

1

Narration: This interview is being given to Linda Klopp by her husband, Carl Klopp who is the interviewer.

CK: Linda, when were you born?

LK: I was born on August 11, 1945 at approximately 10:30 a.m. in the morning.

CK: Where was that at?

LK: Elizabeth City, North Carolina

CK: Were you born in a hospital and did you have anyone in your attendance or were you born at home?

LK: I was born in an Army hospital. My father was in the Armed Services at the time - he was in the Army. I was born on a military base in a hospital.

CK: Was there any trouble with your birth?

LK: No, none that I recollect.

CK: Were you the oldest in your family?

LK: I was the first born so yes, you might say, I was the oldest.

CK: How many siblings followed?

LK: I have a sister who was born in 1948 and in between, I guess within a 10 year span from the time that I was born, my mother was pregnant and miscarried about four or five times.

CK: How many years was your father in the Army before he got out, and after that, what did he do for a living?

LK: Our father was in the Army for about six years and after he left the Army, he went into the Navy for perhaps two or three more years. After he got out of the service, we moved to a small, little mining town in Virginia called Fremont, Virginia which was in the Appalachian region of Virginia and my father became a coal miner, which he probably did until I was about 11 years old.

CK: When your father was in the military, did your mother do any kind of work?

LK: No, my mother was a housewife. She stayed home and took care of me and my sister so she didn't have the opportunity to work. I really don't think there were any women working outside the home in that area that we lived in.

CK: That probably provided a limited income so what kind of childhood did you have before you went to Virginia.

LK: With my father being in service, probably a fairly meager existence. The military didn't pay very well. I think my father was making \$75-\$100 per month at that time, and maybe that's even stretching it a bit. When he was a coal miner, he didn't make much money so we were a poor family.

CK: When your father was in the military, was he stationed close to home where you could get food from the PX?

LK: When he was in the Army, we lived on a base. When he was in the Navy, we lived in one area and he was away on duty.

CK: What kind of school did you attend when your father was in the military?

LK: Well, I didn't actually attend any schools while he was in the military. When we moved to Virginia, the very first school that I attended was a pretty small structure because the area that we lived in was very sparsely populated. It was a very small town - it was a mining town. The kind of school that I attended, the teacher had three grades in one classroom - there was first, second, and third grade and there were probably a total of 12 or 14 of us in the classroom. The teacher would give the first grade something to do, then the second grade and third grades something to do. She was constantly back and forth with

each particular grade. There weren't very many kids going to that school - maybe at the most, about 60.

CK: This town in this coal mining area, what was that like. Did it have paved streets? Did you have a car? Did your mother drive you anywhere?

LK: Yes, we did have a car. The area that we lived in was a little suburb of the coal mining town. No, I don't think they had paved streets. We did have a car and my father taught my mother how to drive, at great risk - it was pretty exciting when she was learning how to drive because we had a lot of near misses.

CK: Was there any foreigners in that town?

LK: No, there were no foreigners. It was basically white - remembering I came from the south. I cannot recall any foreigners. Everyone could speak the same language. There were very few blacks. I don't remember that there were any foreigners.

CK: Was there any violence in the town with unions? Was there anything like that or was everything most of the time pretty peaceful?

LK: Pretty peaceful, I think. I don't recall any unions. There was a convict camp about two miles down the river from where we lived and I do recall "accidents" happening there quite a bit. For the most part, the camp consisted of black men. I can remember my father mentioning that maybe there were a few white men there. One time these prisoners were playing some kind of ballgame and one of the prisoners slipped and fell in the river. They didn't go to a lot of trouble to look for his body because he was a black man. I'll tell you more about the prejudice issue later.

CK: Did you attend church regularly and what denominations were there?

LK: Oh yes, I attended church quite regularly because my mother and father made me attend church. Church as the big social part of our existence. People attended church on Sunday, sometimes all day, Sunday evenings, Wednesday evenings. It was called Freewill Baptist Church. It was a Fundamentalist type of church. Women were not supposed to cut their hair, wear jewelry, make-up. Very very basic type of religion. Lots of praying, footwashing, speaking in tongues. We would interact with other churches maybe once a month and have, what we used to refer to as, dinner on the ground. Everybody would bring lunches and there would be all day preaching, all day singing, and it was a real social time for the

kids. The adults were very serious - it was a real serious part of their lives. One thing I particularly remember was funerals. Whenever someone died, the body of the deceased would be embalmed at the funeral home and then would remain at their house until the time of the funeral. There was a dead body in the home for maybe two or three days. I was very scared of death and would dream about seeing these bodies.

CK: Was there any trauma in your family while you were growing up, either with you or your parents or your sister? Anything that might have changed your ideas toward life?

LK: Well probably one of the things that was the biggest trauma in my family was my being so ill as a child. When I was born, I didn't have a bridge in my nose and, at the time, it was a rarity. I forget the medical terminology for it, but they didn't really expect me to live so I had numerous operations, had my head shaved, I was in the hospital a lot and this was all prior to the age of six. I was in and out of hospitals a lot. My parents received a lot of publicity, donations were taken, people gave to funds to help with the hospitalization, and fortunately, since my father was in the military at the time, they paid for a lot of it, but there were still a lot of medical expenses that they had to take care of themselves. I guess you might say that was one of the most traumatic things that happened in my family.

CK: Do you recall the different hospitals you were in?

LK: Well, I do remember being in the hospital a lot - it almost seemed like a regular part of my life. I remember a hospital in Lebanon and Abingdon, Virginia, the University of Virginia Hospital, and I also remember being in the Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, D.C. That was probably one of the best times that I had in the hospital - they treated me in such a special way. I didn't realize the reason that I was being treated so special was because they thought I was going to die.

CK: How did your family take this? Did it make it harder on your family?

LK: Yes it did. Especially when my sister came along and my father tried to get a lot of leave from the military and sometimes that was pretty difficult to do, but my mother recalls staying by my bedside almost constantly. It was very draining on them emotionally - it was a pretty bad time.

CK: What nationality was your father and mother and what generation were they in this country?

LK: I think they were third generation. My mother was part Indian and Irish.

CK: What type of Indian?

LK: Cherokee and my father was German.

CK: What family ties did they have with their parents or grandparents? Did they ever help with some of your illness and financial problems?

LK: My mother's and father's parents?

CK: Yes.

LK: No, they were very poor. My mother and father both came from a very large family. I think there was 14 in my father's family and 12 in my mother's family. They came from very large families that were very poor so it was really quite the reverse. It was probably that my mother and father could afford to take care of their parents rather than getting financial support from their families.

CK: Were there any Indians in that area?

LK: Not that I recall.

CK: Did your father belong to a Union?

LK: I think he belonged to the AFL-CIO. I remember him talking about John L. Lewis a lot. I remember seeing pictures of him and I was quite impressed by his bushy eyebrows.

CK: What was sex education like in those days? What books were considered something that you would read in school to give you more ideas about relations with the opposite sex?

LK: Well at that age, and when I was living in Virginia, and I lived there up until I was in the fourth grade, any kind of sex education was unheard of. You didn't discuss things like that.

CK: Were you ever lectured by your parents on the birds and the bees?

LK: Never.

CK: What did you do to seek information in your puberty stage to learn more about sex?

LK: When I was in my puberty stage, I was living in another part of Virginia at the time and we read books that would show diagrams. In health class, we touched a bit on sex education, but never about pregnancy, birth control.

CK: What were you expected to do around your house in your younger years?

LK: When we moved to Hampton, Virginia...

CK: How old were you when you moved to Hampton?

LK: Oh, I was about ten. My father started working as a mechanic at that time and my mother started working as a bookkeeper and so my sister and I were expected, when we came home from school, to do all the chores around the house. My sister and I literally kept the household going. We did washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning, everything that was to be done around the house.

CK: What forms of discipline were used if you didn't do what you were asked to do?

LK: My father once or twice might have slapped me. I can barely recall his disciplining me because it hurt him to have to discipline me. I got talks from my father - he would talk to me and tell me how much I had hurt him and that I really shouldn't do things like that - if I had done something that was displeasing to him. I had so much respect for him and loved him so much that was more than enough to take care of any punishment that I needed. On the other hand, my mother was a very stern disciplinarian. She would probably beat me within an inch of my life. Today that might be considered child abuse. She had a very bad temper and she would slap me or make me go out and cut a switch from off the tree and she would beat me with that around the legs or the lower part of my body.

CK: How old were you when you started dating? What restrictions were placed on you when you started dating?

LK: Well, I was going steady at the age of 12, but going steady meant that the guy could come to my house and sit there under my father's supervision and watch TV. He could spend the evening with us - maybe four or five hours - and then I could walk him to the door and kiss him goodnight. I was not allowed to go out in a car with a member of the opposite sex until I was 16, and then when I went out, I couldn't go out without double dating with another couple. My father was very strict and he didn't want me to get into any kind of trouble so he kept a pretty watchful eye over me most of the time. It was quite awhile before I had any kind of social life and started dating.

CK: When you were young, and in your teen-age years, did you go to any bands or did you have a chance to see any famous people?

LK: No, not really. I just went to sock hops every Friday night or any chance that we could, but I don't ever recall seeing any famous people?

CK: Did you drink and party a lot during your teen-age years?

LK: Maybe about the time I was 17 - I started making up for lost time so every chance I got, I was partying and having a good time.

CK: What did you and your family do for recreation in the home or were there any special places that you and your family liked to go?

LK: We lived on the Chesapeake Bay and we used to go to the beach a lot. For family type of entertainment, we'd go to the beach or take a vacation together. My family liked to play cards a lot. We would play monopoly and I particularly enjoyed working jigsaw puzzles.

CK: When did you meet your first spouse?

LK: When I was 23, I moved to Washington, D. C. and was working at the Wax Museum part time. I was working for a law firm - it was a very interesting job by the way - and the lawyer was a lawyer for the Food and Drug Administration. I didn't really have any social life right away so I decided to get a part-time job and make some extra money. While I was working there part-time, there was a guy who was working as a security guard and I was working as a cashier. The security guard became my first husband.

CK: How long did you go with him before you got married?

LK: About six months. We lived together about three of those six months.

CK: Did you have a wedding or were you married by a justice of the peace?

LK: A justice of the peace. We went to Maryland, Upper Marlboro County, Maryland, to get married.

CK: What were the restrictions on marriage then? Did you have to have a blood test or were you advised on family planning by anyone up there?

LK: We didn't have to have a blood test. All we had to do was swear that we had never been married before, show some identification, and we were married by a justice of the peace.

CK: Did you have any children by your first marriage?

LK: No, I didn't.

CK: What did your husband do for a living?

LK: My husband was in the Army - a recruiter for the Army.

CK: Did you continue to work after you got married?

LK: Yes, I continued to work. I had worked for the lawyer for some time and then I worked for an insurance agency. Then we moved. He was transferred to Chicago. I got a job there as a clerk in an insurance agency.

CK: How did your first marriage last?

LK: Approximately three years. We started having difficulties in the second year of our marriage and he started working part-time to supplement his income. He was wanting to get out of the Army. He did get out and couldn't seem to make an adjustment to life on the outside so he decided to become a career soldier. He worked part-time in Chicago in addition to his recruiting duties with the Army.

CK: Was there anything that you and your husband did special at that time? Did you belong to any clubs?

LK: No, it was a rather dull marriage. We didn't do much of anything socially.

CK: Going back a little bit, what was the first job that you ever held?

LK: The first job I held was as a clerk in a drycleaning store. I had that job for about three months.

CK: What were the working conditions on that job?

LK: I think the pay was about \$2.45 per hour and the working conditions were pretty good. I just seemed to work a lot and didn't make much money. That job was not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

CK: How many hours a week did you work?

LK: Around 30-40.

CK: Did you have holidays off and paid vacations?

LK: I wasn't there long enough to get a paid vacation. I did have holidays off - mostly Jewish holidays, because the owner of the store was Jewish.

CK: What was the next job that you had after that?

LK: One of my girlfriends that I had gone to high school and college with, her dad was a lawyer, a corporate attorney, so when I dropped out of college, he gave me a job for about \$45 a week as a legal secretary. I worked for him for about two years. That was an exciting job. He used to go to Europe during the summer and I was the only one in the office. Since I loved going to the beach, I would call the answering service, have them pick up all the calls, and I would spend the day sunning and socializing on the beach.

CK: What happened after that job?

LK: Well, I decided I wanted to live in the big city. I was tired of Virginia. I decided to strike out on my own and go to Washington, D.C. That's when I moved to Washington, D.C.

CK: That's where you met your husband?

LK: Right.

CK: After you moved to Chicago and got a divorce from your husband, what was life like after that?

LK: Perhaps I'd better back up a little to answer that question. In 1970 my first husband, who was working at a hotel, had met someone there by the name of Carl Klopp and my first husband and I had never done anything like go to the racetrack or exciting things like that so this friend that he met, who was a doorman at the hotel on LaSalle Street, became a friend of ours and we went to the track where he showed us how to gamble and do some fun things that we had never done before. My first impressions of this friend, Carl, were pretty negative. Carl seemed like a real macho individual to me and I wasn't used to anyone like that. He had his hair slicked back and he wore short-sleeved t-shirts with his cigarettes rolled up in the sleeves. That just totally turned me off. I thought this guy had a real macho image, but the more I got to know him the more I got to like. I thought I would like to have a relationship with him. After my divorce, Carl and I started seeing each other and it wasn't long after that, that we started living together. That was back in 1971. The first date that we ever had was Washington's birthday and we've been together ever since.

DK: What led you to come to Rock Springs, when did you come to Rock Springs, and what led up to your coming to Rock Springs?

LK: It will take a little bit of time to tell this to you, but at the time I was working in Chicago for a man who had properties in Aspen, Colorado. I worked for him for about three years and told him that I wanted to take a vacation out to Aspen. Carl and I took a vacation out to Aspen and loved it out West! We decided that we wanted to live out West. When we got back to Chicago, I told my boss that I would work for about another six months, but then we wanted to move to Aspen. I asked for his help in finding a job out there. He did help me and I got a job in Aspen as reservations manager. Carl got a job working for the Pitkin County Road Department. We lived there from June of '76 through February of '77. We were in Aspen the year that they had no snow. They cut back on the hours that I was working because reservations were being cut back and since there was no snow, there wasn't much for the road crew to do, Carl wasn't working much either. One of the interesting things that happened when we were living in Aspen - perhaps it happened a year before we moved there in the spring of '76 - was Claudine Longet shot Spider Sabich. That was a really big thing in the town of Aspen. When we were living there the trial was going on and her husband, Andy Williams, was at the trial everyday. According to the newspaper accounts, she shot him in cold-blood (jealousy was the motive),

but because of her celebrity status, she had to spend 30 days in the Aspen jail. She only spent the week-ends there and the jail cell was fixed up for her stay. Needless to say, there was a lot of resentment and hate for her there. Spider Sabich had quite a reputation as an expert skier and he was quite a celebrity on the ski circuit and everyone in Aspen had a lot of respect for him. The last time we visited Aspen, maybe five years ago, we found out she was still living there and was married to the lawyer who had defended her.

We did see quite a few celebrities there - Gene Hackman, Don Knotts, Diana Ross, John Denver, Jack Nicholson, and Cher. Aspen was a nice place to live. Aesthetically, it was a gorgeous place, but we couldn't afford to live there without jobs. It was a very expensive place to live.

Carl took off on the road, deciding to do a little exploring to see where we could move next since we needed to find work and earn a living so he went to Las Vegas and came back to get me. We went to Las Vegas and lived from February through mid-April in Las Vegas. It was very difficult to find work there too. We could only find spot labor.

One night we happened to be in one of the casinos there and someone told us about an obscure little town in Rock Springs that was doing a lot of hiring. This was in 1977. We decided that we

needed to make some money and get our lives together so we made plans to leave Las Vegas. We decided since we had lived together for so many years and we loved each other, why not take the big plunge and get married in Las Vegas. We got married on April 14, 1977 and we were married by a justice of the peace in Clarke County and I think we were married at high noon. We then got on the road and headed for Rock Springs, Wyoming.

We arrived in Green River, Wyoming and it was snowing that night. We slept in the car because there was no place to stay. The next morning when we arrived in Rock Springs, we immediately went to Job Service to see about jobs. They told us we couldn't get a job unless we had a place to live.

We couldn't find a place to live because there weren't any places available.

CK: Obviously you stayed. What did you do to find a place to live and what did you do about jobs?

LK: It was very hard to find a place to live. There was nothing advertised in the newspaper and, of course, we didn't have the money to buy a home and what we did see in the paper was prices that were astronomically out of sight. There were no rooms to rent in motels. We lived out of the '69 Pontiac that we had - it was very big and roomy - for about four days. We had arrived in town on Friday and we slept in the car out by the Husky on

Interstate 80. On Monday Carl went back to Job Service and he found a job working for Sterling Construction out of Colorado. While he was working on the second day - I was getting desperate because Carl was working pretty hard and it didn't seem right that he should have to sleep in the car - I went down to DPASS and talked to a woman there by the name of Dora Roland. I was telling her of our plight. I asked her if she knew of anyone who had a place we could rent or if she knew of any motel rooms or anything. She said no, but she did know of someone on the staff there that had a small place to rent that had just opened up and she would ask him about it. We were virtually penniless - we didn't have much money - hardly enough to rent a space with a security deposit, but I did meet with the man to see if we could make arrangements to pay him something later. He said that was fine. He said we looked like honest people and he would let us move in. It was a three room house at 814 1/2 Young Avenue. He said he would let us live there until we had the money to pay him. That was the first place we lived in Rock Springs. We lived there for about a year. We were getting pretty cramped in there. We had left all of our stuff in storage in Colorado and we needed to get that out and we knew that when we got that, we would need a bigger place to live.

Esther and Jack Bunning lived across the street from us. They had a house for rent - 809 Young Avenue - it was a big three

bedroom house. After a year of living at 814 1/2 Young Avenue, we moved to 809 Young Avenue and rented that house.

The first few months we were here, I was collecting unemployment from the job that I had in Aspen, Colorado and Carl was working in the oil field. This gal that I had talked to at DPASS asked me, since I wasn't working, if I was interested in being a volunteer to help someone learn how to read or help them get their GED. I started working as a volunteer for Right to Read in the old school district building on B Street. About two weeks after I volunteered, the director of the program, Jane Shapiro, told me there was an opening for a part-time volunteer coordinator. I applied for the job and got it. It was only 20 hours per week, but it eventually went to 30 hours per week, then 40 hours per week, and now it seems like forever.

The Right to Read program lost its federal funding in 1980 and then came under the auspices of the College in 1982. I've been working for the program for 12 years.

CK: During the time that you've been here, have you had any illnesses, have you had any sicknesses, and where were you attended for these illnesses or sicknesses?

LK: I don't know if it's Rock Springs, if it's the area or what, it seems as if I've been sick every year that we've been year.

Back in '79, I had a tubal pregnancy. Carl and I had been wanting to have children for a long time and that definitely limited our chances of having children after that. I had surgery at the hospital here in Sweetwater County.

I had always heard that the medical profession left much to be desired in this area and I guess I found out when I went in to the hospital with the tubal pregnancy. In the first place, I was mis-diagnosed by Dr. Harrison who told me I was not pregnant. After missing several periods and enduring much pain, one day the pain was so great that I had to go to the emergency room. They discovered that I was three months pregnant and as a result of the mis-diagnosis and my tube bursting, I almost died.

Since that time, I've had various stomach surgeries and if I had to be hospitalized, I preferred going to Salt Lake City. The medical facilities there seem to be better. The medical facilities in this area leaves much to be desired.

DK: Were you involved in any extr-curricular activities?

LK: I wanted to become involved in the community because we liked it. At first thought it was an ugly town - it was culture shock coming to this are. It was by far quite a switch from Aspen, Colorado. It was the kind of a place that made you want to get involved in community activities. I saw an article in the

paper where they were recruiting people to help in the Humane Society. I got involved in that and have been with the Humane Society since 1978. We used to have the shelter out by the Husky and Dr. Radosevich would take care of any of the pets that needed shots. People would come and "dump" animals there and not give us any money to take care of them. Other than contributions from persons within the community, we had no funds to operate, and eventually we had to shut down the facility that we had out there. I'm still somewhat involved in that although there's now another organization in town that helps animals.

The biggest involvement I had was with the YWCA. That was from 1978 until 1983. First, I was a member and then I became the secretary for the board of directors and then I served as president of the board from 1981-1983. There was a tremendous need for women's right especially in this area. There were a lot of women whose husbands worked in the oil fields or the mines and the women had no outside activities so the YWCA was a service that provided classes and help for these women. During my term as board president, we were instrumental in finding and setting up the safehouse for battered women.

CK: How were you able to maintain your life in accordance to the way other people were living? There were people living in the

desert in tents and prices were high. What was your lifestyle like.

LK: We had a nice place to live. Carl had a good job and was making good money. We did see a lot of people living in tents and campers especially off Interstate 80 - not too many around town. There were quite a few people living out by the Husky and in cars. Some people lived in make-shift dwellings out in the desert. Prices were extremely high. Things were not convenient and available as they were in the big city. It was very convenient. A lot of the time, if you wanted to get something, you had to go to Salt Lake City - and that's even true today. If you wanted to make big purchases, you could purchase things here, but you could get whatever you needed a lot cheaper in Salt Lake City so you had to weigh whether you wanted to buy it here and pay more for it or go to Salt Lake City and spend the time, energy, gas, etc., and get something for a more reasonable price.

When we passed through Rock Springs the first time in 1976 - we were living in Aspen, but going to Yellowstone on vacation - we got off Interstate 80 at the Outlaw Inn, they were in the process of paving Elk Street. I remember looking at the road which was unpaved going north for about three miles and thinking what a dirty, filthy place to live. It struck me as a "one horse town". Since that time there have been lots of improvements in Rock

Springs. We have now "beautified" the town. It's more liveable. It's a prettier town. One of the big improvements has been the family recreation center and the expansion of the College. One of the things, if I were to look at Rock Springs and think of something that could really be changed in this area to spruce up the city, would be to rid the area of all the trailer courts. They really are a distraction. They seem to be full of garbage and I would like to see the City make more of an effort to make this part of Rock Springs attractive. On the whole, I'm pretty satisfied. I like Rock Springs. Economically, we're disadvantaged now. I wish there was more diversity within the County and the State. We may be forced to leave and I would hate for that to happen because I like living here.

CK: What type of friends have you met here? Have they influenced your life in any way?

LK: I have a lot of good friends. What do you mean by "what type"?

CK: What type of people do you enjoy associating with and how do their opinions of the town influence you?

LK: Most of the friends that I have are people that I work with at the College.

CK: What's your best memory of Sweetwater County?

LK: I think one of my best memories of Sweetwater County would be when Carl and I decided to open a business. Carl wanted to open a taxidermy business and in our wildest dreams, we had never considered anything like that. This is one of the great "American dreams" to own your own business. I think in a place like this you have the opportunity to do things like open a business. This wouldn't be so easy to do in other places and I thought when we opened our business this place was really great because living in Rock Springs gave us the opportunity to do that.

CK: What's the biggest change in the country since you were young?

LK: The biggest change in the country?

CK: Yeah.

LK: There's been a lot of changes as far as women's rights - they have more equality, there's more equality of races. When I grew up in the south, racism as a way of life. I remember going to the beach and there was a "white" section of beach, which of course was bigger and then a "colored" section of beach which was smaller. In the department stores and public places, there was a "white" restroom and drinking fountain and a "colored" restroom and drinking fountain. There was segregation at the Woolworth

Store and even my high school, Hampton High School, out of 1200 students, we had one token "colored". I remember my father saying to me that he would rather see me dead than see me date a "colored" man. They had to sit at the back of buses, and Hampton Institute which was about three miles from where we lived, had many demonstrations for equality. This was happening from 1960-1963. We had a "colored" woman working for us and she was not allowed to use our bathroom and she wasn't allowed to eat from any of our dishes.

As far as I'm concerned this has been the biggest change and probably one of the best, although I think we still have a long way to go.

CK: One last question I would like to ask you. What would like to leave to your grandchildren or heirs, some words that might help them in their future.

LK: America is the greatest place to live. It's the land of opportunity. We have freedoms and rights here that other countries dream of and opportunities that other countries do not afford. Always hold America close to your heart and be proud to be an American.

CK: I want to thank you very much, Linda, for this interview. It will be completed on April 30, 1989. Thank you once again.

LK: Thank you, honey.