

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewees: Jannie M. Turner (JT)
Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)
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Keys: James Mars Wilson, Ella Mae Whitaker, Navy nurse, World War II, Guadalcanal, Marine fighter pilot, Katharine Mars [James' mother], Galesburg (Illinois), Charles (CB) Birge Wilson [James' father], Coconino County's first county attorney, Statehood Day, Monte Vista Hotel, meat-hanging room, apple cellar, Mars Hill, Wilson Road, cattle ranches, fishing, Underground Railroad, Hiram Mars, Methodist church on San Francisco, Platt Cline book *They Came to the Mountain* about Flagstaff, Charles Birge Wilson, Jr. [Jannie's uncle], unload coal, Indian pow-wow, Route 66, WWII fighter pilot, South Pacific, Arkansas cotton farm, first nurses on Guadalcanal, final letters home, Mars Hill, Koch Field (airport), Francis Decker, Katharine Mars – flew over Grand Canyon, Tucson law school, Schnebly Hill, Sedona, Dr. Leo Schnur, Navajo Road, Emerson School, Marshall School, Norm Killips, Switchback Hill, Rotary, Naval Reserves, heart attack, Cottonwood Hospital, Dr. Kittridge, Dr. Stilley, Dr. Sitterly, church organs, Ardrey Auditorium, wooden plank road to San Diego.

TM: Today is Monday, February 14th, 2022. This is part one of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Jannie Turner. My name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Jannie. How are you today?

JT: I'm fine, thanks.

TM: Great. Jannie, may we have your permission to record this oral history over the telephone?

JT: Yes, that's fine.

TM: Thank you so much. Jannie, what year were you born?

JT: I was born in 1946, in Flagstaff.

TM: In Flagstaff, Arizona. How did your parents meet? What were their names, and how did they meet?

JT: Okay, my dad's name was James Mars Wilson, and my mother was Ella Mae Whitaker. And they met, after they -- my mom was a Navy nurse on Guadalcanal, and my dad was a Marine fighter pilot in the South Pacific. But they didn't meet until they both were, at the end of the war, when they were back in, ah, San Diego area. And that's, that's how they met. And they got married, actually, in their uniforms, in -- hmmm -- I'll have to think about that; I think it was like Chula Vista or something.

TM: Okay, what year did they get married?

JT: 1945.

TM: Okay. How do you spell your dad's middle name?

JT: M-A-R-S.

TM: That's an unusual name. How did he come by that name? Do you know?

JT: That was his mother's maiden name. His mother was from Galesburg, Illinois; her name was Katharine Mars.

TM: Okay. Where did your dad grow up?

JT: He grew up in Flagstaff; he was born in Flagstaff and grew up in Flagstaff.

TM: So he -- let's see; I'm trying to put a timeline together. He was probably born in the 1910s, or 20s?

JT: 1920. Both my parents were born in 1920.

TM: And what was, what were his folks doing in Flagstaff?

JT: Well, his dad came in, like, 1909, looking for a better place for them -- he and his wife -- to live. Katharine Mars was my grandfather's wife; he was Charles Birge Wilson -- CB, they called him. And he was a lawyer. And he moved to Flagstaff in, like, 1909. And he became a lawyer here, and a judge, over the years. But they came out then, and built a home here. So my dad was born -- later, of course, from when they first got here, but my grandfather was, he was a pretty prominent citizen, you know...

TM: What was Charles' middle name?

JT: Birge -- B-I-R-G-E. And that was his mother's maiden name!

TM: Okay! Nice. I'm sorry, you were saying that your grandfather, Charles Wilson, was a lawyer and came to town, and he became a judge. Please go on; I interrupted you there.

JT: Oh, that's okay. He was very, very active in Flagstaff; he bought an entire city block, when he first moved to Flagstaff. And it's directly across the street, west, from the courthouse downtown. And he bought that whole block in there, and then eventually sold off pieces of it, you know. But he built his law office right on the corner -- well, actually, the law office was there, in the old pictures I see it was there. It's just a little, teeny, tiny rock house. And that was the law office, and then the white, they had the big white house there. And so he just walked across the street to the courthouse, where he worked, of course. Yeah.

TM: That's nice; nice. I'm trying to think of a gentleman who had a garage right in there, and I'm thinking his name was Lester Cooper, but I could be wrong.

JT: Oh, that's probably before my time. The only garage I remember was the Babbitt's having a garage right down the street.

TM: Yeah, okay. So then he became a judge, and raised a family.

JT: Yeah, he actually was; ah, yeah, he was, you know, off and on judge. He would be a judge, and then he would be something else. But he was sworn in as Coconino County's first county attorney on Statehood Day, in the courthouse. So that was kind of neat.

TM: Wow. Okay. Did -- I'm just gonna, as names come up and I'm thinking about them, I'm gonna ask you -- do you remember a woman named Kathleen Wise?

JT: Oh, gee; I remember that name, but I don't...

TM: She was secretary to the city attorney, and to the mayor, back in the 50s, I believe. Anyway, I just put that out there. Okay. So he was off and on the Coconino County attorney, and he was the first county attorney.

JT: The first, yeah, because it wasn't, because it was a state within days, so that's when the first county attorney office was actually initiated. So, yeah. So he was, but he was in a lot of things; he was a real big-wig in the Kiwanis -- not the Kiwanis -- Rotary, in the Rotary. And in the Masons, were big in Flagstaff at that time, anyway. And he was one of the investors that invest their money in the building of the Monte Vista.

TM: Really? Wow.

JT: So, yeah. I found -- they had a plaque in the Monte Vista -- behind the counter, back in a storeroom, kind of thing. I took a group of second-graders in there, on a Flagstaff history trip, and happened to mention to the guy, that my grandfather invested. And he said, Oh! And he pulled out this plaque, and my grandfather's name was on it.

TM: Oh, my!

JT: And then he put it back in the storeroom! I have no idea where it is.

TM: Oh, my, that's lovely.

JT: Yeah, yeah. But that was fun.

TM: Yeah. So then, so your father James, did he go by Jim?

JT: Uh-huh, he did. Jimmy, as a kid.

TM: Jimmy, yeah. Did your father give, you know, speak to you, give you any stories about what it was like to grow up in Flagstaff in 1930, during the Depression?

JT: [Laughs] Well, I have a letter, written by my grandfather to my dad's mother, who was visiting her family in Illinois. And he said, Jimmy -- and the date on the letter was 1926, so he was like six-years-old. And he said, Jimmy has been hard at work hauling coal to people's houses, and chopping so many cords of firewood. And, I mean, it was work; they worked. And he and his brother, all of their needs, they went out in the woods and hunted and brought back meat. They had a meat-hanging room in the house. And so the boys hunted for the -- my grandfather never hunted a day in his life -- but both his

sons kept the family fed during the Depression with meat. He also said, my dad said, he absolutely hated raisins because it was the only fruit they could get during the Depression, and so his mother put raisins in everything. And then he grew up saying, I just don't want to eat any more raisins!

TM: It must've been really hard to get any kind of fruit in Flagstaff, during that time.

JT: Yes, it's so isolated, but, you know, we are so dependent now on semi-trucks; and in those days, I don't really know how everything got here. I know it got through...

TM: The train!

JT: ... from Sedona.

TM: Right.

JT: ... some of those, and the peach farms, and the apple farms, and stuff down in Sedona. Those guys would haul their stuff up here and sell it.

TM: That's right. Okay.

JT: But that was seasonal, you know. The rest of the time... They did have -- my grandfather also built, besides the meat-hanging room -- there was an apple cellar. He built on the side of Mars Hill; and there's a road going up Mars Hill, when you're on your way up to the Observatory, on the left there's a road that says "Wilson Road," and that was my grandfather's house and my uncle's house. And both houses had an apple cellar. So that they could keep fruit in the house, because, you know, they just had no refrigeration or anything, really, to keep it. And it was so hard to get. So when the apples came in, they would stack, you know, crates of apples in there to eat all winter long.

TM: So it was basically cold storage.

JT: Yes. It was carved into the side of the hill, so it was a cave, actually. But they had built it themselves, but it was cold storage.

TM: Nice; yeah, yeah. It was the icebox of its day, I guess.

JT: Yeah.

TM: Yeah. What else do you remember about that time?

JT: My dad, in the summers, would work on some of the cattle ranches. I have pictures of him and his brother, both -- they rode horses, and I have my dad's saddle, he had when he was just a kid. And it was made by Doc Martin, who was an important saddle maker downtown in those days. The old pictures have his saddle shop on First Street or whatever, Main Street. And so, anyway, he would go out and work on the ranches and stuff, and help out the ranchers in the summer time. You know, branding and rounding up and all that kind of stuff, they did that.

TM: Back in the day, this is 1930, 1935, when your father was ten to fifteen; I mean, it sounds like he was hauling coal and cutting wood when he was six. By the time he was ten, he would've been old

enough to do a lot of things.

JT: Yes. He did a lot of odd jobs like that, for other people, to earn money. And I do have pictures, and I don't know all of this, but I have pictures of my dad and my brother out fishing, on one of the lakes. And bringing home fish, also, for dinner. But in many of them, they're accompanied by a black guy, who I think worked for his dad. But I don't know who he was or anything; I'd like to find out... That was early on.

TM: Yeah. I know that African Americans worked in the sawmill, for good money. For the Riordans. But, yeah, it'd be fascinating to know who that might be.

JT: Yeah. And it, he may have been somebody that came out from Illinois, even. Because my grandpa's in-laws were part of the Underground.

TM: Do you remember any of that story?

JT: I just -- all I know, and I just came across it in something, that said how he -- how Hiram was his name, Hiram Mars -- who had been part of the Underground, during the Civil War era, up there in Galesburg, Illinois. I have a lot of stuff; he... I have a lot of things! I sort of ended up, I guess, being the family historian. I have a manuscript he wrote, as a kid. Growing up, they were in Kentucky; they had grown up on a plantation in Kentucky. And then moved to Galesburg. As a kid, he had servants, you know; he had a black mama -- that he called "Mama" -- and her son was his companion. He had to go hunting with him, to keep him safe when he would go coon hunting. All those things that Kentucky kids did, I guess. But they were real close to 'em in those days. And it's funny, because in his -- it's a hand-written manuscript; the writing is hard to decipher and everything. But he called his servants "Darkies." And my typewriter, I tried to type it to preserve the story, and my typewriter was one of the old ones, you know, manual. But it beeped if you made a spelling mistake, and every time I typed that word, the silly typewriter was just beeping, beeping, beeping, as I tried to type it out. I have it... the story. But, yeah. So, but then when they left Kentucky, they moved to Galesburg, and then I understand he was part of the Underground Railroad. So I'm wondering if he didn't, you know, keep some of, take some people with him. But anyway, they were out on, my dad and his brother went fishing out on one of the lakes; I can't recognize which lake it is from the old pictures.

TM: Did your grandfather serve in the Civil War?

JT: No, my grandfather did not. He was -- his dad was a mason, by trade, and also a member of the Masons. And, my grandfather...

TM: Okay. This was Charles' father?

JT: Yes, CB's father. And so, they didn't have much money or anything, and he really didn't get a formal education. He taught himself everything he needed to know to be, to pass the bar exam, and become a lawyer and a judge. He was all self-taught, because they didn't have much money for that. So, but her family, the Mars family is the ones that lived in Kentucky, and went to Galesburg.

TM: Okay. And they must have done fairly well, when they came to Flag, to have enough funding to buy a city block. Unless city blocks were pretty cheap back then, which coulda been, too.

JT: Yeah, I think that they were pretty cheap, because it was really early on. And there was, on that city block, was a church, and my grandfather donated that church, to get it off of his property. He donated that church to what he called, in his memoirs, the "Mexican Methodists." On the south side. And it's still down there. It's that church on -- ah, I think it's -- mmm -- San Francisco? I think it's on San Francisco. Anyway, it's -- and there's a plaque on it, it was a historical marker, that church was there, but. In Platt Kline's book, he's the one that mentions that my grandfather gave that to 'em, but my grandfather also mentioned it in his memoirs, that he donated that church. And the whole church was moved on a wagon; you know, horse-drawn wagon.

TM: I was gonna say, how did they get it down there?

JT: Yeah, they put it on a flat-bed, and horse-drawn, and moved it down to south San Francisco, and put it there. And it was in use -- I think it's still in use. It's been used by many different denominations over the years.

TM: Nice. And Platt Cline?

JT: He wrote a famous, some books about early Flagstaff. *They Came to the Mountain* is one of them. And about Flagstaff history, yeah.

TM: Yes. *They Came to the Mountain* is the definitive on Flagstaff history.

JT: Right. They were very -- actually, my cousin, my -- who also has the same grandfather. Her godparents were Mr. and Mrs. Kline. So they were all good friends.

TM: Okay. And so your grandfather, CW, would've known Platt. But Platt would've been young, he would've been a young guy, huh?

JT: Yes, but her -- my dad and his brother were the ones that were friends with Platt Cline.

TM: Contemporaries. Yes.

JT: Yes. And the brother is the one who is the father of my cousin, of course. And he was Charles Birge Wilson, Jr. And he went by Charles, and my grandfather went by CB.

TM: This is your uncle?

JT: Yes. And I have his memoir, also, of growing up in Flagstaff.

TM: Oh, nice. What do you, is there anything you remember from your uncle's memoirs that comes to mind?

JT: I do remem -- he has a lot of -- he went to... When he went to law school, he paid his way -- how he saved his money to pay his way to go to law school -- was he would unload ton; unload freight cars of coal at, like, two dollars a ton. How he ever got enough money to go to law school, I don't know. But I know he did that as a young man, high school, maybe.

TM: Wow. And that was here in Flagstaff? Or where was that?

JT: Uh-huh, right here. At the train station. Yep. The train would come in with coal, and somebody had to unload it in to bins that went to every house in town.

TM: Right, cause people were burning coal then to stay warm.

JT: Right, right. And he has stories about the old Indian pow-wow; and he would go to the pow-wow, or go to pow-wows. Or go even, maybe, up on the reservation. Dancing, dancing in them; and get out there and dance with them, at the pow-wow.

TM: Nice. And the Flagstaff pop-wow was famous for bringing in indigenous peoples from all across the Four Corners area!

JT: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Well, everywhere. We had Aztecs, that came up from Mexico. So, yeah. I always loved the Aztecs; they had all those feathers. Looked so pretty.

TM: Okay. Nice. So you were born in '46. Did you have any older, or younger, children -- or, brothers and sisters?

JT: I have a brother who was born in 1950. And both my parents, of course, had just served in World War II. And so my dad moved my mom here to Flagstaff after they got married in California, after the war. They packed up -- they went and purchased all of their furniture and stuff -- like beds and dressers and all that kind of stuff -- from the PX, and hauled it all out to Flagstaff. And my mom had never seen country like this, cause she was from Arkansas; and of course, soon as she left Arkansas, she went into the war and was on Guadalcanal. And they came on old Route 66, of course, which went through Kingman and, over all of the hills -- Oatman, all of those places. And my mother was halfway across that area, she was standing there in Oatman looking out across the desert they had yet to cross, and she thought, What did I get myself into? She just could not believe, cause she'd never been to Arizona, and she thought she was seeing what it was going to be like. Yeah. Then they came to Flagstaff; and, of course, the first year they were here, there was a huge snowstorm. So, she said she couldn't wait for spring, cause she was going to have a baby in the spring, and she was finally going to be out of the snow, and... I was born on May 13th, and it was in the middle of a snowstorm, there were eight inches of snow on the ground! She was disappointed.

TM: Oh, my. Did your father, or mother, ever talk about their service in the Second World War?

JT: I have all of their stuff. I have my dad's exploits during the war, I have the nurses' camp -- pictures of the nurses' camp, and stories and things; all this stuff from both of them, war stuff, yeah. They're all my dad's...

TM: Do you have a couple of things that -- interesting stories that your parents may have told you, or recorded, about their time in the service, during the war?

JT: Well, I have -- I know I have a couple of things that I remember seeing as I went through all the scrapbooks. My uncle, his wife stayed home, of course, while he was at the war. And she gathered all of the family pictures and all those kind of stuff, and while she had all this time on her hands, and she was expecting my cousin (who's a year older than I am), she made scrapbooks. For both my dad and my uncle. Of all of this stuff from, you know, from their childhood all the way through. And, so, newspaper

clippings from the war, of course, would get in there, so there were newspaper articles about my dad shooting down so many Japanese. He was in a little, one-person plane. A Dauntless? Something -- my brother told me what the name of it was. I'm looking at the picture right here on the tube. Dawson Dauntless, maybe? Anyway, those little tiny planes, like the Red Baron and stuff.

TM: Well, it wasn't a bi-plane in world War II, was it? It woulda been a fighter aircraft, I woulda have to assume.

JT: It's a little fighter plane, yeah, that has -- I'm sitting here looking at him sitting in it. And it's just room for himself; and it has, of course, little flags painted on the side from planes they shot down; you know, kept track of 'em. Anyway, but I know there was one story that... There was a big meeting of the Rotary, and some of the state senators and everything were visiting the Rotary meeting, and giving a talk. And the back door opened, and my dad came home on leave, came home to see his dad, who was at the meeting, and he walked in. And they said all the men in the whole meeting jumped up and ran to the door to beat him on the back and congratulate him. And senators were left with no audience! There was an article in the, it was an article in the Flagstaff paper. So I have that. Yes, and...

TM: And what about your mom? Did she talk about her time as a nurse?

JT: Yes. My mom, she grew up in Arkansas, in a place called Walnut Ridge. And they were cotton farmers. And I have pictures, even when I was a child, of going -- my parents went to visit the farm. And my grandfather, at that time, was still walking behind a mule with a plow, in a field. So, in his overalls; I mean -- very much like he always did, they're old pictures. But, it was a cotton farm, and they only had two children and they didn't have any workers. And so from the time my mom was two or three years old, she was in the fields picking cotton. And she said, you know, she hated it, hated it. Cold, and their fingers would get bloody, because the cotton is sharp. And she couldn't wait to get out of that town, and to get out of Arkansas, as she grew up. And as soon as she graduated high school, she went straight to nurses' training in Memphis. And from nurses' training, she joined the service and went to Guadalcanal. And she was one of the first 50 nurses on Guadalcanal, and they built the entire hospital area. And so, I have lots of pictures, and stories from her that, you know, I can't -- I do remember; you know, some horror stories. And some things, she said -- one of her jobs, the worst job she had, she said, during the war, was she had to sit by these young boys -- 17, 18-year-old boys who were dying -- and they dictated letters home to their mothers. And she had to write the letter, and send it for them, because they couldn't write -- they were too badly injured. So she would write the letter and have to send it back to their mothers. And she said that was the hardest job, because of course the boys were just in tears. Telling their mothers how much they loved them; and, you know, Sorry I'm never coming home, that kind of stuff. And she said that was the worst, the worst of all. She said the bedpans, the blood, was nothing compared to having to do that job.

TM: I bet.

JT: So. When my parents came to Flagstaff, we had a couple of years here in town. And they lived in Clark Homes, which was more housing.

TM: On the west side of Flagstaff?

JT: Yes. And then they rented a little house up on Mars Hill, right downhill from my dad -- my grandfather and his, Charles' house. They would have had a house on that Wilson Road. And so they

had a little place right there. And it had a wood-burning stove, which was the only way that she could cook. She had to learn to cook on top of this wood-burning stove. And she'd never had to do that before! But it was kind of a primitive thing.

TM: Well, it was what everybody was doing at the time. Yeah. Remind me a minute; go back for a minute to Jimmy, your father. When did he join the service? Did he graduate from high school and then join the service?

JT: Yes, he graduated in 1938, and he got a football scholarship to go to the University of the Pacific in California. But he had an ankle injury that kept him from playing, and then the war broke out, and he just went right out and signed up. He was -- he had learned how to fly airplanes in Flagstaff.

TM: Tell me that story.

JT: Well, out at Koch [JT: Pronounced Coke.] Field, Francis Decker, who was another local person, he was flying airplanes out there. And my dad and my uncle were friends of his, and they would go out there and they would, they learned to fly.

TM: Okay. And where was that?

JT: ...It's somebody's last name. That was out in the Doney Park area of Flagstaff, north 89A.

TM: Okay. So on the far, east side of the San Francisco Peaks. Okay?

JT: Uh-huh. Yeah. And so they learned to fly out there; just, I don't know exactly what kinds of planes they flew.

TM: What got your dad interested in flying? Back, cause this woulda been -- and I'm trying to work out the math -- 1935-ish? '36?

JT: Right, yeah. His mother had a brother who was a flyer. And so I think that's the only reason that she would actually give him permission to let him be flying in those planes in those days. But! She was actually the first woman -- according to a newspaper article I have -- she was the first woman to fly over the Grand Canyon in an airplane.

TM: Oh, wow!

JT: So, apparently, you know, it was something that they were into.

TM: Remind me of her name again?

JT: Katharine Mars. And her brother's name was also James Mars. And he ended up -- well -- they ended up with no survivors. It was he and his wife, and one son, and all of them are deceased and the son didn't have any children, so. But I have all of his memories, and pictures, and everything that he did. And he rubbed elbows with Lindbergh, and all these other people.

TM: Wow! So let's go back to Katharine for a minute. Can you tell me more about her flight over the Grand Canyon? Do you remember, like, when that was, and how she got in on that plane?

JT: I do have the newspaper clipping somewhere, and I'll look it up and find it. Because I've been trying really hard to keep all these peoples' histories, in compartments, you know, in files, and all this other stuff! Because I have so much.

TM: Good for you.

JT: So. But, that was in the *Arizona Daily Sun*, which I think was probably the *Coconino Daily Sun* at that time.

TM: I'll try and look that up online, see if I can find it.

JT: Yeah. She also, she was very adventurous for a woman. She rode, with a couple of other people, up on the San Francisco Peaks, with the shepherders. And camped, and ate out of the Dutch ovens, and all that kind of stuff. And she went out in to the, what she called them -- I guess they were...? -- she called 'em ice caves, which are out by the Cinder Hills and stuff. And did a lot of this kind of stuff, went to Walnut Canyon, all these places. And she wrote! She was quite educated, and she wrote articles about it. She wrote it back home to her family, and they published it in the newspaper. So I have some of her hand-written ones, and I also have the ones that were published in the paper.

TM: Did she go under Katharine Mars, or did she have a pen name?

JT: Uh-huh. No, she was Katharine Mars.

TM: Okay. Great.

JT: So, and I have those things, too.

TM: Okay, so now we're going back to your dad, back to Jimmy. And Jimmy's learning how to fly with Francis Decker. Do you know what kind of plane he was learning how to fly?

JT: I just don't. I'm sure, you know...

TM: And did he get his license then?

JT: Uh-huh. And then he joined the Navy, when World War II broke out, when he joined the Navy. And the Marines were looking for pilots. So my dad had a Navy uniform, and he had a Navy office -- I don't know whatever it was, first time; I have pictures of him in his Navy uniform. But then the Marine Corps needed pilots, see, cause they were starting a flying branch of the Marine Corps. And so they took some of the pilots from the Navy, and he's one they chose. So he was in the Navy, and he was also, then, in the Marines. We have pictures of him in both uniforms.

TM: Nice! Did he ever talk about his flying in and around Flagstaff, before he went to the University of the Pacific?

JT: He did talk about just how Flagstaff weather is so unpredictable, that sometimes with the winds, or with, you know, the bad weather; things would -- he was always concerned with when they were getting ready to build an airport. He said, They've got to be really careful about the angle of the wind, and this

and that. Because he had been up and down in all of that, so.

TM: Yeah. What was he studying in California?

JT: Law. Like his dad. So, yeah; he started out... And my Uncle Charles, his brother, was also a lawyer. So...

TM: Okay. So in a way, he was following his flying uncle and his father, and other family members, in law.

JT: Right. So, yeah. So when he got back, he -- but the war broke out before he could get very far into law school. So when my mother and he came back, they moved to Tucson for a while, and we lived in a Quonset hut while he finished law school. She was a nurse in the hospital, and he was in law school. And so, he went to class during the day, while she stayed home with me. And then they met at a certain corner, and transferred me back and forth; and so he went home and kept me at night, while she worked the nightshift at the hospital.

TM: Did she work at St. Mary's? I'm trying to figure out which hospital she might've worked at. Coulda been Tucson Medical Center... I do not know the history of Tucson hospitals that well, but St. Mary's was there forever.

JT: The Quonset huts were right adjacent to the campus -- the U of A campus, which is where my dad was going to law school. Cause they walked; both of them walked from the Quonset hut to their work. So it had to be close to the university; maybe it was the original university hospital.

TM: Interesting. Okay. So, as you grew up, did your mom keep working in, as a nurse?

JT: She worked in a nurse, as a nurse, in the Flagstaff hospital. And when we first -- um -- jumping ahead -- but then after my dad became a lawyer, and finished down at Tucson, we came back to Flagstaff. And my grandfather had the business as C. B. Wilson and Wilson, Compton, and Wilson was -- or at some time it was just Wilson and Son. But it was him and my Uncle Charles. But he told my dad, You know, all of those farmers that bring their fruit, and all that kind of stuff, up to Flagstaff; you know, there's ranchers and there's farmers down there in Sedona, and they have to come up Schnebly Hill in horse-drawn wagons, and come to my office every time they need a deed drawn, or a will made. And he said, Why don't you just move to Sedona and have a Sedona office. Where they can come to you and do it, and it'll still be affiliated with us, and where they know everybody. But they don't have to make the trip to Flagstaff. So that's what we did -- in 1954, we moved to Sedona.

TM: Schnebly Hill was a steep, steep road that climbed out of Sedona, up to the flat country, the flat highlands, and then headed off to Flagstaff. It musta taken them a day! -- with a wagon, just to make that trip.

JT: Sometimes it took two or three, yeah. And of course, they would sometimes come with their whole family, because the wives didn't have much in the way of stores, or anything in Sedona, to buy material, or flour, any of that kind of stuff. So they would come up and, you know, use it for a day. But by the '50s, when we moved down there, we had more in the way of stores. But they still didn't have a lawyer; they didn't have any way to get legal work done. And of course, since they were ranchers and farmers, they all had to have deeds of their property. So that was really pretty much the main thing my dad did;

but he also did -- he didn't do criminal cases -- he just did all of those basic needs. And he did it, in return, for a side of beef, or a barrel of pickles, or... We had all kinds of crazy things like that around! Cause he didn't like taking their money for doing these necessary things! So we did a lot of bargaining down there. But it was, that's when we were down there. When my mother worked for a doctor, a country doctor, that worked down there, and... Dr. Leo Schnur. He was quite famous in Sedona.

TM: And Dr. Schnur was the physician at the Grand Canyon Hospital, as well.

JT: Ah, yeah; yeah. So, he was, he had an office in Sedona, and my mom was his nurse.

TM: Okay. Oh, super! So do you know Paul Schnur? Dr. Leo Schnur's son.

JT: Yes, I remember him, from being... I haven't, it's not somebody I've associated with, really; I don't think we were the same age group. But, yeah, I knew him, so.

TM: Okay. When did you guys move to Sedona then?

JT: In '54. And, so, my dad was Sedona's first lawyer. So he opened his office right on the main drag downtown.

TM: Did he keep flying? Did you guys have a plane, or did he give up on that?

JT: No, he gave up all that when he got married and had kids.

TM: Okay; okay. What are your earliest recollections of Flagstaff? You moved out of town when you were eight, but do you have any early recollections that you're, of being a small girl in Flagstaff?

JT: Oh, yes. And I, you know, it's like I said, I have some pictures and stuff. We built a house on, backing up to Navajo Road, which was in what they called Mortgage Flats, out there. And my dad, he's cutting -- I have a picture from the newspaper of him cutting the ribbon for house building in that area. And pictures from my front yard where there's not a house past our yard.

TM: Where was your house? Where did he build your house?

JT: It was on Hopi, which backs up to Navajo. And our house on Hopi -- well, it was, like, 113, back in those days, but the numbers are different now.

TM: So would it have been the first house to go in in that whole area?

JT: Uh-huh. On Hopi, it was the first house.

TM: Okay. And that would've been 1948---ish?

JT: Just about. I was, I think I was about five. I was going to kindergarten at Emerson School; I walked to Emerson School.

TM: '51, then.

JT: Yeah.

TM: I am speaking to you from Navajo Road in one of those houses. It's a small world here!

JT: Yes. Well, do you know which house has the Killips?

TM: They're on North Navajo, aren't they?

JT: Um, they're right... No, it's right by Marshall School.

TM: Yes. So, do you remember Mrs. Wolf: Mr. and Mrs. Wolf?

JT: Oh, yeah. I lived right next to her.

TM: Okay. They had a son named Tom, and Tom is in Phoenix. And he comes up -- his kids come up every now and then. They still have that house. And that was on the corner, there, of -- is it Navajo and Bonito?

JT: Ah, yeah, I think so.

TM: There, yeah, right next to Marshall School.

JT: Right. And I walked from that house, down to Emerson School, which is where the library is downtown. And so, and I walked with Norm Killip, and some of the other kids that grew up in that neighborhood. And so, and then we were right behind Norm's house, because that was like the first kid I learned, that I met. And he's still our best friend! So, yeah. So we lived there, and from our yard, there weren't any houses north. There was a dairy farm, way out there, and a few things like that, but there were no houses.

TM: And the soil here is lovely. Jim Sanders lives next door, his wife Lola, or Pete, she goes by. They bought in, early on, when the, after the ribbon-cutting. He served in World War II. And mentioned the dairy farm, and how nice the soil was from that.

JT: Yes. And, of course, all that area has water, and everybody has wells.

TM: That's right. There's a little perched aquifer; you go down 15 feet, and there's water there.

JT: That's right; that's right. My husband grew up on Navajo and Havasupai, right at the corner. And they had a well, also. So we, everybody in that area; see the DeMiguels -- I lived next door to the DeMiguels when I was, for a little while when I was married -- and we all had wells and stuff. And the yards looked great, we had such beautiful flowers! And it's a wonderful area.

TM: What else do you remember as a little girl, from that time?

JT: Um, I remember, you know, little things like, we would put out wading pools, and play in the yard, and -- you know, that kind of stuff. But just mostly what we did in the neighborhood, I think. So. But of course I never, I never really left Flagstaff. Because even though we were in Sedona, we came up -- my dad was also in Rotary, and he was also in, you know, in these organizations. So we were in Flagstaff at

least three days a week, every week. And then when I was in high school, of course, I rode the school bus, from Sedona to Flagstaff and back, every day.

TM: Wait a minute! Up the Switchback Hill?

JT: Yep.

TM: Every day?

JT: Yeah.

TM: That must've been exciting.

JT: The Sedona School went -- what? -- first grade through eighth grade. And we had 40 kids in the whole school. So it was just a little, little group; and I have a lot of memories with that. And I'm still hanging around with my grade school girlfriends in Sedona. But, yeah, so we, it was Sedona Grade School down there, and then after eighth grade, then everybody rode the bus. But the county line goes right straight through, by the airport turnoff...

TM: In Sedona?

JT: And so after -- yeah. So after we got out of eighth grade, the kids that lived on the other side of the line, had to go to Mingus and Cottonwood, to high school. And everybody on the east side of the line went to Flagstaff High School.

TM: Wow. So were you happy you had to go to Flag, or would you have rather gone off to Mingus?

JT: Oh, no, I would've gone to Flagstaff; Mingus was... Cottonwood is not a real desirable place in those days.

TM: Okay, I'll be careful here -- mind my P's and Q's.

JT: I know.

TM: No, but no, you were from Flagstaff, and you woulda had friends there...

JT: Oh, yeah.

TM: So that makes way more sense.

JT: Yeah. We already had friends, and stuff, and I could stay at my grandfather's house, overnight if there was a school dance, or something I wanted to go to. The downside was, of course, that we couldn't stay after school, like to play football, or to be a cheerleader, or to go to a club. Because we had to ride the bus; there was only one bus, and we had to be on it. So, that was kind of the downside. But, I was, you know, kind of lucky, because I could stay at my cousin's house, or my grandfather's house, when there was an activity at night that I wanted to go to, like, you know, homecoming dance, or whatever.

TM: Nice. Okay. And then it sounds like your dad, as you mentioned, three days a week would come to Flagstaff. I'm assuming he would do some business, as well, with his father, for the lawyer, or for the legal company. And so he basically -- I'm assuming here, help me out -- he would do legal work for people in Flagstaff and Sedona.

JT: Mostly Sedona. Cause he would come up and go and coordinate it all with my grandfather. You know, because my grandfather had all those original customers, clients. And he already had paperwork on them; a file, like, for each ranch, or whatever. So they'd go down and say, Okay, well if he sold this property, so we have to update this, you know, this piece of land, and that kind of stuff, that they would do. But my dad was in the Naval Reserves, and so he came up for that meeting every week, and he also came to go to the Rotary. And they did several things like that.

TM: How many years was your father in the Reserves?

JT: Oooh. He was in the Reserves for most of his life. Unfortunately, he died in '66. He didn't have a long life. So; but, yeah, he -- most of his life, was spent in the Naval Reserves. I remember when my Uncle Charles retired from the Naval Reserves -- he and John (Doctor John Stilly) -- had gone into the Service together, and had been friends. And they had a big party together, when they retired. But my dad still had more years to go.

TM: Huh. How did your father die? In 1966?

JT: He had a heart attack. He had his first heart attack when he was 32. And we drove to the Cottonwood Hospital; my mother was driving; my brother and I were in the back seat. And my dad was saying, I had mumps as a child, it can't be mumps! But it's just right here in my jaw, all the same! Cause it was the carotid artery thing. Anyway, they got to the Cottonwood Hospital, and they decided that he had a brain tumor! And they shaved his head, to go in and operate. And then they hooked up the EKG and realized he was having a heart attack. And so, just the fact that he then lived, to get to a Phoenix hospital, while he was in the middle of a heart attack, was a pretty amazing thing. But he was six weeks in Phoenix, in the hospital. While we, my brother and I, got farmed out to other families in town, so we wouldn't miss school. But yeah, he'd -- but then he had heart attacks, every year -- every year he'd have a heart attack or two.

TM: Was he a smoker?

JT: Well, yeah; all those...

TM: They all, yeah.

JT: World War II guys came home smoking. And my mom, too. Both of them were smokers. And so, anyway, he, if he could have had a bypass -- you know, in those days -- he would've lived. But he couldn't do that.

TM: Right. I mean, that's one thing, looking at the technology of cardiac surgery today versus -- well, this would've been in what? 1950s, 1960s -- so much different.

JT: Yeah. So we did not go to Cottonwood for any doctor services ever again! We went to Flagstaff.

TM: Well, that's a real interesting question...

JT: Of course, we knew everybody in Flagstaff; it's just that Cottonwood was so much closer for my mom to drive in an emergency.

TM: Right. ...Of where people went for healthcare. People at Grand Canyon would go down to the Verde Valley, for healthcare, because the tiny little clinic, or little hospital, at the South Rim didn't have much. And I'm not sure that Flagstaff did, either, for a while?

JT: Yeah, well, we had a few doctors and stuff up here, but apparently... We used Dr. Curran -- I know was my dad's heart doctor. But my mother -- when we first moved back to Flagstaff, my mom became the nurse for Dr. Kittridge. And then they were, of course, friends with Dr. Stilley, and Dr. Sitterly, and Dr. Sechraste. Anyway, a lot of the doctors were personal friends of our family. Kittridge Road is named after that family. And that's close to you; further north. Yeah, that was Dr. Kittridge, and he was a general practitioner here in town. My mom worked for him, and, of course, they were friends of ours. And his brother -- Dr. Kittridge's brother -- is the one, if you go down to Oak Creek, there's one, Forest Houses is a kind of resort thing, across the creek. And there's a statue of a colt, on a post, just as you go past it. Right by Don Hole's Cabins. And he was an artist; he was a very famous artist, and he did a lot of sculpturing, that kind of stuff. So one was a doctor and one was a...

TM: This is Dr. Kittridge's brother?

JT: Yes. And they were both very local, and everybody knew them.

TM: Okay. And then Stilley?

JT: Ah, Stilley. There were two of them: Sitterly and Stilley. But Dr. Stilley is the one who built the organs in the Episcopal church, and in the NAU Auditorium over there.

TM: Really! You mean funded the building? Or did he actually build them?

JT: Yes. No, he built them.

TM: Really!

KT: He built them.

TM: Okay. But he was a physician!

JT: Yes.

TM: So he built organs, like, in his spare time?

JT: He was, actually, a dentist. And, yes. And he studied in Europe, he went to all of those great cathedrals and studied all their organs, and everything. And came back and built them. The one in the Episcopal church and the one in the auditorium -- it's named after somebody, I know.

TM: The Ardrey? Ardrey Auditorium?

JT: Yes, Ardrey Auditorium. And there's a plaque right by it that says it was built by Dr. Stilley. And his mom and my mom were close friends, too.

TM: Nice. A lot of just really, intelligent, creative people.

JT: Yes. Yeah, it was funny, because, you know, it was a small town -- not a lot of people knew about it. It was just kind of a wide spot on the Route 66 to most people, but we had a lot of very intelligent, smart, hard-working people here. It was just great. Actually, it was great growing up here.

TM: Nice. And I was thinking about the tourist flow at the time, to get to the South Rim of Grand Canyon, would've mostly been coming off Route 66 out of Williams.

JT: Uh-huh.

TM: Is that right?

JT: And Cameron, out by Cameron, that turn-off.

TM: Oh, that's right. There were coming from the East Rim Drive. So they would bypass Flagstaff altogether.

JT: Right.

TM: Anyone who was coming south, from...

JT: Uh-huh, they'd bypass it completely. And, of course, the road to Phoenix didn't exist.

TM: Right, the highway...

JT: When we went to Phoenix, we had to go through Prescott. And over Yarnell Hill, and through Wickenburg.

TM: Right. Go Congress and the Beeline Highway -- not the Beeline, but the Congress Junction, and then down the highway that went to Kingman, and Hoover Dam.

JT: Right.

TM: Down that way to Phoenix. Okay.

JT: My grandfather was cousins to Wyatt Earp. And he would go to California, and visit Wyatt, sometimes. Back in his day. And he said, he had to carry a broom, because it was a wooden road. And of course the dust would blow out on that desert, and he would have to get out, and he would have to sweep, for like a mile. And then get back in his old, whatever the old car was -- Model T. And drive it to where he'd stopped sweeping, and then get out and sweep another mile!

TM: This was the wooden road out to San Diego? Out through the sand dunes!

JT: Right, right. It was a mess. And he gave me a list of the stuff that he had to carry in his car. You know, he had to have water, and he had to have tools, and he had to have, you know, rugs to put under the tires in case he got stuck, and he had to have all this stuff! It was a major thing, and it took days! He had to sleep in the car. Crazy. Yeah.

TM: Wow. Yeah. And we take all this for granted, just, you know, San Diego's only seven hours away! Just drive down there. Didn't have to sweep the sand off the wooden plank road. Gosh.

JT: Yeah. Hysterical.

TM: That's amazing. Um, Jannie, we've been yik-yakking almost an hour here. I've had a lovely time.

JT: Of course I have too.

TM: I hope you have, too; this is really neat. I hope you're willing that we can do this again, because I've certainly learned a lot. And I have a ton of questions for you about what you remember about your first years in Sedona. But with that, I think maybe we should hold up here. Is there anything else, though, that you're like, Wait, I want to make sure I mention such-and-such, with the ground we've just covered?

JT: Um, no, I think that's fine.

TM: Okay. All right. Well, with that, this will conclude Part One of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Jannie Turner. Today is Monday, it's February 14th, 2022. My name is Tom Martin. And Jannie, thank you so very much.

JT: Thank you! And we'll talk to you again soon.

END of Jannie Turner interview, Part One.