

Denise Foster and Susan Van Burgel

Side 1:

This interview took place while Denise and Susan were painting my house (see enclosed).

[6] Denise was born in Fort Lauderdale in 1966. She went to the Seventh Day Adventist Fletcher Academy and took 2 years of nursing in Orlando, Florida and then the main campus in Chattanooga, TN, where she had one year of pre-med. Both she and her parents were dedicated church members, but they all became frustrated with organized religion and stopped attending. [Parents: Daniel and Lydia Foster]

[25] She is still nursing weekends at Thom's Rehab to earn money for her painting business. She started restoring wood with Pedello. [Mike Pedello]

[46] As a child she used to work with her father who was a builder.

[55] Most of her work comes from references, advertising on cable, the yellow pages and the Home Show. She came up with the name "Wood Care" in her sleep.

[65] Many painters don't carry workman's compensation insurance, and get around the expense by having their employees carry their own, considering them subcontractors. This, while cheaper for the contractor, is against the law and gives no protection to the workers - and, of course, no protection to the home owner. In North Carolina, unlike California, homeowners cannot buy workman's compensation insurance (unless they incorporate - which is not done). Many companies advertise in the yellow pages that they are fully covered with workman's comp but, on checking, they are not.

[106] Denise has a brother living in this area, and a sister. Her mother had always been a housewife but has started working with her as a painter and her father works on the equipment and power washes buildings. Her three trucks are presently kept at the family residence in Oteen but she hopes to build an office on the 1 1/2 acres they own. [Mark Foster, Michael Schutte (married to Mark Schutte with daughter Shelly)]

[153] Susan was born in Chico, California and raised in the Bay Area. She has had 15 years of painting and in 1954 moved to Huston, Texas to be near her sister and to be with her nephew while he was growing up. While there she painted and also worked in restaurants. When she was 18 she helped a friend build a house and learned painting by doing prep work and observing for two years.

[186] The paints and methods of painting have changed over the years. The latex paint is easier to use than the oil base - quicker and less toxic.

[217] As women, working in what has traditionally been a male occupation, they insist on being treated in a professional manner, ignoring flirtation and slanders. They feel there is no place for harassment in any work environment. In large warehouses and lumber yards "a lot of the older

guys feel threatened - they didn't make it in the business world" and deride women workers, trying to push them around.

[329] It is hard getting qualified workers. There is more to painting than picking up a brush and, when a person is out of work, they often turn to this occupation. This company wants to keep high standards. The best recommendation is word of mouth.

[369] In time Denise is considering a franchise for paint and wood restoration using "Preservawood" product.

[422] Cleaning and preparing a building by using water under pressure is an old technique but during the past 10 years, due to technical development, the pressure is increased and the cleaning improved. Dirt, mildew, moss and wasps are removed.

[470] On this house, even after water pressure washing, it was necessary to do some sanding because the previous painter did not sand before painting.

[481] Estimation on a job is made simple by using a chart using national averages and adjusting for NC.

[495] There is a lot of paper work involved. Denise keeps a file on every house on her computer. She took three accounting courses.

[580] Denise calls her father "Thomas Edison Foster." He set up the pressure-washer van and does the paper and computer work. [David Foster]

Side 2:

[2/1] When Susan was working on a Black Mountain bank, a man came up and watched. He was impressed with her meticulous work. She gave him Denise's card and he, the main maintenance man for Graham, arranged for them to paint the mission house next to the conference center. They next painted Wilson's house and then the Graham residence - several old log houses pieced together by Mrs. Graham. It took a month to complete. [David Jarzyna, Billy Graham, T. W. Wilson, Ruth Graham]

[2/39] Because of Graham's popularity, tourists come every day and try to get near the residence. Only two men have access to the grounds and they are on shifts. Two German shepherds are trained to guard the place.

[2/61] The Grahams returned from a trip as they were finishing the conference center and complimented them on their work which involved major color changes.

[2/73] One coat was used on this house and, though it was discovered that various shades had been used in the past, one color, matching the garage doors (enclosed) was used.

[2/85] They are often asked for advice about colors and will paint small samples so the customers can decide. Since the paint lasts 5-10 years, it is important to make the right decision.

[2/128] In the 60's avocado green was popular. They prefer Benjamin Moore and Martin Senour paints.

[2/145] Some customers, suspecting the contractors may buy an inferior paint and charge for an expensive one, stipulate that they buy their own. On the other hand, some contractors purchase a cheap paint (Glidden's at \$5 a gallon which guarantees one year only), charge for a long-lasting paint that has good, even coverage (\$15 a gallon), and leave town. This company is interested in satisfied customers who tell their neighbors about a well-done job.

[2/201] It is difficult finding experienced, reliable workers. Susan said that by asking a few key questions (i.e. regarding prep work procedures) she can tell who is knowledgeable and capable to do the work.

[2/241] The Weather Channel is turned on in the morning before coffee is poured. They must plan their work around rains.

[2/267] While the lettering on the trucks say "Exteriors" (see photo), and natural siding is their specialty, they are often asked to do interiors.

[2/286] They don't like to paint brick, feeling that it is beautiful as it is but, when it has been painted previously, they will repair it. There is a white brick on the market and there have been many developments in brick. They don't do a lot of new construction work.

[2/313] Regarding work ethic, Susan said it is difficult to get a person to do a good job, even if they show up on time. They have more work than they can handle. Workers act as though they are "doing you a favor" and this goes from 18 year olds to people pushing 40. She tells of a man from Russia who was working for them and always took time off to go to the doctor. His bills were taken care of by our government whereas she has to work many houses to save up for the same kind of work.

[2/487] Both women agreed that the people in this area were kind and friendly but that the work ethics were poor.