

Mitzi Tessier

Side 1:

[1/5] She and Jack came to Asheville in May, 1953 with 2 children (2 born later). He was with Sears Roebuck. She was involved with St. Paul's Methodist Church and the PTA. [Beal Tessier, Chuck Tessier, Mark Tessier, Tim Tessier]

[1/18] She became a field advisor for all Buncombe County for the Pisgah Girl Scout Council. There weren't many working mothers and she found leaders. The headquarters on King Street, just off Weaver Blvd. She organized camps in the forest and in peoples' yards. [Katharine Shepard]

[1/42] She published 2 books - 1982 - Asheville, a Pictorial History and 1992 - The State of Buncombe. Due to her civic involvement she could gather material for the chapters after 1950 easily.

[1/52] The city was devastated by the Depression. Everything stopped after the crash - Federal and city building programs. Very little happened until after the war. The city took advantage of Federal funds in the 1950's.

[1/76] People have historically moved into the city with money and ideas - the Coxes, Groves, Packs and Vanderbilts.

[1/87] She discusses clogging and big circle dancing. The blacks created the Charleston from the Irish step dance. Clogging is a step - not a dance. The big circle, smooth dancing and square dancing is a mountain style. To the tune of a fiddle it is danced at corn huskings and weddings. The blacks introduced the banjo and the sound of a man slapping himself. This is different from other square dancing - unique to Eastern Tennessee, Northern Georgia and this area. [Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Joe Sam Queen]

[1/126] The Rhododendron Festival was formed by the Chamber of Commerce in the 1920's and Bascom Lunsford formed the first group of dancers. He wrote "On Top of Old Smoky," knew all the tunes and played the fiddle. He performed all over the US. [Bascom Lamar Lunsford]

[1/142] When she was teaching at Erwin High School she was asked to sponsor the square dance team - her son was on the team but she had never seen it. She had Wise's team - and hers won in the next Mountain Dance and Folk Festival. This was smooth dancing. Her group, having seen clogging (the same dance patterns but with special shoes) wanted to try that. There were over 250 dance teams all over Western North Carolina and teams, competing for trophies, were active every Saturday night. There was the traditional step (the old way) and the precision routine (like tap dancing routine). Hers was the latter. Her team beat Queen's. [Don Wise, Joe Sam Queen]

[1/199] Enthusiasm for this dancing spread across the country. This went on with different types of music and tunes but gradually went out due to other time pressures such as Little League, basketball and baseball and because the parents wanted more objective judging. Parents argued

with the judges - all dancers were doing the same step but some were seen by the judges to be superior because of their form and love of dancing.

[1/253] She traveled with teams all over the country. The students had to learn how to perform on stage, take care of their clothes, share rooms and handle themselves in hotels. They danced all winter to get money for summer travel. With the help of Parks and Recreation a show was put on in the dance hall in Recreation Park.

[1/310] With Federal money the dance hall was restored and named "Mama T's" (enclosed). Dances were performed two nights a week. A band was put together and the summer programs became an institution in 4 years. [John Davis, Bobo Carter]

[1/330] However, when Stanley's opened up - serving beer and BBQ, the young people went there and the program folded. [Bill Stanley]

[1/358] When her children were small she taught scouting and dancing. She was asked to teach ceramics at the Phyllis Wheatley (black) YWCA. She learned one step ahead of her students. The crafts are alive and well in Asheville. Some go out of style as others come in. [Lee S. (Mrs. Aaron) Schandler]

[1/417] The Southern Highland Handicraft Guild is the oldest in the US. In 1930's, searching for ways for mountain women to earn money, Allanshand was established. A guild was formed and entries were juried (see enclosure). [Frances Goodrich, Lucy Morgan]

[1/477] A craft fair is held in Biltmore Village. It is carefully screened for quality. [John Cram]

[1/498] There is a craft store on Haywood Street, two major shows a year at the Civic Center and one at the Asheville Mall. Crafters have to tour to make a living. The stores are not enough because of the % charged for sales.

[1/535] Cram runs the New Morning Gallery in Biltmore and the Blue Spiral on Biltmore Ave. They show work that is more modern. Griffin has three shops and is restoring space in the old Charles Barker Hospital for offices (see his tape and file). He was one of the founders of the Preservation Society. [John Cram, Robert Griffin]

[1/575] In 1991 a group got together to create the Urban Trail - a trail marking historic properties. Funds were given by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation to have bronze plaques made as markers (see Mathews tape). [Z. Smith Reynolds, Charles Bearnbaum, Jane Mathews, Daniel (Dan) Milspaugh]

Side 2:

[2/1] Creative people worked out 26 stations to have markers. Money was donated for brochures and by following the map tourists can see the important city buildings. Five plaques were in place by July. Students at UNCA are making the markers. The city is cooperating with the project. Private funds are used and people volunteer their time. Her job is to reduce information

to 55 words for the plaques. [Robin Gregory, Grace Pless, Julian Price, John Young, Bascom Lamar Lunsford, Hubert Hays, Thomas Wolfe]

[2/73] She has a degree in journalism from Louisiana State. Her teaching has been in special education, working with high school students with learning problems.

[2/90] A tape, an adjunct to the walking tours given every Sunday each summer, has been put together by Neufeld. The Urban Trail does not compete with the walking tour but complements it. [Robert Neufeld]

[2/111] Betty Molnar, who used to work for the Chamber of Commerce, has a small shop with souvenirs and city information. She also has walking tours and newspapers (see enclosed). [Betty Molnar]

[1/129] The chamber of commerce has a tourist department and offers many services - constant publicity. [Carolyn Ketchum]

[2/159] Many factors make the city appealing for retirees:

1. Beauty - the "Land of the Sky" [Frances Tiernan (pen name: Christian Reid)]
2. Low crime rate
3. Cheaper real estate
4. Center for Creative Retirement, College for Seniors (see info in file for Cissie Stevens for details).

[2/213] She made observations about school, parenting, teachers: there used to be neighborhoods. In the 1950's, because of the law, schools were combined and children bussed to achieve a black and white balance. Some schools were closed. The feeling of neighborhood was lost. This was a painful process. The city and county schools have resisted combining, though this has been discussed since 1930's.

[2/291] The city taxes more than the county so teachers paid more. Discrepancy in pay results.

[2/304] Annexation never stops and this can change the complexion of the areas.

[2/327] The Preservation Society sent out a questionnaire to the candidates asking about their stand on historic preservation - the answers were split. "It is always an educational job, the Preservation Society. Historic Resources Commission and the Western North Carolina Historical Association must continue to work at the local level and state level to be sure the laws are put into place with the kinds of programs they promote."

[2/347] The Western North Carolina Historical Association - proposed in 1892 by Sondley - is headquartered at the Smith-McDowell house. They meet twice a year and give the Thomas Wolfe award and sponsor tours. The Preservation Society came about in 1976 after the Federal government offered funds for urban renewal...the Gudger house (now Pisgah Legal Society), Richmond Hill, and the Manor were saved. Not all efforts were successful but an impression was made on the public and people are aware of the local heritage. The Historic Resources

Commission acts as a watchdog to protect and define historical buildings. Historic districts have been established - Biltmore Village, area around the Manor - and building fronts preserved - Haywood Park kept Ivey's windows. She describes the interiors of Ivey's, Bon Marché, Kress, and the Grove Arcade. Women wore hats and gloves. Purchases were delivered. [Forster Sondley, Thomas Wolfe, Mr. Armstrong]

[2/533] With the love of the automobile the malls were born. Coggins, in 1950, offered \$100 bill to a new store being built uptown in the next five years - no one ever came for the \$100 bill. [George Coggins]

[2/574] She tells about her first book - a contract was signed with the Donning Co. (in Sept) Knoxville and her material was turned in June 1st (9 months!)

Before she started writing she read everything she could find on the history of the area. [Bob Terrell, Forster Sondley, John Preston Arthur, Ora Blackmun]