

Jim Coast

Interviewed by Alec Coast

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AC. Think back to when you were 16 years old. Where were you living?

JC. We were living here in Cimarron actually, just about half a block from where we are now, and we lived there most of my high school years.

AC. Who all did you live with?

JC. At that time there was my mother, my stepfather, and my youngest sister Rosemary.

AC. What age were you, compared to your other siblings?

JC. I'm the youngest of four in our immediate family, but in our extended family, the mixed family, I'm the youngest of eight. We range a lot in range.

AC. What did your stepfather do for a living?

JC. My stepfather was a custodian at the Cimarron High School, and my mother was a teacher at the grade school originally, I think. Then she got into what we used to call remedial reading, but I think it's called Title IX now. She taught until she retired.

AC. What were your favorite things to do when you had free time?

JC. We did a lot of bicycling. Everyone had bicycles back then, and we ran around playing football and basketball outside. That is what kept us pretty much entertained, anyway.

AC. What was your main method of transportation?

JC. When I was 16, my main method of transportation, I had a motorcycle that I had bought the summer before, but mainly I walked to school or rode with someone who had a car. I did not have a car at that time.

AC. What was your first job?

JC. My very first job was a paper route when I was in fifth and sixth grade; then after I got into high school and could drive, I worked on the custom harvest crew for my brother-in-law Ronnie Burns.

AC. About how much would you say you got paid per hour at these jobs?

JC. Very minimal on the paper route. It was just something to do, just me and a friend. And on harvest crew we were making probably a dollar fifty to a dollar seventy-five an hour.

AC. What was school like at this time?

JC. School would have been very similar to what we have now. I think school started at 8:30 and ended at 3:30. We did have 30 minutes for open lunch. So if you wanted to go home you could, but we had a really good lunch program so most of us ate lunch at school.

AC. What sports or clubs were offered?

JC. Well, about what you have now, not as many. There was football, basketball, and track. We did have music and band, thespians or forensics; there was FFA and FHA, which was for the girls.

AC. Were there many opportunities to go to college?

JC. Yes, the opportunities were there, and I would say a fair number of kids in our class went. I don't know what percent, but a number of us started in junior college and then went to a four-year college.

AC. At this time what was your main form of entertainment?

JC. The main form entertainment was basically dragging Main. There was not a lot to do in Cimarron, but we did go to Dodge to eat and go to shows over there sometimes.

AC. Where would a date happen?

JC. Dates usually happened, if there was something like... we had lots of dances in our time. Dances at the high school and on the weekend. We would have them down at the VFW. And if we went out of town we would always go to Dodge, never to Garden, but we would go to Dodge and go to the movies, and Pizza Hut was new, so we would go to the Pizza Hut. And A&W Root Beer was new, so we would go there.

AC. Who were your favorite singers or bands?

JC. My favorite singers were the Beatles, and the Beach Boys, the Mommas and Pappas, and I wasn't really a big Elvis fan, but I did like some of his music.

AC. Who was the first president you remember having?

JC. The first president I remember having was Eisenhower. I was fairly young, but I do remember seeing him on TV and hearing him on the radio.

AC. Can you list some of the major events that happened in the country and around the world during this time?

JC. Well, a little bit before our time was the Cuban missile crisis, which was, you know, very scary. That was when I was just a sophomore. And then the Vietnam War was just starting to crank up, so we were starting to have some issues with that.

AC. What were some of the new inventions of the time?

JC. The one I remember a lot of is the color TV kind of came of age. We always had black and white, but color was starting to come around, and by then it was fairly good. So it was kind of fun. And the use of jet engines for airplanes. That was something that was really starting to come of age. In the time before that, they always used turbo props, so that was kind of interesting to see the new jet airliners.

AC. What were some of the common hairstyles and clothing styles of the time?

JC. The hair styles kind of ran the gamut, just as they do now. Some wore short hair, some wore long. I would say most of the guys had shorter hair. The girls had what they call the beehive thing, where it was all poofed up in the back. The guys wore short hair and we had what they called butch, which was short hair and long in the front. We would get butch wax and put it in the front and comb it straight up. Kind of weird, but it was popular back then. Clothing we had at that time, I remember, corduroy jeans were kind of in; they were kind of cool, paisley shirts, and bell bottom pants. So that's some of the things I remember. Otherwise we wore basically what we wore now, blue jeans and cotton shirts.

AC. Was the Vietnam War a big concern of yours?

JC. It was once I got into college. In high school we knew about it, but I wouldn't say it was a concern. We just knew about it, and as guys we knew went into the service, that's how we knew about it. But yeah, we knew people were getting killed over there so we were concerned.

AC. What did other people think of the war, like you said they were concerned?

JC. Yeah, I think most people were supportive of the war in the beginning, and we felt like we were doing the right thing. So at that time I'd say most people were supportive of the war.

AC. Did you have any interest in NASA? And can you tell me some things they had accomplished at this time?

JC. Well yeah, NASA has always been an interest of mine, I've always wanted to be a pilot because my uncle was a pilot, and I had done some flying with him. But when I was a junior I had to get glasses so I knew I could never be a pilot in the military, because at that time you couldn't be a pilot and wear glasses. I was always intrigued by NASA. I remember the Sputnik thing and John Glenn. There were a lot of things going on in the space program at this time. So it was something I paid a lot of attention to.

AC. Were there any other things you would like to add? Any other interests?

JC. Nope, I think that pretty much sums it up.