

Grace Steuri Interview Summary
First Person Plural Project
15 May 2014

CM Start with childhood, parents names

GS Harry and Edla Fager
Mother's maiden name was Anderson
Met at church social
Mother grew up on farm close to Chanute, KS, father on farm near Osage City, KS

CM Parents educational background?

GS Mother was an RN, education at Trinity Lutheran Hospital in Kansas City
Father farmed, went to Chicago and became an electrician, too
Didn't like farming much

CM Did they meet before she became an RN?

GS After. Took a job, met a woman with TB and got it from her. Had to come home, was in bed a long time

CM How old were they when they met?

5 min

GS They were about 39 years old, they married older in life

CM Are you the oldest child?

GS I am the oldest, born in 1940. They have another child, Glen, born 5 years after me
He is an engineer. I grew up on a farm

CM Did you live where your mother grew up or where your father grew up?

GS Where my father grew up believe it was the house his parents built. They took care of his mother and were given the house

CM Did you help with any of the farm work or in the house?

GS No, not at all, me or my mother. I helped in the house and in the garden. My brother helped, starting when he was about 13 years old. A boy wants to get out and run machinery.

CM Was your grandmother still alive at that time?

GS She lived with us a good eight years and then she died. Had to have been hard on my mother

CM Other extended family around you?

10 min

GS Mother's sister lived close, they had kids. I had cousins galore. My father had family, a sister and some brothers. Probably twenty cousins.

CM Did religion play a big part in your life?

GS Yes, a big part. All raised Lutheran. I'm 100% Swedish. There's the background.

CM Talk about school and your teachers

GS Well, I went to grade school and graduated, then high school for four years. College and graduated with a BS in education in Topeka, KS. Taught for a little while, met my husband and got married.

CM Were you, grade school close?

GS They were close but I rode a bus

CM Favorite teacher or subject

GS Art was my favorite. Helped with the fashion shows. Loved music, too, family was musical. Brother leaned towards math and science.

CM Did parents expect you to go to college?

15 min

GS Wanted us to go.
Dad resented having to take over farm, it was heavily mortgaged. Wanted to do something else

CM Were you always interested in clothes?

GS Before I went to school, at five. Got hand me downs from a cousin. Taking note of how things looked together at a young age. Drawing pictures, weddings, brides and grooms. Designing gowns.

CM When you were a teenager, did you a date?

20 min

CM Met your husband in college?

GS No, in the same town, both out of college. He worked for SW Bell and I was teaching. Met at a party, polka dancing. Another guy following me around at a party.

25 min

CM Still in town where went to college?

GS No, in Topeka, KS

CM How long after you met until you got married?

GS Met in November, asked me football game at KU. No tickets, then JFK [President John F. Kennedy, November 1963] was assassinated and the game was cancelled. Got married the following August. February engagement. In those days, if not married when out of college —

CM And then you started moving around a lot

GS Husband worked for SW Bell, then changed to IBM. Didn't like all the moving. Rockville, Maryland, Minneapolis, Dallas, TX, New Canaan, Connecticut. Then recruited by Systematics in Little Rock as CEO for eight years, retired early.

30 min

GS I thought I would like to collect clothing and show clothing. Learned about this in Dallas. It's been really fun. Idea from a show I modeled in, but I wanted to do the narrating.

CM Do you have children?

GS Had a son, but he passed away about 4 years ago

CM I'm sorry. Can you describe a typical day for you?

GS Like the house neat, attractive. Husband gone right now, doesn't mind if I straighten his den once in a while. Doing some shows coming up, doing some reading right now. Getting the clothes ready, wedding show coming up.

35 min

Last one at St. Mary's Academy, it's a beautiful show. Tell how men and women meet.

CM Where do you find your clothes? Flea markets?

GS Antique places, flea markets, you would be surprised. Can't find really old clothing, has to be made. Bought a couple of collections.

CM Any political or other organizations you are involved with?

GS I've done work for the Heart Association.

CM Significant difference in the way men and women contribute to community organizations?

40 min

GS Women contribute a little more, especially if don't work outside home. Men volunteer, too, but usually women.

CM What year did you move to AR?

GS About 25 years ago

CM Do you remember a person, book, moving that changed your life?

GS I can't say that I have, maybe haven't read the right book. Normal upbringing with artistic bent. No accident or anything that really changed me.

CM Does your husband help with fashion shows?

GS Didn't used to but now he's retired. He's a helpful person, he'll carry some things. Clothes transported in flat in plastic bags

45 min

GS Models help bring them back. He's been to some shows now. Mostly women's clothing, not many for men.

CM Do you think opportunities have changed for women?

GS Yes, mostly service occupations when I went to college.
Nurse, teacher, secretary.
Field is wide open.
Sometimes think girls today may be a little confused. Things only men could do are now being done by women.

CM Do you regret not being able to teach longer?

GS No, taught some tough grades. Started moving, didn't stay in one place very long. Didn't know when moves were coming. Stayed busy with clubs and son's classroom. Impact on career.

CM You were involved in community organizations before the fashion shows?

GS The fashion shows started in Little Rock. About eight a year

CM If you could relive any part of your life, what would it be?

GS There would be two times, I couldn't leave out either - caring for David when he was young.

CM Your son?

GS Yes, he was just so dear, a fun kid. The other period, before David was in our home. The years of dating, planning our marriage

55 min

GS Those times stand out

CM Anything I didn't ask that you would like to add?

GS I didn't tell you David was adopted. That's important to me, it was a wonderful experience. I need to get that in

CM Thank you very much

GS Wasn't as hard as I thought. Thought you were going to ask me about other women in AR and how they contributed to charities. I don't know any women in that category