LC: This is Linda Cameron for the Minnesota Historical Society. I'm interviewing Barbara Thornton Lockwood on August 23, 2002, at her home in Eden Prairie. She was the director of the Pillsbury Home Service Department.

What is your educational background, Barbara?

BL: I have a Bachelor of Science in Foods and Business from the University of Minnesota. I graduated in 1953.

LC: Was that a common background for a woman on the Pillsbury Kitchen staff?

BL: It was not common. It was a very specialized background. It had probably six to eight different curriculum courses from dietetics and the food science specialist. It covered everything that was needed to work in the business world, including advertising courses, accounting—those kinds of things.

LC: Wow. Most of the girls would just have a basic home economics background?

BL: They would not have the kind of background of the foods and business major. We had a lot of science, so the curriculum was kind of unique and is no longer offered at the University.

LC: Oh, interesting. Why not?

BL: Because it was deemed to be too difficult.

LC: [Laughter] Oh, that’s interesting. When did you work for Pillsbury? What were the years?

BL: I started at Pillsbury in 1953. I interviewed with a lot of food companies. Pillsbury did not have an opening, but Ruth Andre Krause and I kind of clicked and she created an opening. I started October 12, 1953, and I left the company in June 1970.

LC: Why did you leave?
BL: I left because I was then the fourth and last Ann Pillsbury and I felt that my concentration was primarily in public relations, human resource problems, away from my first love, which was creative food—and there was no room at the top for a woman.

LC: Oh! Yes. Those questions are coming up. [Chuckles]

What were your positions there? Can you describe how you moved up the ladder?

BL: I started out as a consumer correspondent. Then, I was promoted to director of that department. One of the great opportunities in that department was not only doing consumer letters and correspondence, but I was doing a lot of Ruth Andre Krause’s correspondence as well, so I learned the inner workings of the company through that opportunity. Then, I became director of Variety Mixes. Then, I moved into associate director of all Grocery Mixes. Then, I was promoted to the head job, the fourth and last Ann Pillsbury, Director of Consumer Services.

LC: How long did you hold that place?

BL: I held that position from 1967 to 1970.

LC: Can you describe a typical day for a Home Service director?

BL: Well, primarily it would start with, of course, the scheduled agenda, which could include anything from meetings with marketing to meetings with research and development [R & D] to meetings with the staff. It often involved advertising sessions where we would meet with marketing and advertising to look at proposed advertising from the consumer’s point of view. My department approved legally all of the advertising and product labels, all of the communication to the consumer. It also included probably two or three taste tests in the variety of product test kitchens that were operating across all of Pillsbury’s products.

LC: The other positions that you held… Now, correspondence, you mentioned that you answered a lot of letters.

BL: Right.

LC: Did Ann Pillsbury get a lot of letters?

BL: Ann Pillsbury got a lot of letters. [Laughter]

LC: How many would you say that you answered in a day?

BL: Oh, probably fifty, which was difficult. They ranged everything from complaints to special diets, special needs, “Can you help me with my dinner party?” It was just a great variety of things. In the early days—one of the funny jokes I have to tell you about is one of the letters that’s been talked about a lot—this woman wrote that the cake mix label said, “Made with fresh
“eggs” and she opened up the box and she couldn’t find the fresh eggs. She was very upset, not realizing she was supposed to add those.

**LC:** Oh, dear. [Laughter] You mentioned that you were in charge of the mixes.

**BL:** Right. In the role of dealing on specific product categories, we would be working on the actual production from plants. We would act as one of the quality control checks. In fact, a lot of staff went down for first runs of production. We would look at any changes in formulas from R&D. We would look at label changes that needed to be made. We spent a lot of time developing consumer recipes for use of the product other than the basic use.

**LC:** In all these different roles did you have a part in the Bake-Off as well?

**BL:** I didn’t get involved in the Bake-Off. The Bake-Off was primarily flour. I did not get involved in the Bake-Off, other than to look at potential winners and act as an advisory board in that capacity. Now, when I became Ann Pillsbury, I was, of course, involved in all aspects of it. During the time that I was head of the department, they moved fresh dough into the Bake-Off. That was the first product category that was moved into the Bake-Off. After I left in 1970, they moved cake mixes into the Bake-Off and, of course, now, it’s everything: all of the Green Giant products and the Progresso Soup—you name it. So, the rest of the marketing team in the company looked at it [the Bake-Off] as being such an outstanding commercial way of bringing product sales and product to the consumer that they felt they should move it into some of the other product categories.

**LC:** How many staff members, on average, would have worked in the Home Service Department during your years there?

**BL:** When I left, there were forty-two. It was a very small staff back when I joined Pillsbury, probably twelve, so that kind of gives you a range of growth over the years.

**LC:** Were men employed on the kitchen staff as well?

**BL:** No, they were not.

**LC:** Not at all during the time you were there?

**BL:** No, but we used outside male consultants, Jim Beard being one of our most outstanding advisors and consultants. As far as men involved, of course we had the marketing department there at all taste tests and evaluations of proposed recipe usages with products. The men were very involved from within the company. The outside resource people—primarily I can think of Jim Beard and a few others.

**LC:** Were minorities employed during the years—?
BL: Yes. I had, in my tenure as director, an outstanding home economist and a wonderful housekeeper, so, yes, we did. We looked for minorities and we had a difficult time finding qualified home economists, but we found this young woman through our educational program, which brought in outstanding young women to the company from this particular program.

LC: Were there other positions available within the Home Service Department that you didn’t hold and you might like to tell us about?

BL: Not really. I was blessed to go up the ladder.

LC: You really had kind of a nice run of experience there, didn’t you?

BL: Yes.

LC: The job hierarchy. Who would you have answered to as director?

BL: This was a difficult situation. I answered to a person who was over Creative Services and, yet, my budget was supported by the divisions: Refrigerated Products and Grocery Products. So, it was difficult to report to one person who was not a part of—He reported to the two divisions, but he reported to an executive higher than any of us, so it was a little difficult. It was kind of a situation where you reported to one person, but the other two divisions were evaluating what you were doing and vying for your time, which was really difficult.

LC: Oh, yes, that’s hard. And, your staff would have answered directly to you then?

BL: Yes, they did.

LC: Did Pillsbury offer extracurricular activities for its employees while you worked there?

BL: They supported our involvement in all the professional organizations: the American Home Economics Association, the Home Economists in Business, of which I was president. When I became head of the department, they were very supportive of all of my involvement at the University of Minnesota, the Grocery Manufacturing Association of America in New York. They were very supportive of all of the involvement in and, in fact, promoted that.

LC: Great. Were benefits offered to women employees when you were working there?

BL: What do you mean by benefits?

LC: Were you offered health insurance, all of the usual?

BL: Oh! Absolutely! Yes.

LC: Were there advancement opportunities?
BL: That’s what I thought you were driving at. I did go to Bob Keith, who was then president of the company, and asked him for a leave of absence to get my MBA and he refused that and said I would get my MBA at Pillsbury, which, in reality, I did, but I don’t have the piece of paper.

LC: That’s interesting.

BL: That was before companies were into doing that kind of thing.

LC: They weren’t supporting that, especially for women.

BL: As I was moving up, I’m sure that obviously was a reason that they didn’t want me out for a year. MBA programs at night were not prevalent then. With the amount of traveling that I did for Pillsbury, I would not have been able to even do it at night.

LC: Could women be promoted into other areas from the Home Services Department?

BL: I’m trying to think. I think there were two or three opportunities, but the home economists are pretty narrowly professional. Their skills are pretty honed and don’t always fit some other area, and that’s pretty true of people in the marketing department, people in the consumer research department. There could be some switching between research and development and my department. I would have to say, over all, no.

LC: Okay. Now, I’m going to ask you some questions about the test kitchens in particular. In General Mills’ Betty Crocker kitchens, they had various types of kitchens, like a camera kitchen and a cake mix kitchen and a flour kitchen. Was the Pillsbury kitchen set up like that?

BL: It was set up by product categories. The thing that was so wonderful about my opportunity and the opportunity for the staff at Pillsbury, as opposed to some of the other food companies, was that we were not specialists within the department. In other words, there were some home economists that had skill in preparing foods for the camera, but we did not have a separate staff that did only that. While I was there, we instituted a program where the home economist acted as part of the team that brought a product from concept into the marketplace and they acted as a team with marketing, research and development, and consumer research. So, that exposure to all of the interfacings of the company was very valuable.

LC: Yes, it would be. Can you describe what the test kitchens looked like while you worked there?

BL: Well, when I first came, there was one test kitchen; it was the flour kitchen, so that tells you how much it progressed. [Chuckles] I’m not sure of the exact date—I can find that for you—when the six kitchens were built. They were designed to be consumer-type kitchens with the consumer-type equipment, refrigerators, ranges, to simulate what would happen in a consumer’s
home. They were decorated and they were put together to reflect the product category that was worked on in that kitchen.

LC: How did the work environment change over time? Did it expand? Was it modernized?

BL: Oh, it definitely expanded and we were perpetually updating everything with really the peak of microwaves coming in. We had to do microwave alternatives on labels. We had to be not just a follower in the industry, we had to really lead with what was happening. So, yes, we really updated everything in techniques and equipment, even down to pans and those kinds of things. We learned a lot from the Bake-Off what consumers were doing in their kitchens.

LC: I’ll bet.

BL: In fact, I think we were on the cutting edge of seeing the real surge of the popularity of Mexican food coming from the West Coast way back, I would say, in the mid 1960s, about the time I was named Ann Pillsbury. There were more and more of the ethnic kinds of influences and we could see how that might influence all of the trends that you see today.

LC: Was it up to you to make recommendations for new equipment?

BL: Absolutely. One of the most popular speeches given at the Back-Off was what we called a “trends speech”. The food editors just adored this and practically wrote word for word what we said about what we felt was coming and what we could see out of the consumer entries. It was very exciting.

LC: Neat. Did Pillsbury ever offer tours of the kitchens like Betty Crocker?

BL: Yes, they did.

LC: Were they an attraction as popular as the Betty Crocker Kitchens?

BL: No, because they were not promoted to the extent that General Mills did.

LC: How did the staff like having tours coming through? Was that disruptive in any way?

BL: Well, it was disruptive in that all the kitchens were working on new products. Of course, if we knew a tour was coming, everything had to be put away or out of sight, so it was disruption. Whereas, we were not showcasing Ann Pillsbury like they showcased Betty Crocker, which is a brand. In that way, the two departments were quite different.

LC: Going on to Ann Pillsbury, the character— She was introduced in 1944 and was continued to be used into the 1960s. How was Ann perceived by Pillsbury’s employees? What did they think of her as a representative of the company?
BL: Well, again, as I said, I don’t think— It was just a consumer label. It was not a personality per se. As I said, it was not used as a brand or as a logo. The purpose, as I remember it being, was to let the consumer know that there was a real person behind everything that was done. So, in that way, it was quite different than General Mills’ use of Betty Crocker.

LC: I know in the early years, Pillsbury used Mary Ellis Ames before Ann Pillsbury was introduced. She was actually their Home Service person. Why would they not use your name rather than Ann Pillsbury?

BL: They did in the end and I’ll show you all kinds of things where they did.

LC: Oh!

BL: They were fazing her out.

LC: Why did they decide to discontinue her?

BL: I guess because they felt that a real live person as head of the department was more beneficial over all than a figurehead that didn’t exist.

LC: Had more credibility.

BL: Right, exactly.

LC: How was Ann perceived by your friends and family?

BL: Oh, they laughed because of the competition with Betty Crocker. It’s always been a joke—still is a joke.

LC: I would think even more so now.

[Laughter]

BL: Right.

LC: Did Ann make personal appearances?

BL: Oh, absolutely.

LC: So, you would go and you would introduce yourself?

BL: I was never introduced as Ann Pillsbury—oh, I guess I was on occasion, yes. As I say, in my three years as Ann Pillsbury, they were really moving into a personality rather than a figurehead.
LC: The visitors that came to the kitchens, did they expect to meet Ann?

BL: Oh, sure, everybody does, yes, everybody does.

LC: Were they given an opportunity to do that?

BL: Oh, sure. Every time anybody came through, if I or my predecessors were available, we would always greet anybody that was there.

LC: We already talked a little bit about Ann’s correspondence. Did I ask you how many letters a week she got? I asked you how many letters per day you answered.

BL: Oh, it’s been just a progression of volume. I maybe can look that up for you somehow.

LC: Okay. You talked a little bit about the types of letters that you would answer in the correspondence. How many women were responsible for answering correspondence?

BL: When I was head of that department, there were myself and four others. Even back in the middle 1950s, there was beginning to be a surge in communication. Of course, now, they must do half of it on computers.

LC: I’m sure they do.

BL: I’m sure it’s a whole different scene.

LC: And e-mail.

BL: Yes, right.

LC: Where did the distinctive Ann Pillsbury signature come from? Do you know where that originated?

BL: I have no idea. It was before my time.

LC: General Mills has had various portraits commissioned of Betty Crocker. Has there ever been a portrait made of Ann Pillsbury, to put a face with the name?

BL: They did have a portrait done of me when I became Ann Pillsbury, but I think that was an exception. I can’t remember there being a portrait before that.

LC: Where is the portrait now?

BL: I have it.
LC: Do you! Oh, that’s so fun!

Did Ann ever make radio and television appearances?

BL: Absolutely! That was part, a major part, of the job. Internally, we went out to plant openings. I made most appearances wherever requested. It was a hard thing to keep under control.

LC: I’ll bet it was.

BL: It really had to be—I didn’t have the final decision. A lot of people had the final decision on that.

LC: Any specific television appearances that stand out in your mind or radio appearances?

BL: I did a television appearance here in the Twin Cities that was called “Eating for Seniors”. I did that on KTCA-TV. It was an evening program. I was live on the Bake-Off several times and that was exciting. I have pictures, one with Art Linkletter where the public would see me as the director of Consumer Service, probably not that many. There were more within the business community and that kind of thing.

LC: Are there any stories you’d like to share about your years as Ann Pillsbury?

BL: [Chuckles] There are really too many to tell. It was a really exciting four years. I don’t regret one moment of it. I learned a lot and I feel I gave a lot to the company, so it was a two-way street. I was involved with a lot of tremendous people from the corporate executives to the advertising agency executives to all the food editors across the country to all of the photography studios that I worked in, all of the television studios that I worked in. Through Jim Beard, I spent ten days with Simone Beck in Plascassier, France, at she and Julia Childs’ residence. Oh, it’s just one thing after another that I really have to kind of pinch myself when I think back.

LC: How exciting.

BL: Yes, it really was. You know, in those days, I think there wasn’t the concern about business travel. It was just to get the job done. I did a lot of press parties in New York for the introduction of products. There are too many to even count.

LC: You really traveled a great deal?

BL: I did and I traveled primarily on my own time, so I’d be in New York, come back to Minneapolis and be in the office the next morning. It was a very, very time-consuming kind of job commitment. But, if you loved it and enjoyed the excitement and enjoyed the people and felt
that you were contributing to the company and to the profits, which is the main thing, it was very rewarding.

**LC:** Let’s move on to product development a little bit here. Tell me about some of the products that were developed in your years with the kitchens.

**BL:** Well, when I started in 1953, there was primarily flour and, then, we moved into cake mixes, which was standard two-layer cake mix and, of course, through the years, the proliferation of flavors there, and then, into frostings. I think that we began doing the specialty mixes when I left consumer communication, and then through the quick breads and pie crusts and the potato product line, all of that. In that time period, then the refrigerated products came up from Louisville [Kentucky] and all that work began to be done…

**LC:** Was that Ballard and Ballard?

**BL:** Yes. There was a kitchen specifically for that, so the biscuit business was huge. I think when Crescent Roll Dough was developed that was the star of the Bake-Off in 1968 in Atlanta [Georgia] and it did win, at that point, the $25,000 winner. That was a big bonanza, just a huge opportunity for the company, for the Refrigerated Division. The work on all of the variations and usages of Crescent Roll Dough doesn’t end; it’s going on today like crazy. That’s a very unique, wonderful product and easy for the consumer to handle. In fact, I think it was the last year I was there, I took my two nephews, six and seven [years old] up to the television studios in Duluth and did a live show on kids using fresh dough.

**LC:** What fun.

**BL:** It really was fun. It was very, very well received. So, that big bonanza and then, of course, as they began to acquire companies like Green Giant and Old El Paso and Progresso and all of that, it just exploded all of the lines of products under the Pillsbury umbrella.

**LC:** Did you have a favorite product that you were involved with?

**BL:** I guess probably Crescent Roll Dough. I just think it is my favorite product, although it’s hard to choose. I was not there when the Ready Roll Pie Crust came out, but I think that’s a huge consumer bonanza. I haven’t made pie dough by hand since that came on the market. It was on the drawing board when I was there. I think that’s a fabulous product.

There’ve been some products that never saw the light of day, too, because they were ahead of themselves or there wasn’t the marketing support once they got developed. One in mind is we had a popover mix that was simply marvelous and that was in that category when I first went into the kitchens.

**LC:** What was it called?
**BL:** Pillsbury Popover Mix and I have some ads I can show you. The advertising won every award in the country. It was just an excellent product. I just think that they had so many products rolling out and so many dollars to support so many products that some fell between the cracks.

**LC:** Do you remember a product called Minute Mix? That was probably before your time, too. I think it was done in answer to Bisquick.

**BL:** That was before my time. I do not remember that.

**LC:** Okay. Then, the eggs-in/eggs-out cake controversy. The early cake mixes all had powdered eggs in them?

**BL:** Right. I have a framed picture that I’ll show you of Walter Mondale peering down into a bowl of angel food cake mix. [Laughter]

Yes, the eggs-in/eggs-out was a real controversy while I was there, and when there was a controversy over a one-step angel food where the consumer just beat it and didn't beat the egg whites separately. I can remember sitting in those meetings and saying, “I don’t care how much research you do, I just don’t think the consumer is going to believe that she’s going to get an angel food cake that is what she’s expecting if she doesn’t beat those egg whites.”

**LC:** Exactly.

**BL:** I have a picture you can take.

**LC:** I would love to see that. I found a couple ads that actually talk a little bit about this controversy. I just got such a kick out of it.

**BL:** That’s what I was talking about, this consumer saying that she looked all through the package and she couldn’t find those eggs.

[Laughter]

**LC:** Can you think of other products that were disappointing on the market?

**BL:** We had a whole line of desserts that ended up being like Floating Island. Oh, the chocolate was out of this world! Then, a spin-off of that was a fudge sauce product that was just superb. There were several.

**LC:** Were there cake mix flavors that didn’t fly?

**BL:** Not really. The creative on the cake mixes kind of flowed with what consumers were interested in as far as flavors were concerned. Of course, there was a winner made with German sweet chocolate, the German sweet chocolate cake with the pecan. A lot of things spun out of the
Bake-Off. A lot of flavors spun out of the Bake-Off and, of course, a lot of flavors were done to meet competition, both Duncan Hines and General Mills.

**LC:** Sure. Pillsbury had the first chocolate cake mix, right?

**BL:** Right. Then, the cake mix formulas with that whole series of pudding-in-the-mix and that whole series of improving the cake mix quality was a long, long—and it’s still going on. I think they’re still changing them now and then to pudding-in-the-mix and—

**LC:** And, “Better Recipe.”

**BL:** Right, exactly. Exactly.

**LC:** What factors influenced the work done in the Home Service Department during your years there, things like technology. You mentioned the microwave, the increasing demand for convenience foods, women going to work.

**BL:** The time factor, the equipment factor, the demographics, those I would say were primarily—and then the change in eating patterns and the change in preferences. Time began to be a major factor and, of course, today, it’s just a top priority.

**LC:** Yes. Did you ever think about ethnic groups when you were devising products?

**BL:** Yes, we did. We did a lot of work, I know, in the refrigerated area. I was not directly involved because I was not in the kitchen. I was directing it. We did a lot of looking at the biscuits for the South, biscuits for certain ethnic factions of the South. That’s where Hungry Jack [products] came out and they had a couple great ones that didn’t happen. So, yes, we did. We looked at ethnic preferences.

**LC:** The Pillsbury Dough Boy was first introduced in 1965 and is an internationally recognized symbol of Pillsbury today. Did the arrival of the Dough Boy impact the work done in the kitchens in any way?

**BL:** Well, I must tell you I was in the room when he was born.

**LC:** Oh my! [Laughter]

**BL:** It was exciting! The room had all the Pillsbury top, top executives and the key marketing people and I was there and—his name escapes me; I’m sure we can find it. He was a Leo Burnett Advertising Agency creative. They built up to this presentation. I don’t know if the Dough Boy preceded the Green Giant and [Tony] the Tiger at Kellogg, but you can see that agency had all that. I’ll tell you, it was one of the most exciting afternoons the company had.

**LC:** Did his presence influence the kitchens?
BL: Oh! Absolutely! Absolutely.

LC: In what way?

BL: Well, he added a bit of fun to everything that was done. He was a carrier for the fun of eating and a real vehicle to children, especially for the Fresh Dough Division.

LC: I’m sure.

BL: Do you have one of the Bake-Off aprons with him on the pocket?

LC: We have a couple of them, I think—one for exhibits and one for collections, yes.

BL: Okay. I have one if you don’t.

LC: I have one of the blue ones with the big Dough Boy popping out of the pocket, which we thought could be worn for part of a presentation. Great!

A little bit more on the Bake-Off here—I guess I did ask you what your role was with the Bake-Off.

BL: My department, I and associates—I can’t take credit for everything that was done by any means—were responsible for the judges, selecting the judges and working with them to be sure that they knew what their task was, and giving them a big picture of the winners and talking about all the entrants and so on.

LC: Can you think of any famous judges that you had for the Bake-Off?

BL: Oh, there were many. At the 68th Bake-Off, when Fresh Dough won and was first in the Bake-Off, there were two supermarket chain home economists as judges, which was exciting. We were moving into not just food editors and food writers and so on. One of them was Jerry DelVecchio of Sunset [Magazine] and I’m trying to think of the other. I think it was Agnes Olmstead from Colonial stores in Atlanta. The judges were a key factor. Public relations handled most of the mechanics of making it happen. The department was involved, of course, mainly in the entries and the photographing of the entries and the availability of the press and the press functions where we spoke about trends, as I mentioned, and all of that. Keeping 300 people in tow is a huge job.

LC: I can imagine. Do you have any favorite Bake-Off stories to share?

BL: Well, I do. [Chuckles] One of my favorite stories and memories is the 1967 Bake-Off with Art Linkletter, who felt that a live person from the company, namely me, was there to upstage him. He just gave me the most difficult time you can imagine. At that point, I wasn’t a trained
television person. I was very concerned. I wasn’t able to have a script or anything, no Teleprompters. I had to do this all ad lib. Finally, in the middle of the rehearsal, Bob Keith, who was then president, came up to him and had very strong words with him, which I won’t repeat, and Art Linkletter did an about face of how it was going to go.

LC: Oh, my.

BL: So, that’s one of my most vivid memories.

LC: Okay. I’d like to move on now and talk a little bit about Ruth Andre, seeing that you worked with her.

BL: Okay.

LC: I’m hoping you can fill in a few of the gaps that we’ve got on her. First of all, you knew and worked with Ruth?

BL: She hired me.

LC: She was Ann Pillsbury for a time?

BL: Right.

LC: I understand that she worked till about 1962?

BL: Correct.

LC: Your working relationship to her was?

BL: Very close. I was doing her correspondence and working very closely with her in all of the areas from the time I went out of the consumer communication area into product work.

LC: Did you like her?

BL: Yes, she was a very charming person. She was easy to work with. Yes, I did enjoy working with her.

LC: Her pictures just sparkle; she seems to have that sparkle. Can you describe her, how she looked, how she acted?

BL: Well, I do have some pictures for you to look at. She was very vivacious. She did have the twinkle in her eye that we talk about. She’d gone through a difficult time. She’d lost her husband on a beachhead in the Far East and she was making a way for herself and her two children. She
was very disciplined and had her goals set by the company and she really met those goals and just pursued them.

**LC:** Physically, was she very tall?

**BL:** No, she was a tiny person.

**LC:** That helps us, too. We’ll be casting someone to play her. She began her career with Pillsbury in the spring of 1946, beginning as a Home Service Center technician.

**BL:** Right.

**LC:** What would her responsibilities have been in that capacity?

**BL:** I imagine she was in the test kitchen, in the flour kitchen, the one and only kitchen, probably testing…

**LC:** Batches of flour?

**BL:** Yes.

**LC:** Baking yeast breads.

**BL:** Right, exactly.

**LC:** According to *Pillsbury People*, Ruth was at some point promoted to director of the Home Service Kitchen. Do you know what year that was—director of the kitchen, not director of the department?

**BL:** I don’t because that was before my time, I may be able to get you that.

**LC:** Do you know what her responsibilities might have been as head of the kitchen?

**BL:** Well, I’m sure she was responsible for all of the flour evaluations and testing and the development of all the recipes.

**LC:** She took over as director of the Home Service Center from Ellen Pennell?

**BL:** Right.

**LC:** That would be May or June of 1950, from what I gather.

**BL:** Right.
LC: What would her responsibilities have entailed in that capacity? Was it similar to your responsibilities or did it change over time?

BL: Oh, it changed.

LC: You would have had more to deal with probably?

BL: Oh my, yes. She probably had eight people at the most. At the time I came, they were really into a program of European Recipe Exchange. Is that in your notes anywhere?

LC: Yes, I had a question on that actually.

BL: We had correspondents in Europe looking for very interesting ethnic recipes across Europe for the Flour Division, for the flour, and they were put into flour sacks—I should say flour inserts. That was going on when I came in 1953.

LC: That was really forward thinking, wasn’t it?

BL: Yes, it was.

LC: When you consider how popular international…

BL: Absolutely.

LC: Of course, World War II, too, with the G.I.s coming back with ideas of foods.

BL: Right. You know, I think that that was instrumental in making quiche popular. There were a lot of wonderful breads and a lot of butter cookies. It was a very forward step. I really think that Pillsbury in reaching out to the consumer through this European recipe thing and the Bake-Off was really instrumental in reaching the consumer and knowing what they were doing and what they wanted.

LC: Good! That answered a really good question. You mentioned how many employees she might have had as director. How much autonomy did she have? How much did you have in your capacity? Would it have been comparable?

BL: It wouldn’t have been comparable at all. There was one Ann Pillsbury between myself and her. Over those years that Helen Horton was director and I was director, there was just gigantic growth because the product lines were getting longer and more products and more involvement with consumers and more activity and the Bake-Off getting—

LC: Did you have an assistant?

BL: Yes, I had four associate directors.
LC: Oh, wow! Did Ruth have that, too?

BL: She did not. I was Helen Horton’s associate director.

LC: Do you know if Helen is still living?

BL: I really don’t. I lost track of her. She’s in Palantine [Illinois] and I believe she is still living. I last saw her when I was working for Universal Foods in my capacity of my consulting company and she came up to the convention in Milwaukee [Wisconsin] and that’s the last time I saw her. That was 1983. I have not really kept in touch with her.

LC: As director—this goes for both you and Ruth—could you make changes and improvements in operations during your tenure?

BL: Absolutely. Oh, absolutely, make lots of suggestions. There was nobody looking over my shoulder unless it involved a huge budget issue and then, of course, I wouldn’t have made that decision on my own to begin with. So, we pretty much ran the department.

LC: And, you felt that you were pretty well respected by the men?

BL: Absolutely, absolutely.

LC: Marvelous. Ruth would have answered to whom? I imagine that would have changed, too?

BL: Yes. I’m really not sure. It may be in the material that I haven’t put my hands on yet.

LC: Do you have any idea what her salary might have been in the 1950s?

BL: No, I don’t.

LC: We mentioned that Ruth left Pillsbury about 1962. Let me move on to some more personal questions about her. Maybe you can fill in some gaps there. Ruth’s first husband was in the U.S. Air Force during World War II.

BL: Right.

LC: He was killed in China in 1945. What was his first name? Do you know?

BL: [Pause] I do not know.

LC: Do you know what rank he had?

BL: I do not know.
LC: She married a second time, a man named Mr. Krause. Do you know his first name?

BL: Bill.

LC: Bill Krause. Do you know when she remarried?

BL: [Pause] I believe it was 1954.

LC: They would have been married in Minneapolis?

BL: Yes.

LC: What did Mr. Krause do for a living?

BL: He was an account executive with Campbell-Mithun Advertising…Red Star Yeast.

LC: Oh, that’s handy, isn’t it? [chuckles]

BL: That’s how, I’m sure, they met.

LC: Sure. Did she and Mr. Krause have any children?

BL: No.

LC: She had two children by her previous marriage, Sharon and Ricky?

BL: Right.

LC: Do you know if they were adopted by Mr. Krause?

BL: No, I don’t think so, because he had his own children.

LC: Oh, he did? Do you have any idea how many?

BL: [Pause] Two or three sons. I know he had two sons.

LC: Do you know if they’re still in the area? What did Ruth do following her employment with Pillsbury? Do you know? Did you keep in touch with her?

BL: I do not know that. She called me the Sunday that my announcement as Ann Pillsbury was in the paper. She was in the hospital and she was dying of cancer.

LC: Oh.
BL: I know Sharon was there with her and she did not live very long after that.

LC: When did she die?

BL: That had to be 1967.

LC: Wow.

BL: He also died of cancer a couple years earlier.

LC: Oh, heartbreaking.

BL: She called and talked a long time and I said that I would try to come down and see her and I was too late. There was so much going on that I just couldn’t get down there.

LC: Did she die in Minneapolis?

BL: She died in the hospital in Minneapolis, right.

LC: So, Ruth wouldn’t have been, probably, too involved in Pillsbury’s Golden Ambassador’s Retirement organization?

BL: Oh, no, no, no, no.

LC: She didn’t live long enough to do that. Oh, this is so sad. Is there anything else you can tell me about Ruth, any good stories you’d like to share?

BL: Well, she used to do very elaborate parties for the staff at her home, which showed off all of her cooking skills and her flair for food. We always had a wonderful time. I did not travel with her. I was not in a position at that time to travel with her. I traveled a lot with her successor.

LC: How did she treat the staff?

BL: She treated the staff very well. That smile and that twinkle just was always there. It’s been a while since—

LC: It has. I had gotten the impression that she had died fairly recently, so I’m really surprised to hear you say that.

BL: She never really saw any of my work as director. She really died very young.

LC: Yes, she did. Was she like a mentor to you when you worked there?
BL: Umm, yes and no. Our personalities were quite different.

LC: Are there any other things you’d like to share about your work with Pillsbury?

BL: Oh, my!

[Laughter]

LC: Any great stories you haven’t told us yet? Any good jokes?

BL: Oh, I didn’t really think about this. [Pause] There’s one wonderful story that involves General Mills.

LC: I want to hear this!

BL: I was on the way to New York for, I believe it was, the fiftieth anniversary of the director of Good Housekeeping Institute, Willie Mae [Rogers] and the food editor, Dorothy Marsh. It was a gala at the Four Seasons [Restaurant]. I was standing at the airport and behind me was Jim Fish. Jim Fish was over all of Betty Crocker Kitchens. He said, “Come on, Barbara. Let’s upgrade your ticket so I can sit with you.”

LC: Oh, nice.

BL: So, he did that.

LC: Was he trying to spy?

BL: This gets funny. We got on the airplane in first class and sitting behind us was Paul Gerot and Bob Keith.

LC: Oh, oh. [Laughter]

BL: Of course, nobody at Pillsbury flew first class except the top. So, all the way to New York, it was really kind of not tense but kind of… [Laughter] I looked at Jim and he looked me and we just kind of giggled. They were talking business. They were on their way to Europe. I’m not sure they knew who Jim Fish was.

LC: Maybe that’s good.

BL: Yes. Anyway, we got off the plane in New York and in all this hustle and whatever, I got off the plane without my gown. I got to the hotel without my gown. What does Jim Fish do but go back to the airport in a cab, gets my dress, delivers it to the hotel, and we show up at this big gala.
LC: Chivalry is not dead.

BL: Oh! He was just a wonderful man, just a wonderful man.

LC: Did you enjoy all the parties?

BL: Oh my, yes, my yes.

LC: Oh, fun. Thank you. I’m going to turn the tape off here.

[Break in the interview]

BL: [looking at memorabilia—a letter from Philip Pillsbury] This is hand signed and this kind of gives you a flavor of Philip. This is on my fifth anniversary with the company.

LC: We’re thinking of using Philip Pillsbury, too, as a “history player” character.

BL: Oh, you must because the Bake-Off was a highlight for him. He led everybody into the ballroom, which was the contestants’ kitchen.

LC: And, he sounded really appreciated. Is it true that he was only the Pillsbury member of the family that made it up through the ranks?

BL: Well, George was up in the ranks when I was there, but left for the [Minnesota] State Legislature.

LC: Philip, though, worked as a master miller, didn’t he?

BL: Yes, oh, absolutely. He came with a carnation in his lapel every day. This is a very eloquent letter. It kind of tells you the atmosphere and the kind of person he was.

LC: Oh, yes. I’d love to have a copy of it.

BL: Of course, then it was still Pillsbury Mills.

LC: Oh, neat.

When did you marry?

BL: I married after I left Pillsbury. If I hadn’t left Pillsbury, I probably wouldn’t have gotten married. I had no time.

[Laughter]
LC: I suppose that’s true.


This is the only thing I have of—cookbooks. This is 1945, I believe.

LC: We’re looking at some cookbooks.

BL: This is the *Bake the No Knead Way*, which is the big flour promotion.

LC: We have a copy of this one.

BL: Do you—with the kitchens? That is the kitchen.

LC: Yes, we do. [Looking at photograph in the cookbook] That’s Ellen Pennell, right?

BL: Yes, that is Ellen.

LC: Did you know her?

BL: No, I did not.

This was the kitchen when I came. There were no other kitchens. This is kind of interesting because these books were done in 1967. They were now having me sign things instead of Ann Pillsbury.

LC: Oh, interesting.

BL: These were the forerunners of all little books at the checkout. These are the original.

LC: These would be the original grocery checkout cookbooks?

BL: Yes, these are the original grocery checkout cookbooks.

LC: There’s one for vegetables, meats, soups and salads.

BL: You can have those if you like.

LC: Oh, that would be terrific. Thank you.

BL: Yes. Then, of course, I have a lot of this kind of thing. You asked me what I did in the kitchen, in the mix area.

LC: These are brochures. Are they recipe booklets?
BL: Yes, and we were responsible for those.

LC: For the piecrust mix and the quick breads.

BL: Yes, those were my early—

LC: Two little recipe flyers.

BL: Yes. I have all kinds of this kind of thing, if you want—

LC: Little promotional— These are things that would be inside the flour bags?

BL: Yes. Of course, this was the Crescent Roll Dough that happened after—

LC: “Selections from the Nifty Fifties.”

BL: That was the 1968 Bake-Off.

LC: Oh, wow.

BL: This is an example of what was in the flour [sack].

LC: Okay.

BL: This, in fact, has still got flour on it. This is what we called “flour inserts”. General Mills was doing the same thing. More flour inserts. If you want any of this, you can have it. You let me know what you want to take. I don’t want to burden you with a whole bunch of stuff today.

LC: I’d kind of like to take it back to Collections and let them see it.


LC: If there’s anything they might like to have—because they really don’t have much of this type of thing. [Looking at a flyer]

BL: Here are the 1969 winning recipes.

LC: That would have been popped into a flour sack?

BL: Yes. This shows the expansion and there is the Pillsbury Doughboy.

LC: Oh, look, there he is.
BL: This is an early-on flour—“Best of the Bake-Off.” See, with every Bake-Off, we had tie-in partners. This is an example of…

LC: Here, they show Nestlé’s Chocolate Chips and butter and Pillsbury’s Best.

BL: Here’s another one that has raisins and Saran Wrap and ADA, American Dairy Association. This one I remember doing. This is Batter Magic for the Cake Mix Division. Cake Mix people. Look, five cents off with a coupon. Isn’t that a riot?

LC: Yes. [Laughter]

BL: All these promotions and, of course, all the books—I have all of the books, the hardbound stuff.

LC: One of the things we’re doing, too, in the baking lab, is to have a cookbook library that visitors can just browse through if they want to and a place where they can share recipes.

BL: Do you have everything?

LC: We’ve got quite a few. Most of the ones that we are collecting are—that I have been collecting anyway—the ones of the years where we’ve had Minnesota winners in the Bake-Off. I think there have been six or seven years.

BL: Well, there have been more than that. There have been a lot. Here’s the Bake-Off that introduced fresh dough.

LC: Oh, neat.

BL: I think you should have that.

LC: Yes, that’s pretty historical.

BL: Yes. This is the winner. That’s what started the whole fresh dough thing.

LC: Cool.

BL: I have all of these books, too.

LC: Do you really?

BL: Oh, yes. I have everything. I have two storages upstairs that are like two car garages back-to-back. We have big storages. I have all the furniture from my house. We left the house in 1991. I had two test kitchens and it was just the overhead because I was putting so much money into my company that this got to be too much.
LC: I’m sure Collections would be interested in anything you’d like to share.

BL: This is a typical brochure that was sent out with consumer correspondence in the early days of cake.

LC: It has “Ann Pillsbury’s” signature.

BL: Yes.

LC: I’d love to know where that signature came from. I’m sure it’s the same story as “Betty Crocker” where they just had several girls sign, and they chose a distinctive example—

BL: Yes, I did that for Universal Foods and that’s all I did.

LC: When you signed for Ann Pillsbury, did you have to sign like this?

BL: Yes.

LC: So you had to learn how to do the signature?

BL: Sure. Sure. So, I have all this stuff.

LC: I’d be glad to take this back, if that’s okay. We’ll get it back to you if they decide they don’t need it.

BL: All right. As I say, I have more books. I have all the books and some of them I have duplicates of. Now, this, of course, is my personal scrapbook. It has—

LC: Now, the Society would love this I’ll bet, if you’ve got some things like this in here.

[Looking at personal memorabilia in the scrapbook—cards, letters, etc.]

LC: Oh, they’d love this, absolutely love it. If our Society doesn’t want it, I’ll bet General Mills would love to have it.

BL: This was from my staff. They made this card—very touching. They all signed it when I became Ann Pillsbury.

LC: Oh! Isn’t that neat!

BL: Then, this is the news release in March 1967 [when Barbara became head of the Consumer Service Kitchens]. Unfortunately, of course, we didn’t have archivists or anything, so this glue has come through.
LC: Oh.

BL: This is the major article out of the paper.

LC: Oh! This scrapbook is marvelous with all these wonderful articles!

BL: The Reporter was Pillsbury’s magazine. I saved it all. [Looking at a photograph] Back there is Jim Fish.

[Laughter]

LC: That’s so great!

BL: I have a lot of that and a lot of cards.

LC: Oh, fun.

BL: They can take out up there what they want.

LC: Or if they could make copies maybe.

BL: [Showing letters of congratulation on Barbara’s appointment to Director] The professionals around town—that’s Minnegasco.

LC: Isn’t that interesting.

BL: NSP [Northern States Power] with a note from Jimmy Donahue. Then, more executives. Some of these are my personal friends. Telegrams. It was very exciting. This is the home economist’s newsletter. Here comes the University of Minnesota. I’m a lifetime advisor to the Institute of Forestry, Agriculture, and Home Economics over there and a past board member of the University of Minnesota Alumni Board. Then, here are notes from all of the professionals. The food editors—there’s Myrna Johnston of Better Homes and Gardens and all of the people around the country. Here’s the St. Paul paper. The editor, Eleanor Osman, I had as a judge. Then, this was down in Texas when I was introduced to the professionals down there.

LC: [Looking at a photograph] Who is this?

BL: This is my boss.

LC: What was his name?

BL: Bill Powell.

BL: Yes. These are more pictures, more pictures. This is when I did the Bake-Off [unclear], “Here Comes the Bake-Off.”

LC: Oh, ho! Oh, I’m sure they’d love to see this one.

BL: This was a nice article done in the *Dallas Morning News*. This is the official portrait.

LC: Oh, that’s nice, isn’t it?

BL: Yes.

LC: It looks like a graduation picture from high school. You look so young.

[Laughter]

BL: I was the youngest in the country.

LC: Oh, cool!

BL: [Looking at articles] This is at the Bake-Off in 1968. Here’s Bob Keith that I talk of. Bake-Off VPs. This is some of the other things I did, [unclear] cookbook things. That’s a piece done in the *Milwaukee Journal*. This was a roundtable with the locals: Mary Hart Sorenson, Eleanor Hoffman. We were talking about a consumer issue evidently. We used them a lot. This is my goodbye to the staff.

LC: Was it hard to leave?

BL: Yes. That’s more— Here’s another one of the politicals; this is Congressman Clark MacGregor. This is 1966, right before I was named Ann Pillsbury. This is when I was associate director, director of Consumer Service Kitchens. I had all the kitchens at that time. And, this is what I was talking about; the Bake-Off trend speech that they practically—

LC: Oh, neat!

BL: This was the last Bake-Off I did, which was out at the Del Coronado Hotel in San Diego in March 1970. More of that same thing.

LC: Avocado and gold.

[Laughter]
BL: That was really big—not anymore. [Looking at articles] This is the last kitchen that was added while I was there. This is the Publications Kitchen.

LC: Oh, nice. What was done in the Publications Kitchen?

BL: The cookbooks.

LC: That’s where they did the testing of the recipes?

BL: Yes, yes. Let’s see if I have anything else.

LC: You’ve had a wonderful career, haven’t you?

BL: I have. I’m blessed. I really am blessed. We were always judging a lot of things. Here’s the three milling people—Bev Bajus from Multifoods and Rita Holmberg from Peavey. We were always judging things. Out on the plaza.

LC: Oh, here [reading], “Ann Pillsbury to be Retired.” Oh, I could really use a copy of that one.

BL: This tells you why.

LC: That would be a good article for us to have.

BL: I wasn’t really happy with this; but then—

LC: [unclear]

BL: Do you want this?

LC: Yes. Actually, if it’s okay with you, I’ll take the whole scrapbook in.

BL: Okay. All right.

LC: I’m sure they’d like to see it.

BL: Tell them I got very careless in the end here and it’s not all put together so you’re going to have to be careful. [Chuckles]

LC: That’s okay.

BL: This article was done after I left. I had quite a time— I’m not going to name him because he’s still working with one of the local presses. The rumor was out that I was going to leave and I was trying all kinds of propositions to the Pillsbury executives to stay in a capacity other than Ann Pillsbury and that’s the “really no room at the top” syndrome.
LC: Do you think if they had let you get your MBA, you would have been able to advance?

BL: No.

LC: Oh, that’s terrible [unclear].

[Laughter]

BL: This is my farewell letter to the industry.

LC: When you’re in such a visible capacity, so high profiled, it must be really hard to just slip away.

BL: You can’t. [showing article from *Minneapolis* Tribune, February 2, 1958] Here’s the stuff I pulled out. This would be, I know, of interest. This is Ruth.

LC: Oh wow! Oh, she was pretty, wasn’t she?

BL: This is Mary Hart Sorenson.

LC: Mary Hart Sorenson?

BL: The food editor of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.

LC: Mary Hart!

BL: Yes.

LC: Oh, my gosh!

BL: I just had lunch with her last week.

LC: Oh, did you?

BL: Yes. She’s going to be eighty in April.

LC: Oh, my goodness! She’d be another interesting person to interview. She wrote some wonderful articles.

BL: Yes. She did just about everything.

LC: Wasn’t she on WCCO, too?
BL: Yes, she did just about everything. [Looking at articles] This is “Pillsbury Shows Galaxy of Modern Kitchens”. This is priceless for you.

LC: Neat. This is very good, yes. Excellent.

BL: This was the showcase. This had the grill in it.

LC: Beautiful, isn’t it?

BL: Yes. This has a grill in it. Let’s see if there’s anything else in here. Boy, is this old. “New Kitchens Have Beauty and Utility.”

LC: It’s so nice you saved things like this.

BL: I think it’s throughout here really.

LC: Okay.

BL: You can just take that. You’ll need to be careful of these antiques.

[Chuckles]

LC: [looking at articles] Oh! Look at that.

BL: Yes. Here we are. This was the kitchens.

LC: Oh, wow! Look at that.

BL: This is the Refrigerated Kitchen. This is the Cake and Frosting Kitchen.

LC: Oh, this is excellent!

BL: This is the Variety Mix Kitchen, which I was over. This is before I became over all of it. Here’s Sylvia [Ogren] in the Flour [Kitchen] and the Photography Kitchen, which did not have a staff of home economists, but was used to do the photography.

LC: Did you do anything special with the food for photography purposes? Did you just bake normally or did you have to do a lot of things to make the items work for the camera?

BL: Yes. It had to be authentic and honest, but if you had a special skill at the Swirl Cakes and whatever—

LC: Oh, fun. [Looking at a copy of Pillsbury People] We have some issues of Pillsbury People, but not this recent, so this is nice to have.
BL: [Showing cut-sheet of advertisement for Pillsbury Popover Mix] Now, here’s what I was talking about, that we won every award possible. I think I baked about 200 popovers to get this.

LC: Oh! Look at that. That’s beautiful.

BL: This was shot in New York.

LC: Wow!

BL: I made them on premise.

LC: Would you have melted the butter to get that look in the photograph?

BL: Sure, oh, yes, oh, yes.

LC: Oh, that’s beautiful.

BL: This was a wonderful food photographer, Hy Williams. I went in with Campbell Mithun, art director, who I adored. I did a lot of work with him. This is an example of one that didn’t see the light of day.

LC: That’s too bad.

BL: Here is some of the other publicity with the popover thing.

LC: Would you have been responsible for setting the tables and things like that?

BL: Oh, sure. [Showing photograph of Home Service Center staff, ca 1958] Now, here, this is priceless. You probably don’t have this.

LC: Look at that!

BL: Here’s Ruth and myself and Sylvia [Ogren] and Joan Boyce, who was over all the cake mixes, and Mary Kimball, whom I adored, was over new products, and Rosemary Schaefer, a former school teacher, who ran the educational aspects of the department, and Marion Quire was over refrigerated products.

LC: Do you have this written on the back?

BL: No.

LC: Oh, it would be so good if you would identify those for me.
BL: Okay, I will do that. This is the newsletter where he won the award for that popover thing. I should probably put that all together.

LC: That’s really exciting.

BL: Yes, it was wonderful. Yes, I knew I had this and I thought this is something you really probably—

LC: Oh, that’s perfect. I would love to have that.

BL: This is *Pillsbury People*. This is when we were dealing with Mexico and they were up.

LC: Oh.

BL: This is in Plascassier, France—Barbara and Simone.

LC: Oh, my gosh!

[Laughter]

LC: So, you actually met Julia Child?

BL: Oh, sure.

LC: What was she like?

BL: Oh, she’s wonderful.

LC: Is she?

BL: Yes.

LC: I love her shows.

BL: She just turned ninety, you know.

LC: I know. She’s amazing.

BL: [Looking at articles] “Flour Power Hour Nears.” This is 1970. This is Bake-Off. This was a very successful winner. See, this is the Magic Marshmallow Puffs. So, you want all of this?

LC: I think so. We’d love to at least go through it and if nothing else make copies of things that we can use. This is terrific and I’ll get it back to you promptly.
BL: If you can’t make decent copies, I don’t mind if you keep things. As I said, Frank and I have no children to whom to pass on the memorabilia.

LC: We can sure make good use of it and I can also make copies for Katie [Dishman] over at the [General Mills] archives. I’m sure she’d appreciate that.

BL: Yes. I’d be happy to talk with her.

LC: Oh! She would love that.

BL: This is the letter that went with the [Mondale] picture.

LC: Okay.

BL: Have I confused you with all this now?

LC: No, no, not at all. In fact, I’m very familiar with the Pillsbury company, so the things you’re saying and a lot of the names are very familiar to me.

BL: Okay.

LC: I’m going to turn this off. Thanks so much.