

Oral history interview with Judy Green
Interviewed by Kate Legg, for the National Center for Atmospheric Research
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Note: Interviewer's and narrator's remarks are distinguished by their initials. Conversational expressions/sounds that are not words are placed within parentheses; peripheral or editorial information is placed within brackets.

[00:04] KL: This is Kate Legg. I'm the NCAR [National Center for Atmospheric Research] archivist, and I'm with Judy Green, longtime telecommunications assistant at NCAR. Today is June 30th, and we will be talking about Judy's 38-year career at NCAR. So, let's get started. Where are you from, originally?

JG: Originally I'm from Cheyenne, Wyoming.

KL: How many cities and states have you lived in?

JG: Oh, we lived in Wyoming—because my husband went to school at the university. Then we moved to Minneapolis. We moved to New York—we moved there twice. Then we moved back to Minneapolis; then we moved to Boulder; then to California; and then back to Boulder.

KL: That's quite a trek!

JG: Yes.

KL: (Laughs.) Coast to coast, with things in between.

JG: That's right.

[00:48] KL: What are your interests and hobbies, outside of work?

JG: Well, I have adorable grandchildren, that I'm going to enjoy spending time with. I have a young dog, and a cat that I adore. And I enjoy reading, sewing; you know, just fun things.

[01:09] KL: It sounds great. What, where, and when was your first experience as a telephone operator?

JG: When I was in high school, I was employed by Mountain Bell, in Cheyenne. And I worked there until after I graduated from high school. And then I moved to Laramie, and I worked for the phone company in Laramie, until that company terminated. And then I worked for a couple of banks. And then I was a stay-at-home mom for many years, until I started working at NCAR again.

[01:42] KL: I read, recently, you met your husband because of your job as the telephone operator. Is that correct?

JG: Yes. When I was a telephone operator in Cheyenne, and he worked at a motel. When people would make phone calls, we would have to call back and tell them how much the phone calls were. So I talked to him off and on for about a year before I ever even met him. (Interviewer chuckles.) And then eventually we married and moved to Laramie.

When he was in high school, he was an alternate for a scholarship for MIT. We had to come down here for him to be interviewed. We always said: This is where we wanted to live after we got married, because it was such a beautiful city. So it was kind of amazing that we ended up here.

[02:31] KL: It's a good story. What other jobs have you had—I guess you kind of answered this. So, you worked for two or three other phone companies before NCAR?

JG: I worked for Mountain Bell. And basically it was only Mountain Bell.

KL: Oh, okay. Alright. You also did kind of answer this a little bit, but how did you end up in Boulder and at NCAR?

JG: My husband was employed by Control Data. They were installing the computer for the new computing facility down on 30th Street. So he was here to help install that. They trekked it up the hill, and everything. So we lived here for a while, and then we moved to California.

Working for Control Data he did a lot of traveling, because he was in tech support. So he did a lot of installations and trouble shooting. He got to the point where he was tired of traveling. So one time when he was out here, they offered him a job, with NCAR. So then we came back here.

KL: So your husband worked here first.

JG: Right.

KL: How many years did he work here before you started?

JG: Oh, gosh. He started working here in 1971.

KL: Oh, wow. So really close to the beginning—

JG: Yes.

KL: And then you came a few years later?

JG: Right.

[04:00] KL: Again, some of these are redundant. You have other family members who have worked here: your husband; and I understand you have other family members who've worked here?

JG: Yes. I have a daughter, Belinda Housewright, who works in NETS also.

KL: I think that's kind of fun, that you work in the same group (laughs).

JG: Well, and especially because my husband worked in the same group, too.

KL: Oh, okay.

JG: But not all at the same time.

KL: Alright. It's kind of a family affair.

JG: Right.

[04:27] KL: Do you remember what year you started at NCAR?

JG: I think it was '77 [questioning tone].

KL: Okay. Was there many women working here, when you started?

JG: There were, like, women in the cafeteria, of course. Women that were secretaries; on the switch board; custodial. And there were some women scientists.

KL: Oh, so there *were* a few women scientists.

JG: Yeah.

[00:04:56] KL: I think that's interesting, because the history of atmospheric sciences is predominantly male. So that's why I was curious if many women had worked here.

JG: Right. But, it was always interesting. Because you always assumed that for a woman to work here, she was a secretary. And then, a few times we got corrected. (Interviewer and narrator laugh.)

KL: I would assume that was a safe assumption, in the '70s.

JG: Right, right. Well, and there were mostly women, I think, working in the library at that time, too.

KL: Yeah. Definitely. That makes sense. Librarians are usually women, as well.

JG: Right.

[05:36] KL: What kind of telephone system was in place when you started at NCAR?

JG: We had the cord board, the real old cord board. We had banks of a hundred numbers. So, we had the Jeffco [Jefferson County]—we rang out at Jeffco. (Clears throat.) And then we had all of the divisions, the machine shop. We still had the buildings down on 30th Street—were all two and three. So we had to ring down there also. We also had the balloon facility in Texas.

KL: Oh, yes.

JG: And of course we had Hawaii. And we had HAO that was over on the campus.

KL: So, really spread out.

JG: Yes, yes.

KL: That's interesting.

JG: And then of course Marshall.

[06:25] KL: Okay. Was there a limit to how many phone calls could be happening at once with that system?

JG: Ummm. (Slight pause.) Well, I'm trying to think. Because, I think we had 16 lines coming in. So we could get up to 16 calls at a time. It was just a matter of answering them quick enough.

KL: Was it ever a problem that you didn't have enough lines?

JG: Yes.

KL: Okay! (Laughs.)

JG: You know, particularly when we had a heavy snowstorm, and people were trying to make it up the hill. Or, wind storms—everybody's calling about the wind. Because, of course, NCAR forecasts the wind, right? And, of course, we had—all of the children would call, when they got home from school, they had to call their moms or dads—mostly moms—to let them know they were home, and what could they have to eat (interviewer laughs) and that type of thing. You know, their snacks. So, especially between three and four [PM] we were very busy.

[07:21] KL: I always just think that's interesting. Nowadays, if you get a busy signal you think something's wrong.

JG: Right. And if it every got overloaded—like, one of the operators was on coffee break or something—we could always put on our night switch. And that limited to four calls coming in.

KL: Okay. That's interesting.

JG: And then, when you could take a breather, then you could put it back on. And then when we got ready to close—15 minutes before—we would shut down the switchboard. We would put the

night switch on. And, hopefully, not too many people would hang on. Because we had to wait until everyone hung up before we could close.

KL: Oh, okay. So you would get delayed with going home, some days, if you had too many people on hold.

JG: Right, right.

KL: Oh wow! (Laughs.)

JG: You know, you could go in and ask the person—tell them that you were going to be closing. But a lot of people, that didn't set very well. (Chuckles.) You know, if they were on their phone call, they wanted to finish it.

[08:25] KL: Definitely. That's interesting. How many different telephone systems have you worked on? Besides the cord board?

JG: We had the cord board. And then it got to the point where they were having problems getting it repaired, because it was so old. I think it was probably one of the last ones in Boulder. So we switched to the Harris system, which is a very tiny little thing. And it lasted exactly six months. Because they tried to put two small systems together, to make one large one. So every other hour, the system was crashing. People were getting cut off; we had people standing at our door with their phone cords in their hands, sometimes not saying very nice things.

And you couldn't hear on it. It was just awful. The turnover with that company: Every other week they had a new supervisor, because everybody was quitting, because they got so frustrated.

Then we got the Rolm system. And everyone was so relieved, because it worked. And we had that until we got the VOIP [Voice Over IP].

[09:35] KL: So, frustrations ran high for not only the telephone operators, but staff at NCAR.

JG: Definitely, definitely.

KL: Yeah. Six months to give up on a system—it must have been pretty bad.

JG: Oh yes. Yes. But I think that must have been the legal limit, or something. Probably took them that long to fight.

KL: Yeah, to get out of the contract.

JG: Right.

KL: It just seems, nowadays, we would be stuck with it until the end.

JG: Oh, yeah.

KL: So much time and effort goes into these new systems.

JG: You know, they came in on a Friday, and changed it all out in a weekend, and we were set to go.

[10:13] KL: Was it hard? Was there a lot of new training you had to do when you switched systems?

JG: Yes. And we were all very nervous about it.

KL: Yeah. I'm sure, Monday, that's not a fun Monday morning.

JG: Right. Right! Well, and plus the fact, we also had to change numbers. Because on the cord board, we had three-digit extensions. And, when we go the digital, it was DID—Direct Inward Dialing. So you could dial the person's extension directly. That meant that our whole directory had to be retyped. So, I did that over a weekend. Then, just getting used to all the new numbers.

KL: Yeah. I guess being NCAR, you really can't have down time.

JG: Right.

KL: Everything has to be up and running again.

JG: Right. Definitely.

[11:05] KL: That's interesting. So, I think you've answered what the biggest changes were, through each transition.

JG: Yes. There were a lot of changes.

KL: Is there anything you want to add?

JG: One of the biggest ones was: When we had the cord board, they had some type of a water problem. So the computer room was having real problems. And, oh, people were so angry. Of course, they had to let them go home. My boss came down and sat with me, because she said [that] people were calling in from all over, because they couldn't reach the computer room. And I mean, that's unheard of, here.

KL: Computing is central to this organization.

JG: Oh, yes! Definitely, definitely.

KL: Again, more frustrations vented at the telephone operators! (Laughs.)

JG: Oh yes, oh yes. Uh-huh, uh-huh.

KL: You're really the front line of peoples' frustrations.

JG: Yes, yes. But it was always kind of fascinating. Because, since we were on the ground floor, and the tours used to come down—to look at the computers and everything—and people would stand outside of our door and watch us. Because, it is fascinating watching somebody on a cord board work a switchboard.

[12:20] KL: That, I think, is very fascinating. That's kind of a hidden history of NCAR.

JG: Right, right.

KL: Especially because the tour groups still continue, and you wonder what unintended things people are interested in.

JG: Right. And of course, when I started, there were four of us that worked on the switchboard. And we were all part time. And then, eventually—because I worked Monday, Tuesday, and every other Wednesday. And the other person worked every other Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. So, you know, that way we could switch hours if we had to, and whatever. And then, eventually, it got down to three of us. We had one full time and the two of us were part time. And then eventually she moved to a different group. And I became full time.

KL: And you were part time because you were staying home with your children?

JG: Right.

KL: I do think that's interesting, too. So, there was an openness in this organization, in the '70s, to helping working moms. (Crossover talking from narrator.)

JG: Yes. I think that the other divisions didn't quite know how to work the job sharing. So, they would consult us to see what type of hours and days—you know, how we did it. And other divisions would do it like one week on, one week off. That type of thing. And, sometimes they would do half days. You know, one person work morning; one person work afternoon.

It worked great for us to do it, splitting the weeks.

KL: It makes me think NCAR was probably more forward thinking than a lot of other organizations, during that time period.

JG: That could be.

KL: To have that job sharing. To me that seems more a contemporary thing. So, it's interesting to hear about it 30 years ago.

JG: Yes.

[14:13] KL: I understand that you have an incredible memory for names, numbers, and voices. Have you always had that skill, or have you honed it over the years?

JG: I think, over the years. (Laughs.) You do tend to—well, especially when you have regular people that call in all of the time. Some of the scientists would call in, especially when they were traveling, internationally. It was always nice to hear their voice; but it was always nice to *know* their voice. You know, Dr. Roberts used to call in a lot. He'd tell us where he was, and what he was doing. Dr. Glantz did; Steve Schneider did. Occasionally, they would bring us back little mementos. They would send postcards, from their different locations. And those were always special.

KL: Definitely. So you had a close relationship with some scientists, even though you didn't necessarily work directly with them *physically*.

JG: Right. One of them would bring us flowers from his garden. One of them would call in—he was single at the time, and one of the operators had such a crush on him. (Interviewer chuckles.) Oh, she would talk to him for an hour. I mean, oh, she was just so stuck on him. And then, she heard that he got married, and she was just crushed. I thought: Oh, that's really too bad (big laugh), because that could have been pretty exciting, if we had that.

KL: I know, it's almost the plot of a romance movie! (More laughing.)

JG: Right! Right, right.

[15:49] KL: Do you have any special stories about interacting with Walt Roberts?

JG: I know, one time he called from Mexico, and he was really sad because he said that his friend had just died. I think he was in a boating accident. But, he used to stop in occasionally, and say hello to us. It was always nice.

Karen Sawyer used to always call in, and check in with us when she was out of the country, or wherever. Some of her stories were always interesting.

KL: Even on the ground floor of the Mesa lab, you kind of had a window into all these international science—

JG: Right. Even though we never saw the people. One person used to call, and he was so funny, because he would say: "This is Dr. _____ [intentionally not named] from the university, at such-and-such." And he wanted to speak to the consultant, or the computer room, or whatever. Of course, poor thing, he'd never get an answer. Because he was having some kind of problems. But he called in *all* the time. And I made the mistake, one time, of asking him how he was. Which was a terrible mistake, because he told me that: Yesterday he took a bus ride, and he sat next to somebody that was sick, and now he's so sick. And he's got a sinus infection. I'm thinking, "Boy, that's the last time I ask him how he is!"

Or sometimes, if he called in—if you were lucky—he took a deep breath after he said "Dr. Robert _____" and you could say, "Who could I ring for you?" Because then you could cut him off and get him right to the person he needed to have! (Laughing.)

[17:35] KL: So you definitely were a listening ear for people, whether you wanted to or not.

JG: Well, and especially because there were so many international people with accents, heavy accents. And then with the amount of people that worked here, that had strange names. Because, when I first started, I would write down every name as they gave it to me, because I was afraid I wouldn't understand what they were saying.

KL: Have you honed your pronunciation of foreign names?

JG: Some. You get kind of used to who they're calling for.

KL: I've found that, even, as a librarian here. I have also heard that, in the early days, you knew everyone's extension by memory.

JG: Yes. I was trained. We sat and we memorized all the extensions, in the very beginning.

KL: And this would have been hundreds of extensions, correct?

JG: Yes.

KL: Oh, wow. So that was something that: You actually sat down and worked at it. It wasn't just, kind of, on the job.

JG: Well, right. I mean, while we were sitting there. Because one of the other gals that was training me, she said, "We have to know all of these so that we can ring them in an instant." And boy, we worked on them. It was a real challenge, but it was fun. And boy, it sure came in handy.

KL: I'm sure. And, you know, especially nowadays, where no one knows phone numbers anymore.

JG: Oh, I know.

KL: I think this is just—it's kind of a lost skill.

JG: It is. Especially when all of the phone numbers are programmed into another phone. You don't know what they are.

KL: It really makes you realize that, in an emergency, maybe you *should* know some phone numbers! (Laughs.)

JG: It makes you wonder: Do the children get to school, and you ask them what their number is, "Oh, I have to look at my phone." (Chuckles.)

[19:15] KL: Yeah. That's very true. (Pause.) How many NCAR and UCAR directors have you worked with?

JG: Oh, gosh. Way too many. Because Dr. Roberts was the director, here, when I first started. So, there were so many of them—too numerous to name.

KL: You just kind of ride the waves of change. (Laughs.)

JG: That's right. That's right. Which is probably what we're going to be doing now.

KL: I would agree. It's like a perfect question for our interview today. Along with that question: How many managers have you had?

JG: Oh, golly. I'd say, ten maybe? Quite a few, quite a few. Because, they never quite knew where the switchboard belonged. When I first started, they were in Facilities [department]. My manager was actually the director of safety. He has the office right next to us. And then, as times changed, they decided that maybe we should—we were still in Facilities, but then they changed managers. And then, when we got the new system, they needed someone who knew more about the telecommunications. So, of course, we got a new manager then.

Then, for a while, they switched us over to IT. So we were part of IT. And then they decided that we didn't really fit with IT, so then we went back with Facilities. And then, pretty soon, they decided that NETS—since they were handling so much of the fiber and the other cabling and everything—that we should be under them.

[21:04] KL: So, have you been under NETS the longest? Is that kind of—

JG: Yes.

KL: Okay. So, bounced around until you found your final home in NETS.

JG: Right, right. Yeah.

KL: And you've liked working with the NETS group.

JG: Oh, yes. We're kind of like a family, a close family. Like, one time during the snowstorms, guys came down and shoveled me out. They did my driveway, my sidewalk. I mean, it was great. Any time anybody has any kind of a problem, everybody helps everybody else. You know, it's—and that's the way an organization should be.

KL: That's a nice thing to have in a work place.

JG: Yes.

KL: People who care about you outside of work.

JG: Right, right.

[21:43] KL: Are you surprised, when you meet people in person that you have spoken with over many years?

JG: Yes. Sometimes they don't look anything like I expect them to. And other times, you think: "Yeah, that kind of does fit." But it's always a delight, to meet someone that you've talked to for that period of time.

KL: Do you get a reciprocal reaction? Where they say to you: "Oh! You're not at all what I expected!"

JG: I don't think I've ever heard them say that. They might *think* it. (Interviewer laughs.) Most of the time they just say, "Oh, it's nice to finally see the face that goes with the voice."

[22:23] KL: How many calls do you think you answer, on average, a year? How has that changed over the years?

JG: Oh. Well, in the beginning we answered *all* calls. Any time anyone wanted to call, at NCAR, they had to come through us. And we placed all international calls out. And a lot of domestic, if they were having trouble getting through on our FDS system. So, numerous calls. As it got to be more and more where people were calling in on their own, you know, it leveled off. But, we probably get between 1,000 and 1,500.

KL: Still. Okay.

JG: Yeah. Up until, I'd say, up until maybe the last six months or so. Then, I think, because everybody has cell phones, or whatever, they don't really need to call us.

[23:18] KL: You mention that you've helped people with international calls. Was that just because the system wouldn't allow people to call out?

JG: Right.

KL: Okay. It wasn't policy, so you're not charging up expensive phone bills.

JG: Right, right. No, we always had to have a charge number. It was just: They could not dial international.

KL: Okay. So that just how the system is set up.

JG: That was on the cord board.

KL: Okay, interesting. I think that's interesting. I don't know if I could dial internationally on my own, right now.

JG: Well, we actually had to go through an operator.

KL: Oh, okay.

JG: You know, at Mountain Bell, or whatever.

KL: Did you get to know operators, then, at the phone company—

JG: Sometimes.

KL: —working here?

JG: I know I always—I got to know the guy down at NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association] real well. He was a telephone operator there, and he was blind.

KL: Oh, wow. Interesting. Okay. So, in a predominantly female profession, there were some men working there. Okay. That's interesting.

[24:09] How did the addition of Voice Messaging change the culture of NCAR?

JG: JG: It changed quite a bit, because all of a sudden—we had always been taking messages for them. And, after we got voice mail, a lot of people didn't want it. We said, "Well, if you want a phone, you have to have voice mail." So they had to be trained on it. You know, a few people balked at first—the older people, old-timers. But after a while, I think they really got to depend on it.

[24:44] KL: Was taking messages originally part of your job? Or is it something you just did.

JG: No, I incorporated that. Because I knew so many of the people in SCD. You know, I started taking messages, and eventually it just sort of developed.

KL: (Laughing.) And people expected it.

JG: Yes, yes. After that, they did. They really did.

KL: So, you weren't just the telephone operator. You also almost were a secretary to probably dozens of people.

JG: Well, occasionally babysitter, too. Because we used to have these carrels outside of our office. You know, outside of Room 34? There was a scientist that—she had some kind of a meeting, and she brought her kids in and wanted to know if we'd take care of her kids for an hour.

KL: Oh, wow.

JG: I didn't know what to say. They were good kids; they just sat there. But it was kind of an uncomfortable feeling, because I didn't—and I was surprised she asked us.

KL: Yeah. It's kind of like: "Well, the telephone operators. Ask them!"

JG: Sure, right. They're not doing anything but sitting there. (Laughing.)

KL: They can watch the kids.

JG: Right.

[25:52] KL: NCAR has obviously grown over the years, and has offices in many different locations. What were some of the challenges involved with an organization on the move?

JG: Oh, there were so many. Just getting phones set up in their offices. Because I would help with that. And doing the programming, of course, for all of the new phones. Getting used to all the locations. You know, that was really tricky. Closing down RL3, and RL2. They'd get situated one place, then they'd be there for three or four years, and then move someplace else. I mean, we'd just sort of go with the flow, after a while.

KL: And you would be expected to keep up with that, immediately.

JG: And the directory. Yes. Yeah, and we had to update the directory.

KL: So you actually installed the phones, too.

JG: I also helped install, yes.

KL: So it helped you to get to know people, that way.

JG: Right. And numbers.

[26:52] KL: A lot of work. How many times do you think you've said "Operator," or "Hello, NCAR" over 38 years?

JG: Oh my gosh. Oh, too many times to count. Because I even answered that way at home, sometimes (laughs) without even thinking.

KL: It probably gives a laugh to your family and friends.

JG: Oh, yes. Or else they say, "Oh, I guess I dialed the wrong number." And then it dawns on me what I'm doing.

[27:20] KL: That's pretty funny. Did you get any memorable calls during 9/11? Or another crisis?

JG: Well, I actually wasn't working during 9/11. So, I didn't. I didn't take any of the calls. From what I understand, people were allowed to go home if they needed to. I was stuck in South Carolina, for four days. And that was kind of scary.

KL: How was flying—

JG: You couldn't.

KL: —after that?

JG: I was supposed to leave on a Tuesday, and I couldn't come back until Friday. Because, I think for a couple of days in there, they didn't have planes going in or out. There were a lot of people that rented cars. But then they ran out of cars.

KL: That's a long drive, too, from the East Coast here.

JG: Oh, yes. Yes. It took a lot of scrambling. It was kind of strange, and quiet. You know, you don't realized how many airplanes are in the air, until they aren't there.

KL: I think we've discussed before, I shared a similar experience. It's odd. Planes in the air, I think we just don't notice them until they're not there.

JG: Right.

KL: Did you have any special protocol when you went through security at the airport?

JG: I had to dump my whole bag out. That was kind of—and then trying to gather up all the change, and whatever. That was kind of funny.

KL: I guess none of us—

JG: And taking the shoes off. I hadn't done that before.

KL: No. None of us probably knew at that point that it was the beginning of just how things would be.

JG: That's right.

KL: Now you expect it.

JG: Yes, so we just undress at the airport.

[29:11] KL: Exactly! (Laughing.) Did you get any interesting calls during the 2013 flood?

JG: Uh, yes. We got a lot of calls. A lot of them wanting to know when the rain was going to stop. As if we can predict that. Or, you know—and a lot of people complained because they felt like it was the water coming from NCAR that was flooding their basements.

KL: Oh. So NCAR was blamed for—

JG: Right, right. Along with our deer that eat their tomatoes.

[29:47] KL: Do you want to talk just for a second about people calling to complain about NCAR wildlife?

JG: Oh, gosh. They do call. "Your NCAR deer are eating my tomatoes and my apples." And, of course, the raccoons are all over the place. The deer, the fox, the wolves. The coyote. It's always kind of amazing, though, to drive up here, and you see the fox crossing the road, or the coyote. You know, it's part of life.

KL: Definitely. How do you respond to people who are blaming the NCAR deer for destroying their gardens?

JG: My reaction is—or usually I answer—I say, "You know, they're eating my garden, too." I say, "We can't control them."

KL: Are people—do they kind of—

JG: They back off.

KL: Yeah, back off and realize they're being kind of silly.

JG: Yeah. But then when they start complaining about the mountain lions, that's when it's really funny. (Laughing.) Because we don't control those either.

KL: No. I actually find this to be a truly fascinating part of your job. That's why I'm asking. (Laughing.) So this kind of dovetails into this question: What do you think is the craziest call you've ever had?

JG: Oh, goodness. There is one lady that keeps complaining—she keeps saying that NCAR is doing something to her brain. We have never figured that one out. There was a guy that called, one time, and he was really mad. Evidently he had been terminated, and he wanted to talk to somebody about it. And, of course, everybody we rang had voice mail on. So, finally we had to ring security and say, "You guys have to handle it." He was pretty scary.

[31:36] KL: Yeah. So, you're well trained in customer service.

JG: Oh yes. Oh yes, we handle a lot. It was kind of exciting when Margaret Thatcher came through. That was interesting. We got to go out and see her get out of the car. I mean, let's face it, she looks like a normal person.

KL: But you actually got to leave the switchboard for a moment?

JG: Yes. Yeah, we took turns.

KL: Any other notable people that visited while you've been here?

JG: Oh, I'm sure there have been. We heard once that Robert Redford was coming up. So everybody milled around in the front lobby for a long time. I don't know if he ever showed up or not. (Laughing.)

KL: It will go down as an NCAR rumor.

JG: They did film a movie, with Crystal Bernard. The one about the runner.

KL: Oh, okay. I'm thinking.

JG: Peña. Yes.

KL: Were there movie crews in the building—

JG: Oh, yes. And everybody in Boulder was up here. I came up to work, and I mean, there are cars lined up everywhere. And I'm thinking, "Geez, where am I going to park?"

KL: Definitely.

JG: I mean, it was unbelievable. That was kind of interesting.

[32:56] KL: I'm actually glad you mentioned that, because: What was the NCAR shuttle like, when it first started?

JG: It was like an old school bus, painted blue. Dark blue. Oh man, there were days when you wondered if it was going to make it up the hill (laughs.) especially during one of those snowstorms. You always prayed that you didn't get stuck behind it. Because, at 20 miles an hour—especially in a snowstorm, if you don't get your momentum, you don't go up that road. We all had old cars at that point.

KL: Do you remember the shuttle getting stuck?

JG: Oh yes, oh yes. One time it was right at the bottom of the hill. It was a terrible blizzard; they should have closed. But, it got stuck and they were trying to turn it around, and they couldn't get it turned around. It was really—and of course, then they had cars backed up, trying to come up.

KL: You would think that would be cause to close. The shuttle is stuck.

JG: They have to wait until everybody comes up, and serve lunch, before they let them go home.

KL: I *have* noticed that.

JG: We did have a fire drill, one time. And I thought it was—you know, we were usually notified, if we had a fire drill. But I didn't get permission to leave the switchboard. And one person always stayed on the switchboard so that the safety officer could see who didn't leave their offices. So everybody's running out. They said, "You're supposed to come." And I said, "But I'm not supposed to leave the switchboard." Well, come to find out: It wasn't a drill. And it *was* right during lunch. So people actually had to leave their food on the table, and run out. But I stayed!

KL: Did someone come get you?

JG: No. Finally it blew over. They came down, and they said: "That wasn't a drill. You really should have left." I said, "Okay. I'll know for next time, then." You're always afraid you're going to get fired if you do the wrong thing.

[34:57] KL: I understand. Can you describe a scandalous situation you were involved in, via your role as operator?

JG: Not that I was involved in! Oh, gosh. Well, there have been quite a few. One of them was kind of sad. Because a person called in, and they kept trying to reach one of the guys in SCD, and they couldn't. So I finally rang his secretary, and this guy had committed suicide. So they finally had to go in and tell the boss what had happened. That was sad.

KL: Definitely.

JG: There was a guy who had started Fathers' Rights, and he worked here. So, he used to get a lot of phone calls from fathers who were trying to get custody of their children—or, at least, some type of joint custody. That used to cause a lot of problems. Because, they wanted to talk to him *now*. They didn't want to wait.

KL: And this wasn't really his main job. This was something he did on the side.

JG: Yeah. Because he worked in the machine shop.

KL: But he was their resource then.

JG: Oh, yes.

KL: Even during business hours.

JG: Oh, yes.

[36:12] KL: Did you ever—that makes me think—have you ever been asked to screen people's calls? If someone's trying to avoid someone?

JG: Yes. And we have done that. Especially where it's been harassment. Or, cases of people going through divorce, where they say: "We don't want him in the building. We don't want him calling her."

KL: So not only did you have to keep track of everyone's extensions, and their office locations, and their names, but also who you were to let through, essentially.

JG: Right, yeah. Because we would get a notice from security, letting us know.

KL: I think these are the things people just don't realize were your role. You did a lot more than just answer the phone.

JG: That's right. That's right.

[37:01] KL: Have you ever felt threatened by a hostile call?

JG: Not really threatened. Upset, sometimes. There were a few times when the tears would just roll down my eyes—down my cheeks—because this person was so mad and so rude. And I'd think: "Golly. Here I am, trying to help you, and you're just not cooperating." But, eventually you get over it, and you move on. One thing about being a telephone operator: At least when you go home you can leave your job. You don't have to carry it home.

KL: Definitely. So you could not hang up on someone if they were—

JG: No.

KL: —being rude to you.

JG: Nowadays, people do it. But then, I didn't. Being trained at the phone company, there were certain rules that you followed. And I couldn't imagine hanging up on somebody.

KL: So, you've never hung up on anyone. You just had to keep trying to help them.

JG: Right. Now, if we—you know, now we have the situation where if we get constant faxes, or telemarketers that are always recordings, we can just divert the call.

KL: Do you get a lot of telemarketers?

JG: Yes. A lot.

KL: I am assuming, because they don't know who to call, so they just call the main number.

JG: Right. They call the main number. Well, see, there was a period of time—I guess for security reasons—that we weren't allowed to give out the phone numbers. So, of course, when they called we would just ring it. They said, "If somebody wants to give their phone number out, then that's

fine." So, you know, there was nothing we could do. We could just ring the number. So, if they call and ask for the person—I thought, "I don't screen the calls. I just ring them."

KL: Well, I appreciate you protecting us from telemarketers.

JG: (Big laugh.) We try.

KL: I only get one person, and I think he asks for me by name.

JG: Yes. I think so.

KL: Probably because I've been too nice, on the phone, to him.

JG: Next time when he calls, just divert him.

[39:13] KL: Thank you. Who is your favorite person that you've talked to, on the phone?

JG: Oh, golly.

KL: Or persons. You can have more than one.

JG: Oh, I think maybe Glantz was always—he was always fun. You know, he always called me from wherever. Sometimes he was just at the airport. Or sometimes he was in Timbuktu, or wherever. But he would always call, and say Hi, and tell us where he was, and what the weather was. It was always fun to hear from—Steve Schneider used to always call. Most of the time, they were usually checking in with their secretaries. But it was always fun to hear them. Dr. Roberts, of course, always called us. Karyn Sawyer used to call.

KL: So, very personable people—

JG: Yes.

KL: —that you look forward to speaking with.

JG: Yes.

KL: Balance out the rude people.

JG: That's right. That's right.

[40:10] KL: I understand. What scientist calls the most often?

JG: Well. I think Mel Shapiro calls a lot. Simply because he—you know, he's up here at the Mesa, or sometimes he's down at Foothills. He doesn't always have their extensions handy. So he calls, you know, to talk to certain people. But, he's always kind of interesting to talk to, too.

[40:37] KL: Kind of, again, dovetails with a question: Who's the neediest caller?

JG: Oh, gosh. (Pause.) Boy, he's one of them. But, I don't know that there's so many. Because, as I say, a lot of people, if they're in their cars, they need to talk to somebody and they don't have their extension handy, well they're calling, from their car.

KL: I guess everyone is needy. That's why they're calling! They need something!

JG: That's right! That's right, uh-huh. There's one gal that—she's a scientist, and she just recently moved to Boston—but she was getting her degree from CU, and she worked here. And then she had a baby, so every once in a while she'd call in, and I'd ask about the baby. We'd talk about the different stages of what he's doing. That was always fun.

[41:31] KL: (Laughing.) Definitely. What is your favorite NCAR-UCAR party story?

JG: Oh, golly. See, I didn't go to a lot of the parties. Because most of the time we had to keep the switchboard open—when the parties were up here. Because, when we close the switchboard, the phones would transfer up to the front desk, for security. So they would always make the announcements and give the awards, up there. But, I think the first NCAR party was probably the most memorable. Because, they had that *really, really* strong punch. And I think it hit everybody *really* hard. I don't know. I don't really have a favorite party story.

KL: The party with the punch, I've heard other stories about. So, I think that is another one that is important to institutional history. (Laughs.)

JG: Right. I don't think they served that punch very often, after that.

KL: And you mentioned you had the recipe for the punch?

JG: Yes, uh-huh. I did get the recipe. (Interviewer is laughing.) Well, and it's funny, too, because: Many years ago—probably from the first time, right after this building was opened up here—first December, everybody bought liquor. And they would keep it in their office. So, I think, every afternoon, long about four o'clock, you could always find the different parties going on in the offices. Throughout the month of December.

KL: You know, even now, December is the party month. A little more formal parties, but it seems there's a lot of parties in December.

JG: I think, though, that now they're a little more careful. Because, I don't think that they can actually bring the alcohol on the premises.

KL: No, I think they keep it to the beer and wine only.

JG: Right, right. Or they hide it in secret places.

[43:26] KL: That's pretty funny. What is the "horse at work" story?

JG: Oh! That was Gary. He would ride his horse to work. And he would tie him up outside the cafeteria. They finally told him he couldn't bring the horse to work anymore. Which was really sad. It was kind of unique.

KL: Definitely. Did he ride the horse to work for years? Or was this—

JG: I think, for two or three years, maybe. Because, his wife worked in the library. And he worked in SCD. Then they moved out on—someplace in southern Colorado, I think, to a ranch or whatever. But, it was always kind of unique, to see the horse out there, just enjoying itself.

KL: I know it's a great *place* to be a horse, here, all this space.

JG: Yeah! Might as well!

KL: Do you know, did they live close? I mean, I just think of the neighborhood down there.

JG: They lived in the mountains.

KL: Okay. So, he rode quite a ways.

JG: Yeah.

KL: Interesting. I think that's very interesting.

JG: Because, I don't think they had too many places in the city, at that time, that had horses.

KL: Yeah, yeah. That's kind of what I'm thinking: Where would you have a horse, close by?

JG: You know, I don't know if it was up—I just remember hearing "in the mountains." And I don't know if it maybe was Nederland? Or if it was even that far up. You know, I don't know. Maybe up by Magnolia.

KL: Commuting by horse.

JG: Right, right.

KL: I think that's a great story.

JG: You know, I guess you could just come over the hills, right?

KL: Yeah. It's probably faster than the way the roads snake, down the canyon.

JG: Yeah, yeah. Because I know, when we've had some of those snowstorms, some of my neighbors that worked here would put their skis on and ski up the hill. Or down the hill. Whichever the case may be. Because sometimes it was quicker than trying to drive.

KL: Yeah. I could see that.

JG: Since the city would pile all the snow. So it made it hard for the side streets.

KL: Good times.

JG: Yes, yes, yes.

[45:33] KL: Have you ever had a close call with wildlife, on the Mesa hill?

JG: I haven't. But other people have. Because, boy, from what I understand, if they're coming at you, those hooves are really sharp and can be really dangerous. The rattlesnakes were kind of scary. We have had people call and complain that—wish that we would get our rattlesnakes off the trail. Of course, we did have the bear that, poor thing, finally died.

KL: So you've seen—

JG: And the mountain lions, of course.

KL: So you've seen mountain lions and bear—you've seen the whole spectrum of what's up here.

JG: Right. Oh, yeah.

KL: Have you seen a mountain lion more than once?

JG: Just a couple of times. I actually had one in my backyard.

KL: Okay.

JG: It was dead.

KL: Oh, really.

JG: But my neighbor called me on New Year's Day, one year, and said: "I don't think you better let your dog out, because there is a mountain lion hanging around." And then, the next day, it had died.

KL: Wow. Oh, gosh.

JG: So then the wildlife people came and got it.

[46:46] KL: I actually have to say, I've never heard anybody tell me they've had *dead* mountain lion in their yard. Living in the mountains, I hear mountain lion stories, too. And I take it you've seen many bear, and coyotes, and foxes.

JG: Mostly coyotes, fox. We did have a wolf that came up our street. And it was so funny, because all the cars were following it. And he was coming up to get—he or she—coming up to get food. Because, they had a den of babies, down by NOAA. My neighbor works from home, and he said the wolf went up there two or three times a day. Walk back with something in its mouth.

KL: Going to the dumpsters.

JG: Yeah.

KL: That's usually where I see the wildlife, too, around those dumpsters.

JG: Oh yeah, yeah.

[47:38] KL: This is a big question, and kind of one of those wrap-up ones: How has NCAR and UCAR changed over 38 years.

JG: Oh, it's more like a corporation now. In the beginning it was more like a—I mean, it was a company where everybody worked together. And you knew most of the people. And now it's just grown so big that—and there's so many new divisions and everything—you don't know very many people. Especially if you're only in the basement.

KL: What do you think, just the impact of technology on your job.

JG: Oh, yes. Well, that's one of the reasons, you know, that we're not getting as many phone calls, is because of the technology changes. I'm just not as busy. You know, I do billing, and other types of jobs. But, there's just not enough to keep me busy. And I decided, after 38 years, maybe it was time to do something fun. More fun.

KL: So, in the beginning, you were able to work full shifts just on the phone; and then, over the years, basically, you had to do side jobs—

JG: Yes.

KL: —to keep, so you have something to do.

JG: Yes. Because, when they went from the cord board to the electronic, or the digital, our boss came to us and said, "Okay, we need to know what other jobs you want. Because, if you want to have a job here, you have to do something else." So, she basically created other jobs for us.

KL: That was nice, you were given an opportunity to stay.

JG: Yes, yes.

KL: People recognizing that you did have an important role to play, here.

JG: Right, right.

KL: Even if it was less of a role. I think everyone will miss hearing your voice on the phone.

JG: Well, thank you.

KL: We'll have the message, but it's just not the same. (Laughs.)

JG: Right.

[49:40] KL: What are you looking forward to, in retirement?

JG: Well, we're going to go on a trip, to Oregon and Washington. And then, I'm looking forward to spending time with family. You know, just relaxing and doing fun things.

KL: Do you think you'll ever come up here to take a walk, just to remember here?

JG: I just might do that. I just might do that, since my younger daughter lives close. Sometimes we might come up here.

KL: So we will still see you, maybe, here and there.

JG: Well, I'm going to be working occasionally. A couple of times a month, maybe.

KL: Okay. That's not bad. That makes it—

JG: Yeah, that's right.

KL: That's kind of how, I think, people want work to be: I'll come a couple times a month. (Laughs.)

JG: Yeah. And then, they always say: "I don't know how I had time to work, when I'm always so busy at home!"

KL: Definitely. Well, thank you so much for your time today.

JG: Well, thank you for having me.

KL: This has been a great addition to the history of our organization.

JG: Thank you, thank you.

KL: Thank you.

[50:39] [End of recording; end of interview.]

