinner and played the casinos some more. I'd never been to Vegas before. This was fun and these people were staying at all different hotels. We were like a fraternity. We'd walk in and we'd say, "Jan, how are you doing? How's your room?" I mean, we knew every single person on that plane by the time we got off and saw them everywhere we went in Vegas that weekend. It was a crazy event considering jets are so ho-hum today.

**PS:** Karl had been out filming with Renault. Did he ski?

**SE:** Oh, heavens no. (laughs) He still doesn't ski. His hips are bad from the years he played football. We tried skiing several times, but he gets on a pair of skis and he goes straight to the bottom of the hill because he can't turn. He's afraid he's gonna get killed. (laughs) He doesn't do it anymore.

**PS:** You were talking about how you made the decision to come back to Phoenix.

**SE:** Well, yes. Karl was working for Needham and loving his job. Do you know John Kluge of



Metromedia, one of the richest men in the world? He called. Crazy, on a Sunday. Didn't Karl tell you this story? This is really interesting. He called and said, "Would you kids be interested in moving back to Arizona?" Well, I went into orbit. Here's all my family in Illinois; I'd have to move away from them again. I couldn't. But this was the year Elissa was born, 1960. I never saw the street or the sidewalk. There was snow from my doorway to the doorway across the street, with cold, dreary days, and wind from Thanksgiving until she was born at Easter time. That weather convinced me to make the move.

But then John Kluge called with a small problem. Didn't Karl tell you any of this? Kluge said Karl had to go out and raise all these millions of dollars. Karl quit his job. (laughs) Oh-oh, you know that was scary.

**PS:** You tell me your version of it. I had the feeling he abbreviated it; he wasn't giving us a lot of details.

**SE:** In the first place, Kluge gave Karl only thirty days to raise these millions of dollars because it was just the Tucson area. Then after about three weeks, he still hadn't raised the money. Kluge called back and asked Karl if we would take the San Joaquin Valley too, and increased the price to five million. Can you imagine in the early 1960s, going out and raising \$5 million to start a business in Tucson? Especially with billboards? I mean, it wasn't even refrigerators. (laughs) It was a nightmare. The bottom line was, Karl did it.

But then he quit. What he did was go call on all those people that he had called on before to sell ads to at the different agencies and accounts. A lot of them became our investors. When he got the money, we packed everything up and moved back to Tucson.

**PS:** You moved to Tucson?

**SE:** I mean, sorry, back to Phoenix; right. Well, I love Tucson, I'd live there in a minute, yes.

**PS:** You started to tell me how excited you were.

**SE:** When Mr. Kluge called?

**PS:** Yes.

**SE:** Well, it just seemed unreal to go out and raise millions of dollars. Karl was probably making at that point \$50,000 a year which was more than anybody we knew was making. But that's a long way from five million. We had always lived very frugally and in the ten years we'd been married, with as little as we were making, we had managed to save over a hundred thousand dollars. I made our own clothes, all the kids' clothes, even jump suits and stuff for the kids when they were babies. We lived very frugally. We had managed to accumulate this money and Karl did a lot of investing at that time in the stock market with a stock broker. That was a lot of money when you have to eat and live. (laughs) A real plus for Karl was that when he went to call on people, I think people trusted him.





So when we got this opportunity, I was just thrilled to death, but I stayed in Chicago while he went out and tried to raise the money. He was able to accumulate that amount in commitments from people and from a lot of friends we had met in the Chicago area. John Lewis and Tom Reynolds were just wonderful to help out. Then Karl went to Phoenix to start the business and I stayed in Chicago through the rest of the school year. I didn't move to Phoenix until the first of June to be with him. We've pretty much been here ever since.

**PS:** Where did you live when you first moved back here? Did you have two babies?

**SE:** Yes, two babies. Well, not babies; they were five and two. They seem like babies today, but we were looking for a school district, of course. We moved to the North Central area. I think it was on Second Street just south of Northern. Pretty far out; it was a long way out then. We were there for quite a few years until we came here to East Georgia. We didn't move in here until 1967. We've been here a long time. Back then, 24th Street didn't even go through. (laughs)

Let alone there was no Lincoln Avenue, and the Biltmore was a hotel with a stable. You know when we moved in here on East Georgia, we had rights. I had a car sticker, I could park anywhere at the Biltmore, use their tennis courts, their stable, go there for dinner. It was like a country club because we lived here and this was Wrigley property. It was kind of interesting. Seems so funny now.

**PS:** I didn't realize this was Wrigley property. So, Karl moved back and started the business. Was that Eller Outdoor Advertising?

**SE:** Yes.

**PS:** Was that its name?

**SE:** Eller Outdoor Advertising of Arizona and of California. They were the two different companies that John Kluge sold us.

**PS:** What were those first years like when Karl was getting the business going?

**SE:** Again, starving to death and living on nothing. Making the clothes. (laughs) Doing all the cooking. It was tough because he didn't take much salary. He never really has. It's just that Karl doesn't have a lot of use for money, (laughs) so we lived very frugally. We got a second car. (laughs) I finally got my own. Like today; Karl is not working any less. He's working long hours, long days. Building the company. He built lots of companies, as you probably know. Four of them and they're all still in existence.

**PS:** Do you want to talk about your work? You supported him emotionally through all of this.



**SE:** Yes. Karl did a lot of traveling because he had to do mostly all his own selling. People working for us did local sales, but he was in New York and Chicago and when he went, he was gone for two and three weeks, from place to place trying to have accounts buy their advertising from us here in Arizona or in California. So he'd be gone a long time. The kids were mostly my life, I guess you'd say. And then I got very involved in the community. Lots of community activities. Met tons of people and had different groups that I was a part of.

**PS:** Why don't you tell us about some of those first things that you did that you got involved in?

**SE:** One of the craziest things we did was start an auxiliary for that place where they took in children.

**PS:** Gompers?

**SE:** Gompers! Yes, Gompers Habilitation Center. We started an auxiliary to help people keep their appointments in and out of there. I also became part of the Zoo Auxiliary, out at the zoo. I was very involved in school. I was always a homeroom mother. Worked with Cub Scouts. Golly, I can't even think what all. I should go look at my scrap book and I'll tell you.

**PS:** Was it in 1968 when Karl got involved with radio as Karl's business grew?

**SE:** Yes and television. He'd started *Phoenix Magazine* before that, maybe in 1965. It seemed we were buying outdoor companies all over the world at that time. He had purchased companies in Kansas City, St. Louis, Detroit. All these companies back there. That's what we did in the summer. (laughs) That was the kids' vacation. We would go to those cities and meet with mayors, governors, accounts people, then take them to dinner. We'd spend a week in each of these cities with the kids. I'd sight-see all day with the children, while Karl met with the customers. Then we'd take customers to dinner at night, to get to know them since we lived in Arizona.

**PS:** How involved were you in helping with the business?

**SE:** Well, I suppose not at all and yet a lot. I knew (laughs) everyone. That is, I knew people that worked for us and I had a lot of parties, cocktail parties, dinner parties. I traveled with him when he traveled to call on people to entertain them.

**PS:** Did you ever consider going back to teaching?

**SE:** Not at that point. I had finished my credits to get my masters in teaching but I had started to lose credits. After ten years, you begin losing credits. The thought of going back and taking those classes over again or going another direction was defeating. That's terrible, because I did think about it, yes. But I didn't know if I could do it anymore. With all the work I was doing with Karl and with the kids and with my own life and my friends. I didn't have a lot of time. And I didn't want to go. Back in the early years, you had to



live at the school. I would need to be in Tucson and that wasn't real convenient. I took a bunch of correspondence courses but I had reached my limit on the number that I'm allowed to do and I didn't want to go to Tucson alone.

**PS:** What about ASU? Did you ever consider going there?

**SE:** No. The thought never even occurred to me. (laughing)

**PS:** Were you ever a paid employee?

**SE:** No, no. I felt like an employee but I wasn't getting a paycheck.

**PS:** How did Karl make the decision to get involved with radio and television?

**SE:** It was so exciting and he was doing a lot of work with Channel 12 at the time. The Lewis family owned Channel 12 and they were interested about possibly being acquired or having a joint ownership. When the deal was made with us, they would own both companies. They would still own KTAR and because it was Combined Communications, they would be major stockholders, so they would still have a direct family relationship with these two companies. I'm sure it was a positive thing for them. Del and Jewell Lewis were such nice people and I think they enjoyed being a part of it, being on the board.

**PS:** What did you think about Karl becoming an owner of a television station?

**SE:** I didn't mind. I mean, it was okay. I rather enjoyed KTAR radio in those days. It was a lot fun being a part of that. It wasn't as much fun when he bought all the other television stations and radio stations cause we didn't know the people. They were so far away. We had no real input personally. I didn't really know them or the business, other than to know the employees that worked for us. I did know them, but not really the day-to-day operations.

**PS:** Did you spend much time down there?

**SE:** Yes, we all did. Our kids worked there, both of them, and they seemed to enjoy it a lot too.

**PS:** Television is still an exciting place to be.

**SE:** I think it is. It's changed from what it was then though. Thirty years ago, it was a big part of the community.

**PS:** Tell me what it was like being the controlling owner of a television station.

**SE:** I guess I just thought of it as work, like being in the newspaper business in a little town. It was just



what Karl did. Karl loves to sell and television was one of his commitments, to do that. He loved it and I tried to be supportive and be with him. The kids did too. They liked it. But Karl in the meantime, had gotten so involved in sports. Did he tell you about that? With all the things that he was interested in and acquired and wanted to do, we had a lot going on. We went to a lot of games (Laughs). You throw in all the Roadrunner games and the Suns games and the UA games, and we went to all the ASU games. Fiesta Bowl came along around then too and we were all working on that. We were involved in a lot of sports in the community.

**PS:** Being the owner of a television station seemed like back then it was more of a community involvement. The owners lived in the city.

**SE:** Yes. We all tried to be a part of the things that needed to be done in the community. You want to support everything because you want the community to do well and to make it a better place to live. So you did anything that was positive. It seems to have changed today, but you tried to make it a wonderful place for people to move to, to become a part of.

**PS:** Groups wanted your support.

**SE:** Yes, I was on the art museum board and a lot of other things like that, too. We tried to support activities like the symphony, but Karl's not a very good symphony goer. I kind (laughing) of gave up on him.

**PS:** He was more into sports.

**SE:** Yes, and did you know, he chaired the opening of the Diamondback Baseball Club's Bank One Ballpark [renamed Chase Field in 2005] for Jerry Colangelo and raised over a million dollars? So, I feel like we've contributed and supported it.

I was on Friends of Channel 8 at ASU because we were giving our television cameras and expertise and so forth. We would send our equipment out to ASU, so it was fun to go over there and work with Bob Ellis. He was just a darling guy and I think he appreciated so much all that Karl was doing to make a success of Channel 8 television station. So that was fun. I did that with Karl.

**PS:** Why don't you tell me again about how you got involved with Channel 8. Were you on their community advisory board?

**SE:** Yes, I was. I enjoyed that and went to the board meetings and I enjoyed it because having been involved with Channel 12, I had a little information. Then if Channel 8 had a real problem, I'd talk to Karl about it and see if there weren't something we could contribute or solve for them.

**PS:** What kind of things were you able to do?



**SE:** We able to help with programming or we could send people over who could add to something they needed or give further information. We helped install new cameras and taught the people how to use them, mostly things like that. Then when they held the Channel 8 fund raisers, I worked those in the evenings.

**PS:** I read that you were even on television hosting the volunteer program.

**SE:** That's right, I did. There was the volunteer bureau, a new thing in Phoenix when we first came back. Isabel Tinker asked me to expose the community to the different volunteer organizations that were available in the community. We didn't really have a way to do that, so I called on each one of them. I think there were twelve or fourteen different major volunteer organizations, like the Salvation Army, Goodwill, Good Shepherd for Girls and even the institution down there on Van Buren, Arizona State Hospital. Each of these places had some volunteer group, so I worked with the heads of them and had them on the program for an hour to explain their needs in the community, things people could contribute to or do, or become personally involved in. I did that for a whole year and I really loved it. That was fun.

**PS:** Do you remember what year that was?

**SE:** Oh, golly, I'm just guessing that it would have been 1964 or 1965.

**PS:** You were really one of the pioneers on television.

**SE:** Well, maybe.

**PS:** There weren't many women on television at that time.

**SE:** I hadn't even thought about that. The thing was, the program or whatever the Salvation Army or any other volunteer group was doing, needed to be exposed to the community. People often didn't even know those groups existed.

**PS:** Did you ever think about doing more, about having a career in television?

**SE:** No, I never did. (laughs).

**PS:** Let's talk a bit more about how Karl's career changed and some of the effects that might have had on your life. After Combined Communications grew and got more and more stations, it merged with Gannett. Karl talked to us a little about that. What was that like?

**SE:** Well, (laughs) hmmm. I don't think I'm going to talk about that. It was a mess. You know a guy named Al Neuharth?



**PS:** I know who he is, yes.

**SE:** Do you know Carl Linder from Cincinnati?

**PS:** Yes.

**SE:** Okay. That's another story. I really wouldn't want to go public with it. It was pretty bad what they did to Karl. Sometimes, there are things you can't change and we were a victim in both cases.

**PS:** What did you think was going to happen?

**SE:** We had a stockholder, Carl Linder, who was interested in removing himself from Combined Communications. He was looking for somebody to make an acquisition with and Gannett owned small newspapers all over the country. I think Tucson was one of their biggest newspapers. They were very interested in acquiring Combined Communications. We talked to them and the understanding was there would be a CEO office of five people, of which Karl would be one, to manage and run it while Karl would run all of the outdoor, television and radio divisions of Gannett. Other people would be doing different things in that CEO office. Al Neuharth, of course, had the newspaper division and everybody had a different responsibility. But Karl hadn't even been there six months before he realized he wasn't real comfortable with the situation. So he decided again to find another direction with our life. (laughs)

**PS:** What did you think? As the wife you're not really in control of these situations.

**SE:** No, I never have been.

**PS:** When he decided to leave Gannett, what did you think would happen with your lives?

**SE:** I had no clue. I just figured we were going into another valley with another new experience. I must tell you, all the years that Karl took a new job, or new position, he never took more salary. He always found a job, wanted it. When we went with Needham in Chicago, the advertising agency, he was making less than he was at Foster & Kleiser. But it was something he wanted to do and that's the way it was. I figured he was going to find something to do that he'd never tried before but wanted to be a part of, something new to learn, which he did. (laughs) We didn't need very much to live on really. Everything was pretty much under control. We still don't (laughs). We really live pretty responsibly.

**PS:** Karl had always been successful in anything he tried.

**SE:** Right, yes. It was always hard when he first started a new job, getting it on its feet. It usually took anywhere from one to three years to turn it around or to be really comfortable with it. I didn't care. I really didn't.



**PS:** Did Karl have lots of opportunities after he left Gannett?

**SE:** Yes.

**PS:** He told us about Columbia Pictures.

**SE:** Oh, right. I'd forgotten about that. He went with them for three years. Boy, that was an experience. Those people are different.

**PS:** What was that like?

**SE:** Well, the main office of Columbia was in New York on Fifth Avenue, so they had given us an apartment at the Mayfair Regency on the 16th Floor off Park Avenue (laughs). I mean we weren't real comfortable with it. Neither of us were and of course, now we were making movies and they were in a big mess. They were trying to buy out Armen Kokorian at that time and get it turned around. There was so much more to the story. Herb Allen was the guy that owned the company who asked Karl to come in and turn it around.

When we went to parties and stuff, they were in Los Angeles, in Beverly Hills. There we were sitting with Sally Fields and Sidney Poitier and Freddie Fields, who's a producer or director or something. I didn't even know. The movie stars I knew, but not the rest of them. It was a different life than Karl and I ever led, let me tell you. But it was very colorful. If I had been told we were only going to be there for three years, I would have loved it. (laughing) But I thought this was going to be for the rest of my life. It was an experience. The trips to New York and the trips over to Los Angeles and living here. Karl loved it. He got to know a whole bunch of new people, different people. We're still friends with a lot of them; we became part of their lives as a result of those three years.

Then there was a guy named Ike Herbert who was with The Coca-Cola Company. We had owned Swenson's Ice Cream at the time. I suppose Karl told you about that. Ike and he were on this board and Ike was with Coke and so Karl started working with him doing all the numbers and he felt the synergism was perfect between them. Coke needed to expand into another field. What could have been more perfect than to go into the movie business? So Karl talked to Ike about it and Ike went to whoever was the head of Coke at the time. Then Karl had to go back and talk to Herb Allen at Columbia Pictures and Herb Allen thought it was a bad idea at first, but then he thought it was a great idea. Anyway, you know that all came to pass. So they put together the acquisition of Coca-Cola and Columbia Pictures.

**PS:** But you decided not to go to Atlanta.

**SE:** Yes, yes. They asked Karl to be on the board and to go there. Oh, no. (laughs)

**PS:** So, during all those years when Karl was working with Columbia Pictures and with Coca-Cola, did



you actually have an apartment in New York, or did you stay in your house here in Phoenix?

**SE:** We had an apartment in New York but we weren't in it very much, as little as possible. (laughing) If there were a meeting in New York, we went back. I think other people used it when we weren't there. I think it was Columbia's home away from home or something for people like us to use when they flew in.

**PS:** When you went to Los Angeles, where did you stay?

**SE:** Wherever. We just got a hotel room. We often came home. Karl (laughing) loves to come home, so if it were two o'clock in the morning, we got on the plane and came home.

**PS:** Did you have your own plane, or did you fly commercially?

**SE:** We've had our own plane since 1967. Off and on.

**PS:** Does Karl fly?

**SE:** Heavens no. It's like he skis, not at all.

**PS:** He didn't mention being a pilot.

**SE:** No, (laughs), no, no. He has no interest in it. He loves what he does.

**PS:** So, you have your own plane and a pilot, too.

**SE:** Yes, pilots. With Combined Communications we had two planes and six pilots because they had to trade off all the time when we flew so much, with Karl's flying and then the company flying. It was all business. When the kids and I went, we flew commercially unless it were a company affair. Then we used the company plane. That was impractical back in the 1960s and 1970s.

**PS:** It sounds like those three years were . . . You didn't quite know which way to . . .

**SE:** Right. (laughs)

**PS:** Did you stay here most of the time, raising your family and staying with the community?

**SE:** Yes, I was very involved with the community. I loved my community work. I really did. Most of it was challenging. It was fun to be a part of it all.

**PS:** Tell me about what happened after Karl decided not to go Atlanta, with Coca-Cola.





**SE:** Fred Harvey came to him. He was having a lot of problems and owned a company called Circle K Corporation. Circle Ks were very small and were in back alleys. They weren't on any major streets. They would be on an alleyway or a side street. Fred Harvey talked to Karl to see if he'd be interested in it. There were a couple of other things that he had. I can't even remember what they were now that might have been more interesting to me (laughs) than Circle K. But, Karl felt that Circle K held an awful lot of opportunity because they had no way to go but up at that point.

So, Karl decided to go with them. Of course, we really got into it, even serving in stores and he went out and looked at every location himself. In fact, I would say when Circle K first got into trouble, when it got so big, he couldn't get to all of them and you can't always trust someone else to pick good locations. This was a great expertise of Karl's because we'd been putting up billboards for thirty or forty years. I mean, you don't want to pick someplace that isn't a main artery. So it was pretty easy for him to be able to choose the right area. Sometimes it might look good, but getting in and out of the store might not be, with too much traffic or whatever. Karl seemed to understand all those things. He ended up being very good at picking the locations where they should build Circle Ks and he closed down a lot of them that they'd had before. Then we went worldwide. We had Swenson's Ice Cream in the Far East and all over and we were traveling for that, and then for Circle K. We were traveling all over building Circle Ks.

**PS:** Karl told me how it grew. I never did make the connection. He didn't mention the connection between choosing locations for billboards and choosing locations for Circle Ks.

**SE:** Well, sure. Seven-Eleven's were on corners and on major streets. They were like neighborhood stores. That's what they didn't have with Circle Ks when Karl went with them. There's a little Circle K even today on 12th Street and just south of Maryland. Do you know that one? It's on the west side of the road, in the middle of the block. That's the way all the Circle Ks were at the time, but Karl changed all that.

Next he went into the fuel business and he took a lot of grief for that. But Circle K wouldn't even be in existence today if he hadn't done the fuel business. In fact, Seventy-Six Union that owns them now is the one Karl talked to before there was so much trouble, about being a partner. Of course, Seventy-Six did come by a couple of years later. I guess they had been thinking about it (laughs) and did make the partnership.

**PS:** I read about Circle K Travel.

**SE:** Yes, Karl had me start a travel agency in 1984 or 1985. He was trying to cut all the expenses for Circle K travel and it was very difficult. We had people traveling all the time the world over and it was just open season. The expenses were out of sight. So I started a travel agency and had a lot of good people working for me. We were able to cut travel costs even though travel increased over fifty percent, by doing in-house so to speak, but we took other customers too. I had probably thirty-five or forty accounts besides Circle K, but Circle K was our main concentration to try to cut business travel for the companies. As you know travel can be very expensive. That turned out to work really well for him. They kept my travel agency for



another three or four years after Karl left Circle K. It was very successful.

**PS:** Were you working full time?

**SE:** Well, pretty much. I was still doing did all the community work, but I was at Circle K Travel every day. (laughs)

**PS:** How did you learn about the travel industry?

**SE:** Karl sent me to travel school, (laughs) Mundus Travel School. Actually it was a lot of fun. I loved it. Of course I learned to use a computer, so it was very worthwhile. I really quite enjoyed it. I loved it. It was fun finding the good buys for travel for friends. Everything else was pretty routine, somebody going from Phoenix to New York or Chicago on business. There are only so many flights and only so many airlines, not like today. So that was it; it was just a question of getting a good fair deal. When you call up yourself, you don't always get the best fair price, but we had access to all of that, so we were able to get a bottom fare for anyone going on a trip. But it's changed so much today. Almost nobody that was in the business with me, or at the time I was is still there, because it's pretty tough to make money in that business. I really enjoyed it a lot.

**PS:** So you really had your own business at that point.

**SE:** Yes, I did.

**PS:** You're so modest about it. It sounds like you were very successful.

**SE:** Well, yes, but I had a lot of help. (laughs) I can't take responsibility; I can't take the credit.

**PS:** How much staff did you have?

**SE:** We had four agents who handled accounts. But we had an operation in Chicago that handled the off-hours times, when the regular offices were closed. That worked wonderfully. They were great. There was an 800 number that you called for service.

**PS:** Was that the main time that you worked in Karl's business as a full time employee?

**SE:** Yes, but I didn't get paid then either. (laughs)

**PS:** I assumed you would have gotten paid. (laughing)

**SE:** No. No, I didn't. I didn't take a cent. (laughs) No, I've never been paid. I think I've been paid a lot. (laughs)



**PS:** Tell me what happened as Circle K grew and there were problems.

**SE:** Well, it was a nightmare. Circle K was doing great. I don't quite understand how it worked, but in 1986 Congress passed a law about empty land on the books, making it a liability instead of an asset. You were supposed to develop property; it was a tax law. It was made retroactive from September back to the previous January. So it was tough for large businesses that had a lot of real estate to turn the ship around and try to sell stuff you weren't going to use for maybe five or ten years. Karl is a visionary and he was always thinking about where we would be in five years, or ten years. He had bought properties everywhere, holding it until an area grew to the density that was needed to put in a store. You would just hold a property.

Well it became a problem. So he ended up trying to sell some of it. Of course you know what the Resolution Trust Corporation (RTC) did to a lot of people. It came in and made it pretty tough. It was tough to eliminate properties that you no longer wanted as a result of not knowing what was ahead. It was very difficult with the financing and so forth for Circle K. So Karl had about two or three years where he tried to cut back and it wasn't quite enough, with all the expansion that he'd done. But the thing is that he thought he had the whole problem solved. It was all set.

The RTC had its money and everything was set to go. A gal at City Bank, I probably shouldn't be telling this so don't quote it, who was our head banker for all the banks that dealt with Circle K, was tough. Karl thought she was impossible. I won't even tell you the things he called her. Anyway she ended up pulling the plug on us at the very last minute. Just before everything was all set to go. She committed suicide thirty days later. There were a lot of other things I could tell you that I won't tell you. Do you know what I mean, about Neuharth and about Linder? I'd love to, and some day we may tell these things. They altered the course of our life because we couldn't change what we were being dealt. Does that make sense?

**PS:** Yes, you're not in control of everything.

**SE:** It's a terrible disappointment when it happens. That's the way life is.

**PS:** You talked a bit about the bankruptcy problems with Circle K. What was that like for you and Karl personally?

**SE:** It was terrible. We just had no clue what was ahead. I didn't know if we'd be living under a tree. I mean do they come and take your house? The crazy part of the whole thing was that we were making payments; we had loans on the things we owned and we never missed a payment. But our portfolio had dropped down because of those things in the Circle K stock. So we were under the net worth that you need to have while still making the payments. They came in and foreclosed on us. It's tough, when you're still making the payments. But you have no recourse. I don't know if you ever had any trouble dealing with the RTC, but if you didn't, you're lucky. They don't talk to you. Everybody who had ever been fired from some bank job



was now running the RTC. (whispering: Don't say I said that.) These are people we used to know who were the top people in different jobs that we were now dealing with. That's life.

**PS:** Karl was saying that although Circle K declared bankruptcy. . .

**SE:** We did not. We never declared bankruptcy. Our accountant and our lawyer came in that front door and sat down here and said, "You guys don't have a choice. You cannot survive, there's no way you can survive. It's over." Karl said, "Well, that's too bad because whatever it takes, I'm going to pay the money back. I'm going to work it out one way or another." We spent five miserable years. Karl would buy something and he'd turn it around and sell it the next day, or two weeks later just to take fifty cents on the dollar to try to get ten more cents to pay off Valley Bank and all the other lenders that we had, like Louie Johnson. (laughs)

**PS:** What were you thinking during that time?

**SE:** I was just terrified. I was sixty and I didn't know how I was going to get a job. Who's going to hire a . . . (laughs) you know, all my credentials had been eliminated. I couldn't go back and teach school. Who was going to hire somebody and give you health care and so forth at sixty years old? It was terrifying. Not that I didn't trust him. I did. I just didn't know how we were . . . I just hoped Karl didn't die too soon. (laughs) I knew he was going to spend the rest of his life, whatever it took, to settle that debt.

**PS:** You talked a lot about what Karl learned during that period. What did you learn?

**SE:** I suppose he told you, you learn who your friends are. (laughing) They are back beating on the door now. (laughs) Forget it! It was hard because there were a lot of people I thought I really cared a lot about, too. It was a disappointment. Karl and I did everything together then. We worked very close together trying to figure ways out of the mess and what we could do, ways to go, what and how I could contribute, whatever they were. The first three years were the worst. But we just worked away at it. It's hard to believe even yet that we did it. Did he tell you how much the debt was? It was like a Third World country debt. He was determined to pay it off because he felt it was a real black mark to take personal bankruptcy. That has nothing to do with anybody else taking personal bankruptcy, but Karl thought of it as a real black mark. It didn't matter who else took it but for him, he couldn't live with it. If he'd taken bankruptcy, things would have been a lot better a lot sooner, but he couldn't have lived with it. So it wouldn't have been okay. This is what we needed to do. We were just very lucky and very blessed that we were able to come back again. I don't know what tomorrow holds. I've been down this road four times.

**PS:** You hear some wives say they had no idea anything was wrong. It sounds like you've always been very involved or that Karl has been very open with you.

**SE:** Yes, he has been. We would talk over anything. I had some things that I had paid a lot of money for, so we'd return them for what we could get. We often got less than half of what I'd paid, but we just tried



everything we could think of. We tried to put every asset down, divvy up, figure out where we could go, and find business opportunities that we could go into that hopefully would turn around within a year, so we could pay off some more of the debt. It was a long road.

**PS:** Some marriages wouldn't survive that.

**SE:** No. I'm sure they wouldn't have. But we'd been poor so many times. (laughs) That isn't the worst thing that can happen to you. Health is and it's disappointing to lose friends. That was hard. That was really hard. But we've had a lot of challenges with health too, in our family. We've survived that so far too.

**PS:** After all of this turning things around, did Karl actually start a new company?

**SE:** Again, yes.

**PS:** I think I saw you were vice president of something.

**SE:** Red River was our company that we formed after the mess with Circle K to move properties in and out. Of course, I was still working at the travel agency for Circle K. But we were trying to figure out ways and we did it through the Red River organization that we had. It was bankrupt, but not literally. Figuratively. So that's what we did was work together in there.

**PS:** Then Eller Media Company.

**SE:** Yes. Karl started that in 1993 or 1994. That's something he knows well. So do I. (Laughs)

**PS:** Are you involved in working with that?

**SE:** No, not really. I manage some assets and investments that we have and I do some donor work with our money where we feel that we can make a contribution. That's a fun thing to do and not be wrong too many times, which we all are, as you know.

**PS:** Karl talked a lot about his general philosophy of business. Do you have a philosophy of your own, or do you share his?

**SE:** I pretty much share his. When we talk things over and if we don't agree with each other, he hears about it. (laughs) We talk it over and I tell him the reasons why I feel like I do. I think that alters the course for both of us. He does that with me as well.

**PS:** Does he sometimes tell you that you are involved with the wrong cause?

**SE:** Yes, I've had that happen just recently. They asked me to go on the John F. Kennedy for the



Performing Arts board in Washington DC. “Why?” he asked me. “You don't want to do that.” I said, “Well, you know what, I'm going to think about it a minute before I decide.” Then when I told him I was going to do it, he said, “Well, why are you doing that? Why would you want to do that? That's not even here.” I said, “You know what? I've never done anything like that. I've never done anything in the arts really. Not with a commitment.” Of course I've been involved with the arts here. I was on the Herberger Theater Founding Board of Trustees. I mean, it isn't that I haven't done anything for the arts at all, but not like I have in sports. I said, “I'll tell you what. I'm going to do it for a year and you see if I like it. Is that okay?” Well no, it really wasn't okay. Anyway, I did it.

Karl's been to two meetings with me, but not happily. Do you know what he said to me? (laughs) There was another meeting was in Washington a couple of weeks ago. I said to him, “I want you to go with me. It's a lot of fun stuff.” There was the symphony the first night featuring the Labèque Sisters [Katia and Marielle Labèque, classical pianists] playing the piano and we were invited to marvelous homes. The French Ambassador asked us not to the Embassy, but to his own home for a white tie dinner with only sixty invited guests. When do you get to do that in your lifetime? Right, it's fun. The State Department dinner was just marvelous and a lot of people we knew were there. We sat with the maestro from the symphony. I said to Karl, “I'd like you to come to the symphony,” and he said, “No, I have no interest in that; that's your thing.” I said “You know what, Karl? I'm going to have to get more involved in your life so you will feel a little bit of commitment for the one or two things that I do that are mine.” He said, “That's your deal and not mine.” Oh! (laughs) Anyway I went. But I told Karl, “I'll shorten it to just two days. I'll go Friday noon and come back Sunday noon.” He said, “If you're only going for two days, why go?” (laughs) Just to give you an insight into Karl. I mean, puhleeze! I went and I had a good time. I expected to be miserable, but I had a wonderful time. Tons of people I knew.

**PS:** Did Karl go with you?

**SE:** No.

**PS:** You went on your own?

**SE:** Yes.

**PS:** Great. I would like to ask you about your community service.

**SE:** We could be here for a week.

**PS:** I know, (laughs) but we'll try not to be.

**SE:** Ten minutes.

**PS:** Why don't you tell me about yourself as a young girl growing up in the family back in the Midwest.



Did you get involved with community organizations?

**SE:** Yes, pretty much so because we owned the newspaper, *The Paxton Record*. Everybody was very involved in the community and expected to be part of whatever was needed to be done in the town. The hospital. The Scouts, whatever. But I had asthma, so I wasn't too mobile a lot of the time. Not like now.

**PS:** So you grew up with —

**SE:** —commitment to the community; oh, absolutely. Yes, we all did.

**PS:** When did you first start to get active as an adult in community service?

**SE:** I think I first became active when Karl and I had our own business. I felt I wanted to meet more people in Phoenix and in the state of Arizona because, even though I'd been here for years and gone to college here, those were my buddies. I felt I needed to know more about the structure of the community, culturally, and become more involved. I'd never worked in an art museum before. I had never worked with the symphony. I'd never done a lot of those things, particularly culturally. Most of my work had been done with sports and education. Those were my two loves. So it was really a move toward expansion of things you need to know. I've always loved to be involved in charity. I think the people are what make it work, to make it go. When you see somebody who is busy on a board giving tremendous time and commitment, you just like to do what you can to make it go.

**PS:** Yes.

**SE:** I've always loved to entertain anyway and I love theme parties and this was a natural to go from one to the other.

**PS:** Did you get involved in college? I know you were in a sorority there. Did they do community service things?

**SE:** No, I don't remember doing anything other than on campus. But there was a lot of involvement on campus. I worked for the school newspaper, *Wildcat*, and I was an officer in the sorority and did things like that. Studied. Partied. (Laughs) I think I was mostly active when we were in other communities living for a very short time. It was the only way to get to know people. We were in San Francisco for about three or four months. We were in Los Angeles for two months. We were in Chicago for a couple of years and I didn't know a soul in any of those cities. It's very lonely. Neighbors don't come knocking on your door in those areas. So it was a great way to meet people our own age. People who had children. Find out who's the best baby doctor. I mean there are sort of two sides to that. You get to know people, get to work with them and be involved in their particular thing. I was very active in the Evanston Woman's Club in Chicago and loved my board and we did so many fun things together socially and then in the community. We had quite a few charities that all of us worked in and this taught me that it's a good way to meet people, too,



when it's not home and you haven't gone to school there.

**PS:** So when you moved to Phoenix, what was the first group you got involved in? How did you decide to get involved?

**SE:** When we arrived here in Phoenix, our children were pretty little. They were two and five and so there was home room mother and Cub Scouts and some of those things. But that was when I decided I'd try to do some museum work and became active in the Phoenix Art Museum. Also I wanted to know more about what agencies were available here that needed people who had a lot of energy and who wanted to get involved in the area. So I went to the Volunteer Bureau and that's when I started teaching make-up, grooming, clothes, and so forth. I worked at the Good Shepherd School for Girls for those who needed a safe place, and at the Arizona State Hospital on Van Buren. I was pretty scared going in there, I must admit. But it was a lot of fun because the girls I worked with believed everything I would tell them. (Laughs)

**PS:** What was it like the first time you went there?

**SE:** It was pretty terrifying going because it was a very secure place with lots of steel doors to go through and you were escorted by police guards. You went into each girl's room and then into a whole classroom. It was like back being a teacher. I took lots of supplies with me, make-up and clothes, colors and designs and magazines and passed them around to all the girls. It was also the same way with the older people who were at the State Hospital. It was fun putting on their make-up and talking to them and hearing about their lives. That was probably the first thing that I did by myself. I wasn't part of a committee.

I had a television show for about a year on Channel 8 KAET, where each of the non-profit agencies would come in and do a segment on their particular charity. It was once a week for an hour. For instance, Goodwill would come and tell what their services were and who was involved, what they needed. Salvation Army and the Scouts. That was fun to do and I was the hostess.

**PS:** When was that?

**SE:** I think it was in 1963, a long time ago.

**PS:** That was shortly after Channel 8 went on the air, early in 1961.

**SE:** Okay, it wasn't long after that. It was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed doing the shows. We were on the air at Channel 8 for half an hour. The guests did most of the talking; I just asked questions. I did your job. (Laughs) I asked what they needed, what their program was and what their commitment to the community was; also if they needed volunteers and what the volunteers do, what age groups they would like to have, and if they needed both men or women, that kind of thing.





**PS:** How did you get the job doing that?

**SE:** Through the Volunteer Bureau again. They called me and asked me to do it.

**PS:** Had you ever done anything like that before on television?

**SE:** No, I really hadn't. I had done some modeling in Chicago and I was on College Board, that kind of thing, but not really. Mostly newspaper work.

**PS:** How did you know what to do?

**SE:** I think it was like being a teacher in a classroom. It's not very hard. Well, it is; your job's hard. (laughs) I just felt like I were teaching. It was that same kind of thing. I had done a lot of homework on each of these groups. Before I interviewed them and before going on the air, I had done a lot of back up-work to find out more about them, when they started, how long they'd been in the community, things like that.

**PS:** You must have learned an awful lot about the community from doing these interviews.

**SE:** Well, sure. It's very expansive for anybody to have that opportunity.

**PS:** Did you ever think about doing more in television?

**SE:** No, I really didn't have the interest. I like people and I enjoy being with them on a personal level. It's more fun than being on television. (Laughs)

**PS:** Let's talk about some of the early things you did. You mentioned Good Shepherd and the Arizona State Hospital and Gompers.

**SE:** Yes, I started an auxiliary at Gompers.

**PS:** What is Gompers?

**SE:** Well, Gompers Rehabilitation Center was organized by the AFL-CIO originally. They had handicapped people there that were in need of help. We were trying to get people to find wheel chairs, to do the driving, to pick up people, bring them to the center and take them home afterwards. They didn't have any real auxiliary to do that, just paid staff. They needed a paid staff right at the center though, to work in Gompers. When we had our party to organize the auxiliary, we went out to peoples' neighborhoods, cut their flowers, stuck them in buckets and filled those rooms full of flowers. (laughing) I think the auxiliary is still in existence today.



**PS:** So you helped start the auxiliary?

**SE:** Yes, there were a lot of us who got together and did that.

**PS:** How did you get involved with that group?

**SE:** Oh, what's the name of the gal that had it there? She came and found us. I think Gompers is one of the groups that I had on TV. What was her name? Give me a minute and I'll think of it. She was a character. She was really a go-getter. She was one of the ones on KAET Channel 8 for the volunteer area for the community that was on television. Then I got the call and there I was. (Laughs) Monica? Monica.

**PS:** How about the Phoenix Motion Picture Board?

**SE:** Yes, I got on that in the early 1980s. Karl was president of Columbia Pictures Communications. So I was real involved with those people. We were running between New York and Los Angeles while he did that. Coca-Cola bought it first, before Sony. So I knew a lot of the people and was involved with them. We were contacting everybody around the country to make more movies in Phoenix. We felt it was a clean industry. They come in and they leave and we have a wonderful setting here. Natural light and a perfect place for doing the filming. They could have gone anywhere, but we were trying to promote Phoenix as a setting for making film for all the studios in the industry.

**PS:** Had the Motion Picture Board existed or did you help get that started too?

**SE:** No, they just invited me. I think it was pretty small, but it did become quite large. I don't know what's happened to it since, though.

**PS:** What about the Visiting Nurse Service?

**SE:** Oh, I love Visiting Nurse. I actually started being involved in that when we first moved to Phoenix. I was only a year out of college and teaching school and I drove the Visiting Nurses all over. I knew this whole city backwards, downtown. (Laughs) Today, inner city. Drove the nurses to people that needed them, that's what we did. That was our job in this group. You'd work a day and drive nurses all day long. Mrs. Hurley, who was a really close friend of mine, had started this group. I told her I would certainly be glad to help out. From that we started having a book sale to raise money for other people to drive the nurses and it became very successful and it's still in existence today. It is still doing very well and very popular and beneficial. Always in February. Have you ever been to it? (Laughs) You know what I'm talking about. It's really fun and it provides two services. They raise a tremendous amount of money to do charity work in the community and it's also a wonderful opportunity to buy enough reading material to last you an entire year for \$10 or \$20. It's not bad.

**PS:** Tell me how did that got started.



**SE:** Through Peggy, Mrs. Hurley. She's the one that got us started doing the book sale and everybody just loves it. We set up places where you drop off books and we talked to Eddie Basha and he placed book receivers everywhere. Then some of the gals would go around and pick them up.

**PS:** Tell me about the first year of the book sale.

**SE:** Oh, (laughing) it was pretty tough. The first year was hard because we just never had enough people to do it all. We had to go pick up the books, figure out what shape they were in, and price them. That was one of the hardest things, putting a price on everything. We weren't smart enough to figure out ten cents for a paperback would do it. You know, if a paperback's \$8.00, we thought we should have twenty cents (laughs). So that was the hardest part. Then books are heavy. Another big job was moving the books from one location to another; getting them over there to the Fairgrounds. It was horrible; there was just one problem after another. We got some of the labor unions to help us move all of the books over there. They were great. One time when we were working, we had one of those monsoons and the place flooded and the books were floating. We lost a fortune in books. Ten cents apiece (laughs). But it was fun. I was in it a long time. I'm still a patron because I was in it for so long. It started almost fifty years ago.

**PS:** When did the Visiting Nurse book sale begin?

**SE:** I think it was the late 1950s, but I'm not real sure of my dates.

**PS:** Were you there the first year they did the book sale?

**SE:** Oh, yes (laughs).

**PS:** How big was it the first year?

**SE:** I can't remember, but I think we made \$10,000 which would have been a fortune back then.

**PS:** Did you always have it at the Coliseum?

**SE:** Yes, for the most part we've always had it there.

**PS:** I always wondered where you keep those books while you're collecting them.

**SE:** Well, that was a problem for a long time. But now we have a building that's ours, thanks to one of our cute members. So we have a place to store them and we have quite a system now. We have people come and pick up books we're not going to use and donate them to places where they can be used in the community. So, it's almost like a business.



**PS:** I know it's huge. I remember it in the 1970s when I first moved here when I was doing public affairs interviews at Channel 10. There were good stories on the set-up of the book sale.

**SE:** In those days I was very active.

**PS:** You were probably down there. I may have interviewed you.

**SE:** (laughs) Yes, you may have; you look familiar.

**PS:** (laughs) Let's see. Arizona Heart Association.

**SE:** Yes, in those days I was Heart Sunday Chairman.

**PS:** What's that?

**SE:** We went around and did campaigning. We knocked on doors. People did that in those days (laughing) hundreds of years ago. You knocked on doors and asked for contributions for the Heart Association and I chaired that in Phoenix. We did very well and made a good amount of money. It was fun, too. We had a bunch of celebrities involved. I remember Dick Van Dyke was there but it's so long ago I can't remember all the names, although a lot of people came in and helped us with it.

**PS:** Why was it called Heart Sunday?

**SE:** Because it was a Sunday and it was for the Heart Association so it worked out really well.

**PS:** Did you do it all in one day?

**SE:** Yes, oh, yes. We had volunteers all over the city who went around knocking on doors. Wouldn't you hate to do that today? (Laughing)

**PS:** How did you get involved with the Heart Association? Is there any special reason why you chose them?

**SE:** No, but we do now. Now we know in life you have lots of bad things that happen health wise. We have a grandchild with a health problem so we very active in Heart today.

**PS:** Not at that time?

**SE:** No, not at that time. I was just worried about it. I was young and I knew people died of heart disease in those days, and I just thought anything we can do to make it better before I get there, is gonna be all good. (laughs)



**PS:** Arizona Cancer Society.

**SE:** Oh, yes, that's another one. Just about all my friends are involved in that. I chaired the Cancer Ball one year and we each took our turn, everybody that was on the committee. You had a year and it was yours to do, to raise as much money as you could. We went out and called on different people in the community to get support financially and then put on a nice party. It was fun. (laughs)

**PS:** Tell me about what all the party entailed.

**SE:** It was just another ball, you know with the food, the lighting, the music, the place, the invitations, the usual routine, all the stuff you do to make a nice party, so people come and have a good time. The other thing that I did was I got everything underwritten. Everybody does that today and maybe they did it back then, but I went to all of our friends and they underwrote the various parts of the evening. I mean everything I'm involved in now does that, but it wasn't as common then.

**PS:** Arizona Town Hall.

**SE:** Oh, that was fun. I hadn't been to an Arizona Town Hall meeting before and I went to one of the women's Town Halls on education and thoroughly enjoyed it, having been a teacher. We discussed the future of the three universities, what we should do about funding them, how the tax money should be spent. I thought it was very stimulating. I also went to another on the media, which of course I love, especially having been in that business.

**PS:** Were you actually involved in running it?

**SE:** No, I was one of the attendees.

**PS:** Was your involvement with Barrows Neurological Hospital more recent?

**SE:** Ten, twelve years ago. That's very recent, in the game of things. I really enjoyed Barrows. We have Dr. Robert Spencer there who's just a crackerjack neurosurgeon. We're lucky to have him. A lot of us try to support the hospital to keep it the very best in the city so that people will want to use it, keep Robert, and have it continue as part of the community, working well.

**PS:** What have you done personally to help?

**SE:** I've been on almost every committee there. They have a women's board in the hospital that I have been on. I chaired the Ball last year. It was very successful and we raised quite a lot of money. I was co-chair with Karen Meyer and we had a lot of fun doing it. We called on three or four businesses every week to get support from the business community.



**PS:** Like a part time job.

**SE:** Well, aren't they all? (laughs) Think of the hours you spend on the phone just getting somebody to decide the theme for a party.

**PS:** How much did you raise last year?

**SE:** \$2.4 million.

**PS:** That was in 1999?

**SE:** Yes.

**PS:** How about the Herberger Theater?

**SE:** Oh, I love the Herberger. I started in with it probably five years before we ever dug a hole in the ground, so it was pretty exciting and I think it's a wonderful place. I'm really proud of that theater and how it turned out. It was so generous of the Herberger's to give the committee commitment money to get us going. It was a big community effort; even the city ended up helping us underwrite it. We had some tough times then, if you remember back in the late 1980s and the early 1990s financially in this community when we lost every savings and loan, which were all locally owned. Not only that, but those people were all very generous to the community and we were losing a tremendous source of income.

**PS:** That was during the time that downtown was really changing.

**SE:** Yes, but there was no basketball arena; there was no baseball stadium. So you know it really was a pioneer thing putting that theater in. I just love it. Don't you? Isn't it a wonderful place to go?

**PS:** Yes, I have season tickets to the Arizona Theater Company.

**SE:** Oh, yes, ATC. I like Jessica. [Jessica Andrews, Managing Director of ATC] They want me to go on that board. I can't do it, I can't do anymore. (laughs) I do not just join a board; I usually get in there and really work, and I don't have that much time anymore. Either that, or I've got to give up some of the other things that I like to do.

**PS:** Tell me about how you've seen the downtown area change.

**SE:** Well, talk to me about the Phoenix Bird! You know, coming up from the ashes; that's what it's been. I wouldn't have gone downtown after four o'clock in the old days. I thought it was scary driving around down there. I wouldn't have walked down there by myself. But look what's happened. I think it's a total



miracle. We still need a wonderful hotel down there and I hope we get it soon to reinforce the Convention Center and everything else that's gone in down there.

**PS:** What do you think is the most exciting thing that has gone in?

**SE:** Well, for me it's the Suns Stadium, America West. But the Diamondback stadium is a work of art in itself. I still get a thrill when they open and close that roof, sitting there. Don't you?

**PS:** Yes.

**SE:** I mean, it's really something.

**PS:** I'm just amazed how huge it is when you drive by.

**SE:** Well, fly by (laughs) when you come in for a landing at Sky Harbor. It's a piece of work down there.

**PS:** The Herberger Theatre is a key part of the downtown.

**SE:** Yes, and the Herberger's still reinforce; they still give. They're very generous.

**PS:** Let's see, The Multiple Sclerosis Board?

**SE:** I was on that for years and boy, I hate that disease. I'm finding a lot of diseases I hate today, but that one is sure one of the worst. I have several friends who are struggling with it. It gave me a reason to be committed and to do what we could. Mostly I ended up on that though, in fund raising, trying to raise money to help people get walkers or wheel chairs, that kind of thing. That was mostly what I did on the board.

**PS:** Phoenix Human Relations Commission?

**SE:** Oh, man, was that a job! The people on it were really fun and a lot of them are gone today. I still miss them.

**PS:** Like who?

**SE:** Oh, the guy that sang for the Men's Choir; he had a real estate company here. What was his name? Let me think a minute. I mean there were all sorts of people like that, people who were really into it. We met quite often. John Bouma [Chairman/Attorney, Snell & Wilmer] was on the Human Relations Commission.

**PS:** What period of time are we talking about?



**SE:** Well, I was on it for five years. I'm guessing maybe 1963 to 1968. It was in the late 1960s. It was quite an education to me. I hadn't realized. Phoenix was just Phoenix. We've always had a large Mexican-American population and I didn't think of them as being any different. We had very few black people. It just all seemed to work. I never thought about it being a problem, but I found out there were a lot of problems when I served on the Human Relations Commission. I found out that people couldn't live in certain areas, that there problems with restaurants and with buses. It all became real for me at last. These people came to the Commission and they were people you liked and knew and cared about. It was quite an educational experience for me.

**PS:** How did you get involved with that?

**SE:** John Driggs, the mayor of Phoenix, appointed me to the Commission. It was a total surprise. I wasn't particularly interested, but I did get awfully interested once I was on the Commission. But, you tend to do that.

**PS:** Was it a new commission that had just been started?

**SE:** No, I think it had been in operation for a while. I don't think it had been very active up until then, but I'm sure it's much more active today. My goodness, we're the fifth largest city in the country, not just a little community village like we were for so long. That just seems like yesterday.

**PS:** The Harrington Arthritis Research Center.

**SE:** Yes, I was on that board. I was the only woman in the first group of people on the board. We were raising money to build an arthritis research center as a part of St. Luke's. Then Mr. Harrington gave the money and I was on that for five years too. I didn't know very much about arthritis at the time. It was another great education. I know a lot about arthritis today. It helped me to be not quite so afraid of it having been there listening to the doctors speak at all the board meetings. It was very stimulating.

**PS:** You say you were the only woman on the board?

**SE:** Well, the first.

**PS:** How did you get on that board?

**SE:** I can't even remember. Of course, I marched down there, just glad as anything to be there. (Laughs)

**PS:** Had you been involved with St. Luke's before?

**SE:** No, I hadn't and I liked it. It was fun. I don't think the Arthritis Research Center is part of St. Luke's





anymore.

**PS:** No, they aren't.

**SE:** Are you on the board now?

**PS:** No, but I think Judy Schubert is.

**SE:** Yes, I knew she was on it. I think I met her husband, Bill, on the Human Relations Commission back a hundred years ago. You know how everything works. Everything is just part of a pie when you get done. I wouldn't have known her if it hadn't been for the Arthritis Research Center. Cute girl, too.

**PS:** You were listed as a founding trustee of the Children's Science Museum.

**SE:** Yes, we started that a long time ago. Steve Mihalyo [CEO, Inter-Tel] called me and asked if I'd help raise money through the YPO, Young Presidents Organization. With our business we know an awful lot of people who are heads of businesses in the community because they advertise with us. So I was on the Children's Museum board. Virginia Ullman, another Historymaker, was on that board with me and there were six of us. We went out and called on people and we actually started a small Children's Science Museum in the style of the Smithsonian. We set it up across from the Hyatt Regency downtown. Do you remember that? Karl and I put a Swenson's Ice Cream Parlor in there to get people to come to the museum, and we brought in lots of school groups. That was long before the grand edifice we have today, but it was a beginning.

**PS:** Didn't the Junior League have something to do with the Children's Museum?

**SE:** Oh, heavens, they founded everything one way or another, I think.

**PS:** Were you involved with the Junior League?

**SE:** No, I never was.

**PS:** So you came in as a trustee a little later.

**SE:** Yes, they asked me to be a trustee.

**PS:** As a trustee with the Children's Science Museum, was your main role raising money?

**SE:** Yes, primarily, but also to get exhibits in. We had a lot of contacts in Washington in those days. So we tried to get things in that would be hands on, exploratory for children and we did. We made phone calls and arranged to have things shipped in and to have exhibits come and go. Karl and I donated the ice cream



parlor which was a big thing for the kids.

**PS:** Tell us about COMPAS.

**SE:** Karl was one of the original people with COMPAS. So, I ended up on a lot of committees, seating, food, (laughs) table arrangements, themes, all of those things. It just runs through all of my life, I guess.

**PS:** Why don't you explain for posterity what COMPAS is.

**SE:** Well, COMPAS stands for the Combined Arts of Phoenix. And when it first started out it was a very small group. It's expanded into many more groups today. I am trying to think what the original ones were. Do you remember if the Symphony were in it originally? I know the Phoenix Art Museum was, but I don't think the Heard Museum was. I can't remember. I think there were three to begin with when we first started back in the early sixties. Karl was supposed to chair it, but wasn't here that much because he was so busy building our business. That's how I got into it; then I ended up doing seating and a whole bunch of stuff with my buddies. (Laughs)

**PS:** It's been a once a year event.

**SE:** Yes, but every other year now. It's so big, it's an auction today. Well it was then too. but with so many auction items now, it's a big undertaking, having to get all that stuff stored, numbered, recorded.

**PS:** Let's see, you mentioned the Phoenix Art Museum.

**SE:** Well, that was one of my cultural adventures, trying to get involved in the PAM. I really did like it. I took the docent class at the museum. I think I was in it for two years and then worked as a docent for part of a year. But I had so many other demands and I had my children. As a Phoenix Art Museum docent you commit to being there every Friday. I'm not real good at just taking a whole day and wiping it out. I've never been very good at that and I found that very limiting as far as my time. Back in those days, because of the kids with the car pools for horseback riding, swimming lessons, Junior Assembly, sometimes it just was too tearing. You can't do it all. If you try, then you don't do a good job. It's time to let somebody do it who has the time.

**PS:** The Hon Kachina Awards?

**SE:** The Hon Kachina Volunteer Awards was started by Karl. I think he set it up in five, six or seven of our television stations all over the country. The Hon Kachina Awards emphasizes volunteerism. What he did was create a whole structure for honoring people who give from their hearts to help the community. He wanted to recognize ordinary people who did extraordinary things, presenting them as an example for others to become volunteers. Karl wanted to applaud not the person who was chairman of the board of a corporation, but someone like the neat lady who drives for handicapped children or who does other



volunteer work for the community. He had a lovely statue designed as the award; it's quite beautiful, made of bronze, featuring accents of turquoise. He also set up the Hon Kachina Volunteer Awards program in other cities where we had television stations.

**PS:** I didn't realize that the Hon Kachina Awards program was in other places.

**SE:** Yes, we did it in Little Rock where we owned the NBC station. We did it in Atlanta where we had ABC, and so forth.

**PS:** Did they know what a Kachina was in those places?

**SE:** Probably not. (laughs) I don't know. But you know Eller. He just gets on something and does it.

**PS:** The Salvation Army. You were involved with the Ice Cream Social and probably other things.

**SE:** Well, Karl was on the board of the Salvation Army. You ask how you get into things. Well, the Salvation Army people decided to raise money they needed for volunteers and so forth within the organization, so they decided to have the Ice Cream Social and we helped. I think I chaired it for three years. I don't know how long we held it in the stable area of the Arizona Biltmore Hotel, but we had hundreds of people come. It was a regular old fashioned event. Of course we used Swenson's ice cream. It was a regular old fashioned ice cream social where you could make your own hot fudge sundae or banana split. We had it on Sundays so people could come from church with their children all dressed up and it was truly fun.

**PS:** Do they have the Ice Cream Social anymore?

**SE:** I don't think so.

**PS:** Was it a profitable event?

**SE:** Yes, we always made money. I don't know that we made any big amount. But it was a lot of fun and it was a great family-oriented thing, which is a specialty of the Salvation Army. It was a perfect event for them to do.

**PS:** Let's talk about some of the bigger things you've been involved with such as the Fiesta Bowl. Tell me about how that got started.

**SE:** Karl was one of the seven founders of The Fiesta Bowl. It was a long time in coming. We met with the NCAA. I can't tell you how many cocktail parties we had. We invited anybody that was even related to a coach (laughs) or who had anything to do with the NCAA and asked them over. We made salsa, taquitos, whatever you wanted because we didn't have any money. All of the wives, the seven wives, were just a



catering service for years till we got that thing on its feet. Then a friend of mine, Leslie Taylor, decided it would be a good idea to get the women even more involved, so we started doing the telephoning and other jobs and decided to create an official Women's Group. It has been very successful and a lot of fun. They are a very committed group. Today, I'm one of those they call a *patron*.

**PS:** Tell me how the Fiesta Bowl got started. It's huge now, but what was it like during the first years?

**SE:** Pretty crummy. Karl had two big loves, things he wanted to be a part of for the bowl, the parade and the band concert competition. Oh, you should have seen that first parade! In the first place, we went down Central Avenue. Do you remember a hundred years ago, thirty years, whatever it was, all of the street lights were strung from corner to corner, with a light hanging in the middle of the street? The wind would come up and made a certain sound with the lights. We had balloons, hundreds of balloons that some idiot brought in. It was these huge things that were thirty, forty feet high. So they had to string the balloons to go under every street light (laughing) all the way up and down Central. A lot of them got broken. Of course another thing we hadn't figured out, was about the posse groups and the horse groups. (laughs) You know what that means. (laughs)

**PS:** Oh, yes.

**SE:** Karl needed people to do all these things like the telephoning to get the bowl under way. Then we started having the Fiesta Ball. With the Ball we needed all those gals to put together a beautiful evening, with dinner and dancing.

**PS:** Whatever inspired the first seven to decide to have a bowl game in Phoenix?

**SE:** You're talking about the guys, now. I don't know that it was on *my* list of things I wanted to do, (laughs) but we do love sports. My husband's always loved sports. It's been the center of his life. You know, he'd gotten bowl games for ASU and UA and the PAC 10, and he'd brought the Phoenix Roadrunners here. In 1968 he brought Jerry Colangelo and the Phoenix Suns here. Karl has always been very committed to sports and he felt they could use a bowl game in the city. At the time I thought he was crazy. Sugar Bowl, Rose Bowl, what are we talking about? But now the Fiesta bowl is one of the top four.

**PS:** How did you get the name for it?

**SE:** Well, we put a campaign on to have people come up with names and then we chose what we thought was the best one. The name Fiesta Bowl sounded like a party, it sounded like the Southwest, it sounded like Arizona. All the things that you needed to make it really easy to sell. Of course the colors: red, pink and purple (laughs) and a little yellow and orange thrown in. Sunkist came on board and underwrote it; that's when we finally got on our feet. They were terrific. They were great supporters.

**PS:** Now we have Tostitos.



**SE:** Tostitos. Isn't quite the same. (Laughs)

**PS:** Is there anything else about the Fiesta Bowl that you can remember?

**SE:** Well, probably a thousand things. All the things that happened and the crazy stuff we did. We flew to games to watch teams play in different parts of the country. It was a great camaraderie-builder.

**PS:** Of all the different non-profit boards that you've been on, which one stands out in your mind as the most important to you or the most memorable?

**SE:** Well, as far as the non-profit boards I've been on, I think what's been fun is that each one was at the right time in my life. You're doing things with children when you're raising children. You're doing things with the arts when it's important in the community to promote the arts. The same with the medical field. You're doing all that you can in the medical field and right now at my age, that's a big thing. (Laughs) A lot of people need all the help we can get for them.

**PS:** Are there any memories that stand out in particular?

**SE:** Probably not because each one at that time was just a tremendous amount of fun. I liked the people. It was a very expanding kind of thing as far as something more to learn. Every single board you're on usually has a unique aspect to it. The things I did were not just balls, not just one charity ball after another. The things I did were each done very differently. Almost everything having to do with non-profits though, involves fund raising. You can't get away from it. It's just a way of life today.

I love the boards I'm on now. The John F. Kennedy Center board in Washington DC is just tremendous fun. I love the Barrows Neurological Institute board. I'm on the arts board. We also raise scholarship money for the three state universities for science students. These things are very important and they're all very different.

**SE:** I'm finding it difficult to answer your question about my favorite. I love the U of A Foundation board. It's just tremendous fun. They are starting a big capital campaign. Seven hundred million or billion or some wonderful number that has lots of zeroes. It's pretty exciting to see, to have it happen. When you get involved in something like this and to be a part of it, that's exciting. There are an awful lot of people in the state who are committed to the University of Arizona. It's fun to see what people are willing to do to be a part of it and to support it.

**PS:** That's a whole section I wanted to ask you about, your involvement with the University of Arizona. Tell us about how you've been involved. It seems that ever since you graduated, you've been involved.

**SE:** Yes, both of us have been really the whole time. It didn't matter what it was, a centennial for instance,



we would help chair it. A homecoming, any kind of an awards dinner they may have. Whatever it is, if they ask us we always say yes, and they're endless. (laughs) The projects and things they have; I've been head of the Presidents' Club for the city of Phoenix for them. They have programs once a month during the year. It's a luncheon and they have it somewhere in the community and have a speaker, mostly someone from the University, maybe the medical school, maybe from the business school, maybe from the architecture school. Of course you know that we are building those telescopes for shipment to Germany, to Japan, all over the world. We've just shipped a huge one to Japan. It's just gone out. We're living in Maricopa County so we don't get to hear about, or know what's happening down there at the U of A unless we are involved.

**PS:** It sounds like you stay involved. A lot of people stay involved with their alma maters but you've done more than most.

**SE:** Well, maybe, maybe not. An awful lot of people have. We've tried to help monetarily too. But in other ways there are an awful lot of people I know who do as much as we do and more because they love it. Going to university was a big part of their lives.

**PS:** Is that why you've stayed involved?

**SE:** Oh, absolutely. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven when I first walked onto that campus down in Tucson and I still feel that way. It's just thrilling to know a school like that is available in Arizona. It is wonderful to be able to go to school in state and they have so many outstanding colleges. Some of the programs they have at the different colleges are pretty exciting. Just look at the cancer center, part of the University Medical School where Arizonans can get `superb care. Otherwise, we would have to go Los Angeles or Houston or some other place for treatment. It's also an excellent research center.

**PS:** U of A as a university has really grown tremendously since you were there.

**SE:** Oh, yes, but I don't particularly like that. (Laughs)

**PS:** Tell me about the Eller College at the UA.

**SE:** Because Karl had been in so many businesses and also was so committed to the University, they asked if they could use his name to put on the entrepreneurial school and call it The Eller College of Management. If there ever were (laughs) an entrepreneur with all capital letters, it's Karl. All the ups and downs he's had! His heart is *so* into it. He's a good guy. He really cares terribly about what he does and about the University. I think it was a natural, but I was surprised. I don't mean that; I mean I was shocked. But it's certainly been a wonderful marriage for him. He goes down there all the time. He speaks; he brings friends in from all over the country, heads of major corporations to go down there and be with the kids and to work with them.



**PS:** Why were you surprised?

**SE:** There are so many outstanding people, why pick Karl? (Laughs) You know, we're really pretty common folk. We're just around in here. We like what we do. We have a lot of energy, of course, but I was surprised and I think Karl was shocked. It's been wonderful, but we feel if there is something you can do to make it good, to make it okay, then they aren't disappointed in you.

**PS:** Once your name is on it, you have something invested.

**SE:** Yes, there's a reason to do it. We would have done it anyway, but that's neither here nor there.

**PS:** You have also given a huge commitment of endowment money.

**SE:** Yes, we have.

**PS:** Do you personally have a role with the business center there?

**SE:** My personal involvement is mostly in scholarships. I think I told you before that our two big interests have been education and sports. We give scholarships to graduate students so they will be able to continue their studies in the UA Business School.

**PS:** It sounds like both you and Karl, but you in particular, have done more than just lend your name to charities. You've done a lot of fund raising and balls, but you've also been out, actually doing the hands-on stuff. Driving the nurses around, teaching, and so forth.

**SE:** Yes, but I would hate to think my life were just one charity ball after another. I would feel a failure about my community involvement if that were so. I like doing the balls, when I do them; I just like doing the other things too.

**PS:** Which of those other things stands out in your mind?

**SE:** Well, I think each one's different. Even when I worked in the auxiliary, worked with the animals out at the Phoenix Zoo. I loved wearing the costume with the ears, the little animal things. I thought that was great fun. So each thing is a little bit different.

**PS:** You hadn't told me about that one. (laughs) What did you do at the zoo?

**SE:** We cleaned cages in the early days. We worked out there and took care of the baby animals when they were born and fed them. It was endless; we even gave tours in those days. We took people around on tours because the Phoenix Zoo wasn't as professional as it is today. Everything was so different back then. Nobody is going to know what I'm talking about.



**PS:** A lot of people don't realize the zoo is a private foundation and that it is not run by the city. Were you involved with the zoo from early on?

**SE:** Oh, yes, I loved it loved going out there.

**PS:** One other area we haven't touched on here is the political arena.

**SE:** I just love politics. I really do but I'm kind of single-minded, more so probably than I should be. I didn't get involved until Ronald Reagan was elected president. He asked me specifically to work on the group Citizens for America back in Washington. It was so much fun going there and being a part of it. We were to help deal with the press in each of the communities all over the country. We met in Washington and President Reagan explained what he was trying to do and what his commitment was and what he hoped to achieve.

A lot of times when you read about events in the press, that's not what was said, or at least you didn't perceive it as that. So we as Citizens for America were to be able to pick up the phone and say, "You know, maybe there's more to that story than what you've put on the news. Could I come in and talk to you about it?" That's what we did the first four years that Reagan was in office.

We organized another group called Women of the Hemisphere. I think there were twenty-five or thirty women who went through Central America and the Caribbean. We went down there and visited with the people and met with women that we could support educationally to become doctors or lawyers or who could start children's day care centers. We went to Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Dominican Republic doing this. It was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed doing that work and we had the sanction of President Reagan.

We had a crazy thing happen. In 1984 my family had all gone to the Olympics. We were having a wonderful time as guests of Coca-Cola and NBC. I had been down in Guatemala where there was rioting and guerrillas had come over from Mexico and were murdering the people. We flew around in helicopters and because of all the unrest and upheaval, companies like Coca-Cola had closed their bottling plants down there. When I got back to Los Angeles for the Olympics, I went to see Roberto Goizueta, CEO of Coke. He said, "You know, I think they need jobs down there. Those people need to be off the streets and have work, or else maybe you're not solving the problems." Within sixty days they re-opened the Coke plant down there. They'd also taken the movies out of the theaters. Karl saw that and he knew that the movie theater was a place you could enjoy going to, a place to cool off. So he started sending films down to Guatemala. In each of these countries we would all get involved and used our particular abilities to help out with certain things we could do. It wasn't much, it doesn't sound like anything, but it did make a difference.

**PS:** It sounds like quite a lot to me.





**SE:** That was in 1984 when Ronald Reagan was President. He asked me to be a delegate from the United States for the Bicentennial in Australia. That was wonderful fun. Oh, I loved that ten days down there! We marched in parades; we issued stamps. It was really fun.

Bush named me to the commission as part of the 1992 Quincentennial anniversary in the Dominican Republic. Pope John Paul II was scheduled to visit the Dominican during the celebration of the coming of Christopher Columbus to the Americas. Cardinals from all over the world were there and I can remember the Pope running around in that little Pope-Mobile. We were right next to him, marching in the parades. In fact, the Pope and his entourage were staying at the same hotel where we were. That was a ton of fun too. But these are things you might not get to do if you weren't involved a little bit politically.

**PS:** Tell me about going to Washington and meeting with President Reagan.

**SE:** Well, it was a lot of fun. He had such a great sense of humor and he seemed so human to me. He was like people I knew in the little town where I grew up. He seemed very wholesome and I trusted him. He was a decent guy and he really cared about people. He could make a dumb meeting a lot of fun. Everybody was howling with laughter with his input into it. Yet the things he said and did were serious too. My heart just went out to him; I felt that we were so lucky to have him during the time that we did. Nancy was very nice too. We went back often. We'd been to the White House quite a few times for dinner with the different presidents; but that was the fun time, when the Reagan's were in the White House.

**PS:** How big a group was it that met with President Reagan?

**SE:** About twenty, from all over the country. We all got to be friends. In fact, the wife of one of the guys who represented Virginia is now on the Kennedy Center Board with me. You know how that role plays, so it's a small world.

**PS:** Tell us more about going to Central America. It sounds like a fascinating experience.

**SE:** It really was. I love those countries. They're beautiful. Of course we met with the presidents of the countries and the American ambassadors and they all had dinners for us. It was a socially fun thing to do as well as help us in what we were hoping to accomplish. We'd try to get names of women that were very bright who, because of economic reasons, couldn't continue their education, or were mired down with so many children that they couldn't get free to have time to study. That's how we did it, usually through the president of the country, if not through the American ambassador.

**PS:** Do you speak Spanish?

**SE:** Oh, a little. Awful. But it's fun because they thought we were a riot trying to speak Spanish.



**PS:** At least you tried. (laughs)

**SE:** Most nearly everybody speaks English today, but not back then.

**PS:** Are there any women that you tried to help who stand out in your memory?

**SE:** Well, I can't remember all of them or even pronounce their names, but many of them have been up here in Phoenix since then. One couple had been living up here, but have gone back. They started a fish farm and we ended up financing the husband to do that. You know how that works. People were very interesting. They'd bring their children up here to go to school and we'd try to help and that kind of thing.

**PS:** Was there a bicentennial of Australia?

**SE:** Yes, in 1988. Boy, that was fun. Really great.

**PS:** Were you there representing the United States?

**SE:** Yes, Prince Charles and Princess Diana were there representing Great Britain. We were with them during breakfast, lunch and dinner for ten days. It was fun. We got to know them. I adored Charles. He reminded me of our son and I thought he was a very wholesome, sweet guy, easy to talk to. I thought he was very well read. He was very interested in people. I found her about as shallow as you can get.

**PS:** Did you go on these trips to Central America and Australia alone, or did you and Karl travel together?

**SE:** Oh, I traveled without Karl. I told him I was fine traveling with the women to South America and Australia.

**PS:** Besides those trips, you also serve on the Kennedy Center board. You have developed a reputation of service on your own, completely separate from Karl's position.

**SE:** Yes, to a certain extent. Karl isn't really as much into the arts other than doing fund raising for them, but I enjoy it. I like the people real well and the meetings are stimulating. We have two thousand performances that go out from the Kennedy Center and are heard all over the country, every year. We had a ballet dance troupe in Waco, Texas for three days. I don't think a lot of people would know all that and I enjoy that part of it.

**PS:** Are there other areas of your community service that you want to touch on?

**SE:** We just finished holding the Achievement Summit, giving *Golden Plate Awards* to honorees selected by The American Academy of Achievement, based in Washington DC. We hosted eight hundred people for the multi-day event in Scottsdale. It was a big undertaking and a lot of fun. We brought in forty



Americans who were tops in their field including Nobel, Pulitzer, National Medal of Science, Oscar and Golden Globe winners. We also invited 350 to 400 young people who had scored around 1600 on their SATs, students outstanding in their studies. The forty Americans and the students joined together during Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. There were many in the audience the evening of the main dinner and everybody there was special. Some of the adults spoke for eight minutes each and then the young people got fifteen minutes to ask questions. They could dine together and walk the halls and hold conversations so they were able to interact together each of the four days.

One kid who was there, 28 or 29 years old, looked like Clark Kent. Gee, he was cute and he just sold his company for \$24 billion. He was one of the adult winners. We had about five generals there and the new general commandant of the Marines, also the general who was chief of staff. The head of the FBI came, too. Martha Stewart was there trying to remember everyone in attendance. Naomi and Wynona Judd came and gave a surprise performance during one of the evenings. I remember that four Nobel physicists were up there dancing the boogie with Wynona before the evening was over.

**PS:** Sounds great. How long has this Golden Plate Awards event been going on?

**SE:** I think about thirty years. Karl's been involved for almost twenty years. But we chaired it this year with Bruce Halle [Chairman/Founder of Discount Tire Company]. He also underwrote the Golden Plate Awards so we had a great turnout. We invited a lot of community people to be our guests because they had been hearing about it from us for twenty years.

**PS:** It seems like a great opportunity for the kids.

**SE:** Oh, the kids loved it. When they come in on Thursday, they don't know a soul. If you're valedictorian of your school, you're king bee; you're number one. But when you're in a room of four hundred valedictorians, you don't seem like all that big a cheese. So it's very humbling. That's true for the adults too. They wonder what they are doing here with all those important people. But all the important people there are thinking the same thing. Even Andrew Wyeth, the fine arts painter from Chads Ford, Pennsylvania was there. We had a lot of really nice people who came.

**PS:** In general how have you seen Phoenix and the state of Arizona change?

**SE:** I've been here a lifetime. Everything is a two-edged sword. I hate seeing that little sleepy community of Phoenix gone where we knew everybody. Even if we didn't know them personally, we knew who the people were. Everything was locally owned here, mom-and-pop grocery stores, all the banks were owned here. Much of it though, even our newspaper, may be lost to the community. Not that it will be any better or any worse. It's just that there is a different mentality or commitment with the people who have had a business here, who consider Phoenix the center of their lives, and who have had a family born and raised here, rather than those who come to Phoenix, spend three years and are gone tomorrow, moving the kids and family away. I may not be right about that, but I know *I* would be that way.



I've been on the PTA. When you've been a member of the PTA, you know all the kids from Little League, you've sat there watching the games, serving those cones and you see those people the rest of your life. You see those kids grow up and now they're having babies, and now their babies are big. I think that's a very different place than now when we have become such a huge city. The two things I hate the most about a big city are crime and traffic. I hate all the traffic, although the noise isn't too bad even though it is the inner city where I live. But I don't like the crime; we have so many people coming over here from Los Angeles — gangs and stuff. But it's a little more restrictive over there, I guess now. I don't know.

On the other hand, with a large city you have better theater, you have more people coming here for the music and the dance and we are one of the few cities in the whole United States that has four major sports teams. Even Los Angeles only has three. The growth in entertainment, cultural events, and sports is wonderful for people who come here and for us who live here; we enjoy that. It's a little of each, you see. I love it that downtown's safe. You and I can go down there and have dinner tonight and never even have a thought about where we're going to park, and we can pick just any restaurant, where you couldn't do that before. So there are always two sides.

**PS:** Do you have any advice for young people in their twenties, starting off in careers or in volunteering for community service? What advice would you give them?

**SE:** Looking at all the businesses we've had and everything that we have done, I think the saddest thing is that I have seen changes in loyalty and integrity. Those qualities don't seem to be a priority today and I feel that we are the losers. I am the loser when you lose those things. I don't think any success, no matter how great it is, means as much or is nearly as sweet when you haven't done it right.

**PS:** So, what is your best advice?

**SE:** Well, I think young people should pay their dues. I think they should do the right thing when they know what the right thing to do is, rather than simply to take the easy way out just to make a few bucks. But you know, those are choices only an individual can make.

