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Jan

Interview with Jan Slater
Date of Interview: Summer 1995
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Transcriber: Dee Morning
Date of Transcription: September 2003

Susan: Tell us where you were born and how you came to Carlsbad.

Jan: I was born in the State of Washington, went to University in Salem, met my husband there, he was in the Navy. I got my degree in Home Economics on Saturday and was married on the next Saturday. We did things quickly during that time. We moved to Los Angeles until he was shipped out and then I went to stay with my parents until he came back. We were out of the Navy when we moved to Carlsbad in 1960. We moved here because of his job. He was hired as city manager of Carlsbad. I taught school in Encinitas to finish out the year for a first grade teacher and then I stopped working for the next few years to be home with the children. Eventually I did go back to teach in Encinitas. The children had been born in Los Angeles. When we first moved to Carlsbad we lived on Arbol, then we bought the home on Butters Road and have lived there ever since. It was a new neighborhood and the neighbors were very compatible. The neighborhood has changed of course but we still enjoy it there. There was an old dead avocado grove behind us when we first moved there that was quickly developed.

Susan: Where did your children go to school?

Jan: They were in the Carlsbad School District, my daughter from 9th grade through high school and my son from 6th grade through high school. Carlsbad High School was a new school at that time. There was a very active parent group. We were active in Boosters and I was on the PTA Board.

Susan: Tell us about the high school parades.

Jan: Yes, they had parades down town. The classes made floats and the band would march. They had their homecoming festivities at the football game.

Susan: Were you living in Carlsbad when they had the first Hispanic homecoming queen? I think it was in 1965.

Jan: We were living here in 1965 but I don't really remember anything about that.

Susan: So it wasn't a big deal then?

Jan: No, because Hispanics were not separated really. A lot of them lived downtown where they still live but Carlsbad at that time was just a community. You didn't think about Hispanics, Caucasians, or any other race.

Sue: Would it have been a problem if your daughter had started to date a Hispanic from downtown?

Jan: Well, I have to be frank: if she she dated a Hispanic, which she did, we had feelings about it, but we didn't say she could not do it. We had feelings not because of the character but because of the differences in background. As far as Hispanic parents go, they were active in the PTA but I can't remember if any were on the board or not. To me it wasn't a big issue. When I was teaching in Encinitas I had very large classes and I didn't even think about children being Hispanic or not.

Susan: Was the Chicano movement very strong in Carlsbad? I mean the "pride" issue.

Jan: Well, I think that they were very well thought of in Carlsbad.

Susan: That's why we're asking. The Hispanics seem to have been a real integral part of the development of Carlsbad, there doesn't seem to have been a separation.

Susan: Was Carlsbad still agricultural in the 60's?

Jan: It was starting to change but still rural in the backcountry. Palomar Airport Road was just a small road and there was farming going on out there.

Susan: When the braceros program ended and people didn't get work permits anymore, did you see people standing out along the road?

Jan: I don't remember seeing people standing around on corners until the 80's

Susan: How was that kind of influx perceived?

Jan: Personally, speaking only for myself, I have resentment with people breaking the law, not with the taking of jobs – I have no problem with that. But we do have borders that should be respected. As far a trouble goes, I haven't had any with them but I have heard of people who have.

Susan: Did you see any problems when you were teaching?

Jan: I taught until the 80's and I could see a problem coming when Encinitas started bi-lingual classes. I taught many years in English to Hispanic children and had no problem with those children at all. I had maybe half or third Hispanic in my classes and the other children showed no discrimination at all toward them.

Susan: And did the Hispanic children learn?

Jan: Yes they did. On the playground we wouldn't let them speak Spanish so they would learn English. I personally think that when they started the bi-lingual classes, that's when we had problems on the playground. That is when it was almost "you" against "me". I didn't think that the children learned as fast in the bi-lingual classes as they did in the regular classes. When a kid is in a special class like that he begins to feel different from the rest. We found that when there was a problem on the playground some of them suddenly couldn't speak English.

Susan: Some of the women who moved to the Barrio in the 20's still don't speak English.

Jan: I think that's too bad because they miss out on a lot of things.

Susan: Were you active in any groups in Carlsbad?

Jan: Not many because I was working. I belonged to Kappa Delta Gamma and I did a lot of church work. We belonged to the Carlsbad Community Church. The church has changed since we came here. Where the big building is now is where the old sanctuary was. It was a very simple building; I think it held 300 people. The front part was

sanctuary and the back part was the social hall. For many years that hall was where many people in Carlsbad held their social events because it was probably the biggest place they could go to at that time.

Susan: What denomination is that church?

Jan: It's non-denominational and it was started long before we came by a group of Carlsbad people who were going to church in Oceanside. Transportation wasn't what it is today. Because they didn't want it to be any particular denomination they called it the Carlsbad Union Church.

Susan: What kind of minister do they have?

Jan: A protestant one.

Susan: What did downtown look like?

Jan: It was much smaller when we moved here but the nucleus looks much the same. Most of the shops today cater more to tourists. On Elm Avenue just west of the I-5 there was an empty lot where Albertson's is now. Across the street was Jane Sonneman's house. She was a city council member. Jefferson Street was like walking on a country road, it was blacktopped but narrow. The people along there had much larger front yards than now. There were homes around the nucleus of downtown

Susan: When did all this start to change? What happened?

Jan: Carlsbad grew! Actually the downtown hasn't changed that much at all. Carlsbad is still what I call a bedroom community. People live here and work elsewhere. It's a desirable place to live, even now in spite of all the traffic. We are really not aware of it (traffic) until we leave our neighborhood.

Susan: Where did you grocery shop?

Jan: In Oceanside and there was a market on Elm and State.

Susan: At what time did Carlsbad change the most?

Jan: Early 80's. There used to be such a distance to San Marcos. Now there are homes all the way there.

Susan: Has it changed for better or worse?

Jan: I can't resent the growth of Carlsbad. It's just a moving population. When I grew up people didn't move. The only resentment, if you can call it that, is the people who moved here when Carlsbad just started to grow, thought it was a great place, and don't want anyone else to come.

Susan: Did your children stay here?

Jan: No, after college they settled elsewhere.

Susan: Your husband worked for Carlsbad city government. How does he feel about the growth?

Jan: My husband feels the same way I do. When we moved here there were about 9000 people here so there has been quite a growth but he doesn't object to it.

Susan: Is there anything you'd like to add?

Jan: No, I thank you for asking me. Hopefully I've given you some information.

Susan: Oh, you have, yes.