**Oral History Interview**

**with**

**Nancy Hudson**

Interview Conducted by

Juliana Nykolaiszyn

August 5, 2016

Spotlighting Oklahoma

Oral History Project

**Oklahoma Oral History Research Program**

**Edmon Low Library ● Oklahoma State University**

**© 2016**

**Spotlighting Oklahoma**

***Oral History Project***

**Interview History**

Interviewer: Juliana Nykolaiszyn

Transcriber: Clara Gomez-Moran

Editor: Tanya Finchum

The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

**Project Detail**

The purpose of the *Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project* is to document the development of the state by recording its cultural and intellectual history.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on April 15, 2009.

**Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Nancy Hudson is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on August 5, 2016.

**Spotlighting Oklahoma**

***Oral History Project***

**About Nancy Hudson…**

Nancy Hudson was born in 1944 in Oklahoma City. Her family moved a few times during her youth before setting in Vinita, Oklahoma, in the early 1960s. Nancy graduated from high school in Vinita in 1962 and for a summertime job she went to work for the Glass House Restaurant. She started out on the cafeteria line and during the second summer of working there she shifted over to waitressing in the Broiler Room.

Nancy graduated from Northeastern State University in 1966 with a degree in music education and married along the way. After one year of teaching they began their family and the rules at the time prevented her from continuing to teach while she was expecting. Nancy returned to work at the Glass House Restaurant and this time she worked in the office and filled in with the gift shop when needed. Nancy later returned to teaching and taught in the Vinita school system for twenty-seven years. Twenty-three of those years were teaching kindergarten and the remaining time was spent teaching first grade.

Nancy retired from teaching and now lives in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, where she enjoys spending time with family, especially time with grandchildren.

**About the Glass House…**

At the half-way point on the Will Rogers Turnpike near Vinita, Oklahoma, stands an iconic landmark. The arched building opened in 1957 and was the first restaurant built over a U.S. public highway. Conoco (Continental Oil Company) commissioned the building with an aim to serve the needs of motorists passing in both directions. The building housed the Glass House Restaurant, dedicated in 1958, and included a cafeteria, snack bar, and sit-down restaurant. On each side of the building, motorists enjoyed full-service gas stations, operated by Conoco initially. Over the years other restaurants and fuel facilities have operated at the service plaza. Host International, Interstate Hosts and Howard Johnson’s have operated the plaza at different times. The Glass House and the Conoco stations employed many of the area’s youth through the years and served many, many travelers. Renovation began on the service plaza in 2012 and in 2014 it re-opened with a new name, the Will Rogers Archway.

**Spotlighting Oklahoma**

***Oral History Project***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Nancy Hudson**  Oral History Interview  Interviewed by Juliana Nykolaiszyn  August 5, 2016  Vinita, Oklahoma |  |

**Nykolaiszyn** *My name is Julianna Nykolaiszyn with the Oklahoma State University Library. Today is August 5, 2016, and I am in Vinita, Oklahoma, interviewing Nancy Crissman Hudson as part of our Spotlighting Oklahoma series with a focus on the Glass House Restaurant. Nancy thank you for joining us today.*

**Hudson** I’m glad to be here.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well let’s learn a little bit more about you. Could you tell me the year you were born and where you were born?*

**Hudson** I was born in August of 1944 in Oklahoma City.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay and tell me a little bit about your parents.*

**Hudson** Well my mother grew up in Oklahoma City, was pretty much a native and went to high school there and graduated at age sixteen, and she worked for Bell Telephone Company as a switchboard operator, did that many years. My father grew up in Colorado and went to college in Oklahoma City. That’s where they met. He became a chiropractor and after they married, they were in Texas for a while and then they were in Colorado, then in Kansas. (Laughs) So a lot of my time, younger years were in Colorado, in Colorado Springs, and I still love going back, seeing the mountains. Of course you know with family there and in Oklahoma City we just travelled back and forth, to visit together.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And how did your family make it to Oklahoma?*

**Hudson** My dad moved here to be a chiropractor after having bleeding ulcers and had to take time off and heal and then after that we moved here and spent a lot of years here then after that.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And you moved to the Vinita area?*

**Hudson** Yes, we moved here to Vinita in about 1960, and I finished out two months of my sophomore year before getting into junior and senior high school. I’m the oldest of six children, so you know a lot of years and different ones in the school system.

**Nykolaiszyn** *So you went to Vinita High School, graduated.*

**Hudson** I graduated from Vinita High.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What year did you graduate?*

**Hudson** [In] 1962.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. So 1962 rolls around, you graduate from high school, what are you thinking? What’s next on the agenda for you?*

**Hudson** Well, going to college. To help pay your way through college and have spending money, you go to work. So my first job, well not my first job, but working for Annabell [Southern] started many years of working for her and was a very pleasant time. She was always fun and always having—you know she was good with young people and so she had a lot of young people always working for her.

**Nykolaiszyn** *When did you start working for the Glass House?*

**Hudson** After graduation.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. And where were you going to college?*

**Hudson** At that point, I went to Miami [Oklahoma]. Went to college there for two years and moved then on to Tahlequah.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay.*

**Hudson** Northeastern [Oklahoma A&M] College.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And your major was?*

**Hudson** Education.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Education? Okay.*

**Hudson** Music and education.

**Nykolaiszyn** *All right, and approximately what year did you graduate college?*

**Hudson** Sixty-six.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay, well let’s take us back to the Glass House years. How did you learn that there was an opening at the Glass House?*

**Hudson** Well, just living there for those couple of years and hearing people talk and so forth, and I worked for Mrs. Driscoll at the Vinita Hotel. Some of them said, “We’re going to the Glass House,” and I thought, “I’m going too.” (Laughs) I worked on the cafeteria line that first summer and didn’t enjoy the getting up early in the morning but, get there and get your day started and then you have plenty of time to do things in the afternoon and to run around with friends and be able to help at home too.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well describe the uniform for me.*

**Hudson** Y Yellow dress, (laughs) with apron. Had to have a great big bow in the back. I didn’t like the yellow dress too well but you know, you do what everybody else does and you do your job. And then the second year that I worked in the summertime was in the dining room, which I liked better, because then you get to have little conversations, you know. “Are you going on vacation? You just travelling for work?” you know, as you’re trying to serve and be congenial with the people. So you know you hear a lot of stories. A lot of them you don’t remember but it’s still just fun.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What was your salary when you started out? Any idea?*

**Hudson** I don’t remember. I don’t remember that. I was happy with it, so you know I think if I was unhappy with it, I would have remembered more, you know, what pay scales were.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. Well when you walked into the Glass House building, I want you to describe for me kind of the different parts of it.*

**Hudson** Well depends on which way you came in. If you came in through, you know, the main entrance and coming up through the stairway or the elevator and hitting the snack bar coming in that way. Or, you saw what, you know everybody that’s travelling. I think at the bottom where you could just come in and hit the stairway, there was greenery and things that never hit really the magnitude of walking through the hallway upstairs. After you got upstairs, it was a lot different. Being able to look out through the windows and see the road and I just thought that was pretty amazing you know, that we got to eat and look at all the travel people going through and wondering where they were going. And then of course working early in the morning, seeing all the sunrises. I liked seeing the sunrises through those big windows. It was pretty amazing to me to see that.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What time did your shift start?*

**Hudson** Mmm, six thirty? Yeah, early morning people on the highway wanting to stop and get drinks. Most of them would like be in a hurry so the snack bar and the cafeteria line usually got the biggest amount of people.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay.*

**Hudson** Dining room got the ones that are willing to take a break, maybe they’ve been on the road a little longer or something and just wanted a break and to sit still for a while instead of running down the road. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well your first time out working, you were in the cafeteria. So kind of describe for me a typical day. You show up, what do you do?*

**Hudson** Make sure that your area that you’re working at has all the things like toast or the butter and jellies and whatever. The cooks mainly had eggs or pancakes and that type of thing, and they set the heated stuff up on one end and you know having cartons of milk. You know, cereal. Making sure that they’re always filled and ready for customers to pick those up and have that to go on out to eat.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And did you bus your tables?*

**Hudson** Didn’t have to bus too many if it was slow. Now if it was busy, like with a bus or something like that, yes, you had to help the other people to get the tables bussed so that you could move them through. And then if it was really slow and you didn’t have anybody, you got to help clean the greenery up and down the hallway. You each took a little section and had your little spray bottle and a rag and you were cleaning all the artificial greeneries.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Hmm, interesting. When you moved over into the Broiler Room, things changed up a little bit.*

**Hudson** Oh yeah, because then you were just taking orders from the menu and getting things from the kitchen that you needed to serve and hopefully get it in the kindly manner that made everybody happy (laughs) and you know try and visit and keep things moving.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Now did you go through some kind type of training process or did you shadow someone?*

**Hudson** I don’t remember shadowing somebody other than just learning the menu. Since I worked for Mrs. Driscoll at the hotel that was pretty easy to pick up you know, serving-wise. But learning the menu and where to find everything, yes, you had to have somebody. They, you know, the other workers were always friendly and helpful and didn’t have too much hassle with anybody. Sometimes people would—you know you always had those times when something was said and somebody, you know, takes offense or something, but they usually seem to work it out and go with it. You had that in everyday life so it’s just something you do.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you develop your own shorthand to get those orders down quickly?*

**Hudson** Pretty much. And most of them had the same, you had the same ones because you’ve got to work with the cooks. They’ve got to know what your lingo is and so you try and use pretty much the same things that everybody else used.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well on the Broiler Room menu, did anything stand out to you? Is there anything you remember that you served a lot of?*

**Hudson** Well since I usually just did mornings, it was just eggs or pancakes. Course they always had certain ways they wanted their eggs fixed or something but just pretty much the same things. Of course then when we changed over for lunch, it was sandwiches. I don’t remember too many things because, you know, your steaks and things like that were more evening and we didn’t have those. I was gone by two o’clock or something like that. I was, you know, back home so.

Mainly lunch is everybody wanted something that was quick and easy and they’d want the sandwiches and some kind of quick, hot meal. I always liked the food that they had so when we got to take our breaks I’d have something. I always tried to have one of everything so if a customer said, “Well how’s this?” you could be able to tell them what the meal was going to be. So you had to try everything to know what it was. Like I said I was more comfortable with the breakfast menu cause that’s what I used the biggest part of the time.

**Nykolaiszyn** *With your breaks, did you take it in a specific place? Was there a break room?*

**Hudson** I remember going over to the cafeteria line where the tables were, back behind the serving line was a room and just visiting with whoever was there. There was a room in behind where we served we went a lot of times too but if they were having a special dinner or something like that, that was always used for banquets or you know, special meetings or something that they had scheduled.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well what type of person was Annabell?*

**Hudson** Very vivacious and loved to laugh, and joke around. Like I said she just loved, loved people. She had taken lots of vacations. She could tell you lots of places to go and see. There were a few places I went that she told me about, so I liked that. I was able to go toward Canada and see the rocks that she had told me about, on an inlet that we did. I forget what the name [Hopewell rocks in New Brunswick] of it is right now but I really appreciated her telling me about the things that she saw, and we tried to go to a few of them.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did she share any recipes with you?*

**Hudson** I don’t think that I ever really asked for recipes. Most of everything we did had to be in such large quantities that, oh, I didn’t want to try to figure out how to break it all down to make something smaller. (Laughter) I had to do that a couple of times and, uh huh, no. I’ll just go and get it someplace else, I’m not going to try to cut it down.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well you worked in the cafeteria, you worked in the Broiler Room. Did you work any other place within the Glass House?*

**Hudson** Oh yes. After finishing college and one year of teaching, course I got pregnant and couldn’t teach because at that era of time you couldn’t do that. So I worked in the office and then also the gift shop when they’d call and say, “Oh we’ve got a bus coming in, we’re going to need extra people up in the gift shop,” and different things like that. So I did that and the office work.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Ok. So what would you do in the office?*

**Hudson** Work with timesheets, ordering, you know calling in, getting orders placed that we needed deliveries from on a certain day, did the deposits for the Glass House after working up there. Each shift that changed, then you would check all their things and make a balance and did the daily deposits from there and getting telephone calls and running to talk to Annabell. Finding her was a mystery sometimes. “Where did she go today in this big building?” You were always going, “Who can I talk to first that might know the most about her agenda for the day?” I think that was about the hardest part of that job.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Was there a person you would always go to often to say “Hey, where’s Annabell?”*

**Hudson** Warren [Fetter] was your best bet, and then of course the managers in each one of the places, snack bar or dining room or gift shop or wherever. Calling up there, “Have you seen her? Is she anywhere around?”

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well describe for me what’s happening in the gift shop? What’s in the gift shop, what’s being sold?*

**Hudson** We had a lot of Indian trinkets, and of course then just everyday little things that had pictures of the Glass House or just some memorabilia people tend to pick up. You know, little magnets that you buy, maybe little states or mirrors with the Glass House picture on it or a deck of cards or you know, back scratchers that had something on it. But I think for the Glass House the Indian memorabilia type things that they sold in there were the bigger ticket items. People, they were wanting to have a bigger memory of things and find something that they hadn’t found someplace else was, I thought, the most interesting things maybe we had in the gift shop.

**Nykolaiszyn** *With the travelers that would pass through, was there a question that a lot of them always asked you?*

**Hudson** How much farther to Joplin [Missouri] or to Tulsa. I always thought it was nice that we were kind of halfway between. It was, “You’re only halfway there. You’ve got another hour to go.” You know, something like that. It was easy to give them kind of a timeline of what they needed to be travelling.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you notice a lot of people from the area visiting the Glass House or was it mostly travelers?*

**Hudson** It was mostly travelers but there’s always people, you know, that come through meeting relatives that maybe were stopping there, coming out and visiting with them, and then maybe they’re going on and then people from Vinita going on back to their homes. Just kind of a meeting place and have something to drink or snack on while they visited, and other than that I don’t think people from Vinita—You’ve got all kinds of—just wanna come out and see. I know I came back out several times just to go to the gift shop and get something that I wanted to send somebody or something like that. I’ve met relatives out there several times even myself, just to come out here and you know, to do that. Sometimes I think, “I’ve worked out there all day. I don’t want to go back.” (Laughs) That’s about the most I know.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Would you have much interaction with the Conoco guys, the service station guys?*

**Hudson** I didn’t. They were busy, I was busy, you know. I didn’t do that too much there.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. Alright. Well you did breakfast shift. When you were working at the Glass House, did you notice anybody notable pass through the doors?*

**Hudson** Not that I’m aware of.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay.*

**Hudson** There might have been and they were in a different part of the building or I just wasn’t aware of it.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. So you’re there during the 1960s. You know we’re in a time in our country. We’re, you know, in the Civil Rights Movement. Did you notice any interactions with African Americans coming through?*

**Hudson** I’m just took them as people.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. That’s good, that’s good. Okay. So when you returned, you returned several times to work at the Glass House, did you just call up Annabell and say, “Hey! Are you hiring?”*

**Hudson** Just come out and visit with her and see, you know, if there’s going to be anything going on. Course you knew in the springtime when they had all the banquets for the graduates and things like that you always knew she was going to need, you know, people to work extra. Holidays, you always knew there was going to be extra people hired for certain things. So you were pretty assured, if you’d worked for her before and she was happy with you, she would pick you up and hire you just for the weekend or something like that. That’d be fine.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you have to report your tips?*

**Hudson** Not at that time, we didn’t have to report tips. Later on, we did. That was kind of something that started in the late ’60s, when you had to report tips.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. When was the last time you’ve been through and stopped at the Glass House?*

**Hudson** I’d say not in the last twenty years.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Really? Wow.*

**Hudson** After it turned to McDonald’s, it just wasn’t the same. I did have a younger sister that worked out there at one time, and I think ’69 I had a middle sister that worked at the Glass House for the summer. But you know, I don’t know. Once it turned to McDonald’s I just wasn’t interested in going back.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Is there a feature of the building that you have particular memories of, the unique shape, you’re high up….*

**Hudson** Well the neat, unique shape was always the big thing and I’ve always loved, you know, where the windows are and being able to see whether it was the sunrise or just the cars going underneath, and sometimes you get to wave. You know people were looking and you’d wave at them and they’d wave back. Just interesting things like that, those were fun.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Could you feel it move when a semi…*

**Hudson** Yes you can! (Laughs) Sometimes even, they’d honk the horns. Most of the time if you’re serving you don’t see it but it kind of took a while to get used to that. If they would honk and you’d kind of “Oh. Okay.”

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you have any pranksters that worked alongside you?*

**Hudson** No.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay.*

**Hudson** Not too much. I don’t think in the morning they were ready for that. (Laughter) I know I wasn’t. Later on, yeah, I could be a prankster to somebody but I really don’t do a whole lot of that.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well in the late ’60s, ’69 was your last year…*

**Hudson** At the end of it, yeah.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What did you do after working at the Glass House?*

**Hudson** Taught school. I taught school in Vinita for twenty-seven years. Kindergarten for about twenty-three of them and the rest of it was first grade.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Wow.*

**Hudson** Had a lot of kids and their children and one or two their grandchildren. (Laughs) So a lot of years there, a lot of good memories.

**Nykolaiszyn** *What year did you retire from Vinita?*

**Hudson** About twenty years ago.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. Married? Kids?*

**Hudson** I’ve been married twice, first time to Gary Smith and the second time to Larry Hudson. I had two children with my first marriage, Linda and Mike, and we’re now all in Oklahoma City. (Laughs) And that’s the main reason why I moved to Oklahoma City was that’s where they were.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Grandkids?*

**Hudson** And grandkids. Boy, that’s the main thing and you know, going to all their games or theatre productions that they were in and going to church with them, whatever. You just want that family time.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did your parents remain in Vinita?*

**Hudson** No. About ’66, ’67 they moved to, it was ’66, they moved to Blackwell, Oklahoma.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay.*

**Hudson** Left me here. (Laughs) Which was okay, but you know.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well you were in Vinita for quite a time span. And during your time here, how did the city change?*

**Hudson** With losing some of the companies that were here, you know people had a harder time getting jobs and then things like that. Without, you know, Coca-Cola and Cinch and some of those it made a difference in the town. And sometimes you just saw big changes and sometimes it was so slow, you know. You’d get away and come back and think, “Oh, it did change.” (Laughs) I think I see that now that I’ve been gone six years and coming back and thinking, “Oh yeah this is really—oh, that’s not there anymore.” That’s been kind of the thing, I think, the last couple of days especially.

I’ve been back a couple of times, but not to drive around the town quite as much as I have done the last couple of days. You know that it’s always going to change. There’s nothing that stays the same, and you don’t want it to, but you know it’s still when you’ve lived here for so long and then come back and “Oh, okay this isn’t here anymore and okay we got this.” It’s been interesting yesterday and the day before to see all the changes that have taken place.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well do you keep in touch with any of the former Glass House employees?*

**Hudson** No I haven’t, which it’s going to be nice you know, the reunion at the end of the month. I’m hoping I get to come back. I’m planning to, but sometimes things change your plans too. It’s nice getting to see some. I think Lavon [Lewis] is probably the only one I’ve kept in touch with any at all that I can remember. Mainly because we’ve been associated through other things not just the Glass House stuff.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well with respect to the Glass House, what am I missing from your time there?*

**Hudson** I can’t think of anything too much that you’re missing. I think we’ve covered quite a bit of it.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Okay. Well when you look back on your time working for the Glass House and for Annabell, is there something that just really sticks out in your mind that you want to make sure that we know about your time there?*

**Hudson** It was always a pleasant time, just the comradery that you had with the people, and I think with people that Annabell hired it kept it that way. Just because of the type of person she was and she kept her ideals and what kind of people she wanted to work for her, who she thought would be pleasant to the people coming through the Glass House. Think that makes a lot of difference, her discernment of people.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well Nancy, it’s been a pleasure.*

**Hudson** It’s been a real pleasure meeting you and talking to you.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, thank you for sharing your memories of your time at the Glass House. We really appreciate it.*

**Hudson** Thank you.

**------- *End of interview*** *-------*