

Reminiscences of

Mary Beth Schulze

August 21, 2008

Interviewed by: Karen Perone

KP: (Introduction) Today is August 21, 2008, and I will be interviewing Mary Beth Schulze at Rodman Public Library. I am Karen Perone. Mary Beth Schulze has lived her entire life in Alliance Ohio and is known throughout the area for her community service and for helping others. I will be talking with her today about her work with the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts; the offices she has held with the disabled American Veterans Auxiliary; and finally how she became involved with Carnation City Players.

KP: All right, here we have Mary Beth Schulze. Hi, Mary Beth, how are you today?

MBS: Fine Karen.

KP: Thanks for joining me. Let's start off by talking about when and where you were born, and your family life.

MBS: All righty. I was born in Alliance, Ohio. We lived on South Union Avenue at the time, and my mother had eight children, four boys and four girls.

KP: When were you born?

MBS: January 29, 1921.

KP: Ok, and who were your parents? What's your maiden name?

MBS: Oh, my maiden name is Akins, A-K-I-N-S. My father was Glenn Akins, and my mother was Mary.

KP: Tell us a little bit about growing up in Alliance, the schools you attended, the things that have changed over the years that you remember.

MBS: Oh, well that is a long time ago. Um... I don't remember too much about, you know, school. Except certain things stand out, like my mother taught me to read before I went to school. So when I went into school and they were so surprised that I could read, they had me go around to different classes and read. Now, I only remember this because my mother told me that. But, there is not a lot I remember, really, except we lived on a farm, when I was young, like about seven years old or something, and all I remember about that is a big white rooster attacking me, one day.

KP: Oh dear. Where was the farm located?

MBS: On Beach Street. Then let's see, the next thing I remember would be... Junior High School. State Street Junior High School and we had a teacher, I took French and we had a teacher, she was a wonderful teacher, but when we went down to the high school the following year, why, only two people

out of that class continued with French because the rest of us didn't feel we knew enough about it. All I remember is "Comment telle vous, Audjour'hui". You know, "how are you today?"

KP: Did you continue with French?

MBS: Oh, no! No, I took a commercial course. You know, book keeping, typing and all that.

KP: Well that came in handy, later on in life.

MBS: Oh, yes. Yes it did. Yes because when I graduated we couldn't afford to go to college, any of us. So I made arrangements to go and take a year and a half of post graduate work in high school and I worked in Mr. Glenn Guy Hoover's office to pay for my tuition.

KP: Is that Guy Hoover?

MBS: Guy Hoover, yes.

MBS: Then after that I got a job working for the three supervisors of the Alliance City Schools Mrs. Haycock, Mrs. Erwin, and Mrs. Utherbee, and I worked for them until I was married in 1941. For a couple years after that...then I started having children. You know, I had a little boy, who is grownup now he's 65 years old and he's an attorney.

KP: And his name?

MBS: His name is Dennis Schulze and he is an attorney down in Marysville, Ohio.

KP: And you also have a daughter.

MBS: Well, yes. But after, the baby was, he just, just four or five months old, when he was drafted, Wilber was drafted into the Army for World War II. So when he came out of the army, two years later, and then we had a little girl. So they were four years apart the boy and girl, which was nice. She was a respiratory therapist, and she lives on the farm where I live now. They built a house and they built a section on for me. So, I have my own little apartment, you might say.

KP: And her name?

MBS: Pam Weible

KP: Can you tell us a little more about your World War II times?

MBS: Well, my husband was wounded the day after D-day and had a twenty percent disability. That's why he belongs, had belonged to the Disabled American Veterans. So he was over in France and they put him in charge of some German P.O.W.s because his mother had come from Germany. So he knew a little bit of German, and so that worked out nice for him.

KP: That's good. Speaking of the D.A.V., the Disabled American Veterans, you were quite active in that group, I understand.

MBS: I have been a member for 57 years.

KP: Fifty-seven years. So you joined in 1951. Tell us a little bit about how you got involved in that group.

MBS: Well because my husband was a member of the Disabled American Veterans and they had a local auxiliary here and so I joined and I have been a life member. We first met at the Christopher Columbus Hall because we didn't have a chapter home like we do now. Then we did get one, the one built out there on McCallum. So I served at all offices for the local. Then I was selected State Officer. Then I went up to State Commander for Ohio.

KP: What did you do as the State Commander?

MBS: Traveled to different units that invited me for special occasions or if they needed help with anything.

KP: Are there a lot of units in Ohio?

MBS: There were, but people have gotten older. Some of them have relinquished their Charters, but there were quite a few.

KP: And then you didn't stop there.

MBS: No.

KP: You went on to the national level.

MBS: That was '70, '71 I was State Commander. Then 1975, from '71 on up I served in different vice commander positions. Then years in 1975, '75, '76 I was elected national commander. I traveled; I visited Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and twenty-eight different states. Visited V.A. Hospitals and attended different functions that different states had invited me to.

KP: That's great. And you met a very famous man or a couple of them.

MBS: Which one?

KP: Yeah, tell us about that.

MBS: Well ok, in 1976 why we had, what used to be an annual affair, I don't believe they have it anymore; the Women's Forum on National Security. That was our two hundredth year for our country, in 1976. So I got to do a lot of things. I got to cut the ribbon for the dedication of the new D.A.V. national service head quarters in Washington D.C. The national commander for the men and I cut the ribbon. Then we went down to the basement of the building and waited for the car to come in, that was carrying President Gerald Ford. Then we escorted him up to the auditorium to the speaker's platform and we sat on the speaker's platform with him. Let's see, I got to place a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and they took me to Mount Vernon to George Washington's tomb and they opened the door, which they told me at the time that they don't always open it, but they unlocked the door and

me go in and lay the wreath at the place of his burial. I presented a Molly Pitcher Award to Bishop Sheen, for his special work with Americanism.

KP: Sounds like you had a very active year.

MBS: Oh yes. Also another thing that happened during that time I visited the Kennedy Space Center, and I served on the jury at Freedom's Foundation at Valley Forge for a week selecting the winners for that year's Americanism Contest. There just were a lot of things.

KP: Yeah it seems like it.

MBS: Yeah. I chaired the Women's Forum on National Security. I was a chairman of that. That was when the representatives of different veterans' auxiliaries met; came to Washington, D.C. and met. We had speakers and it was really nice. My theme that time was "Security 200 years and forever." Oh when I was in the office of national commander my theme was "Ring the Bells for Membership."

(Mary Beth Schulze then shows a necklace which she received because of that theme.) She also states that she received 156 bells as gifts that year from traveling, which she keeps in a nice cabinet in her living room.

KP: That is a nice keepsake.

MBS: Oh yes, wonderful.

KP: So once you finished up that year did you continue working with the D.A.V. auxiliary?

MBS: Oh yes. I've been a life member.

KP: Is the group active here in Alliance?

MBS: Oh yes, we meet at the chapter home once a month, out there on McCallum, and recently five of us, from our area, attended the National Convention in Las Vegas.

KP: Good.

MBS: That was really nice, busy place though.

KP: I bet.

MBS: Noisy too.

KP: Caring on a lot of business, huh.

MBS: Of course with Carnation City Players that's kept me busy too. I've been a member of that for 44 years. I don't know it seems like when I join something I seem to stick around awhile.

KP: That's good, I mean we need more people like that, but we are going to talk about Carnation City Players in a little while. But, first I want to talk about scouting.

MBS: Oh yes.

KP: You were very active with the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, I understand.

MBS: Well in 1943, when my husband went to the service, the church called me and said wouldn't you like to help with our Girl Scout troop here. So I had my little baby you know, so I said well sure, so I would go down to the meetings and take him with me, and a lot of the girl scouts would earn their baby care badge by helping learn to take care of him.

KP: Well, that was good timing.

MBS: Oh yeah, right. I was a Girl Scout leader, a troop leader for 27 years. See what I mean when say when I join something I stay. Then I was a Cub Scout den mother for 7 years.

KP: When did you find time to do anything else?

MBS: Well I guess I didn't do anything else. Well once in a while we would take a vacation and go on a fishing trip with the children, but it was a wonderful experience and I met so many wonderful people. I just learned to love everybody.

KP: And I understand you taught them singing and drama.

MBS: Yeah, and camping skills.

KP: Camping skills?

MBS: I gave training courses for Girl Scout leaders once in awhile. I went to camp Veda Macy in New York for some training myself. I went to; I think it was, Toledo to a training session for Girl Scout leaders. The only thing I remember about that is there was a tornado alert and they said now if we get a tornado warning why you find the lowest place you can find and lay down in that. That was my first experience with tornado alerts.

KP: Oh dear.

MBS: But thank goodness nothing ever happened, so we didn't have to put in to practice.

KP: And you've stayed in contact with many of these girls, over the years?

MBS: Yes, about five years ago a group of them got together and had a luncheon in at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. I belong to the Abiding Savior, but I used to belong to Saint Paul's. In fact that was where my first troops were. And they had a luncheon and we had revived old memories and we had a really good time.

KP: Good.

MBS: In fact, I have a picture that was taken of the group on my computer table. Yes, I have a computer, I don't know how to use it, but I have one.

KP: You do very well with your computer.

MBS: I play solitaire on it.

KP: There you go - a very expensive deck of cards.

MBS: Yeah, right. Well my daughter comes in and uses it sometimes when she doesn't want to go downstairs to her own. So I feel that was worth it.

KP: So you must have had a big impact on these girls that they decided to get together after fifty years to honor you at luncheon like that.

MBS: I thought I never got to be called for jury duty and I would like to see a trial. So I thought I would go down to the city hall to the courtroom. I got checked through the police thing at the door and they said you go down this here and to the right. And I did and I saw what was going on that day. When I walked up to tell them that I was there to deliver the judge his tickets. So they said come on up here, he says, I told him that I have never been in a courtroom before, so he said come here and sit in my chair. So he let me sit in his chair, but the thing was that I was going to tell you is that when I went up there someone says Mary Beth and she came and hugged me. I thought who is this lady; I can't think, she looks familiar. Here it was one of my little girl scouts back then at the church. It was Jone Shotner was her name and its Boise now, but she is the sweetest most wonderful person. She was one of them who helped with the luncheon. I didn't expect, you know, you think, you're so busy getting old and so you don't think about people that you knew as little children getting old, and there she was a grown woman with gray hair, white hair. Anyways she is just a wonderful girl.

KP: That's always nice when you come back and they remember you.

MBS: Oh yes, I saw one yesterday. I was meeting Phyllis Kibler at Applebee's so I could give her some information; she's my co-chairman now for the box office. I sat down to wait for her and there was a couple sitting down beside me there. The women leaned over and said Mary Beth how are you, and I thought oh my goodness sakes, who's she? She was so nice and so sweet, and she said I was a girl scout with you years ago. I was just so tickled that she recognized me and remembered me.

KP: That's great. Are there any experiences with the Girl Scouts, or maybe a camping trip, or something that you can recall?

MBS: Oh yeah, different times, one time was at my mother's she lived on West State Street where that big car wash is now, on the corner of Shubert and State. Well that was her house then and so we went out there and she had an orchard. We camped out one time one weekend, Gretchen Cox, well Gretchen Swaggard is her name now and different ones that were in my troop. My sister had gotten home from Hawaii and she had lived there for four years, and she had taken lessons for hula. So she taught the girls a hula and they were so thrilled.

KP: That's great.

MBS: Then one time, later on about 1970 just before I quit scouting, why I took them out to my farm. When we lived on a farm then and we took them out there we did an experiment, digging a hole and putting the coal down and putting the food on and covering and cooking it that way. So we had that episode that day and it was so good. Everybody enjoyed it and it was a different experience for me as well as the girls.

KP: Not something you do every day.

MBS: Not something I do every day.

KP: Then you were involved with the Cub Scouts a little bit too.

MBS: Yes my son when he was little why him and Billy Morgan, Bill Sutton, David Ruth, Craig Locke, and Darrel Wutherick. But yes I had them.

KP: Did you like working with the Girl Scouts better than the Boy Scouts?

MBS: Oh no, I enjoyed all of it.

KP: Just a little different working with the boys than the girls.

MBS: Oh yeah.

KP: Let's talk about Tri-County Players, the forerunner of Carnation City Players. How did you get involved?

MBS: 1964, let's see, well I guess for one thing we went to see the shows and they were very good. So we liked that. So they had auditions for shows at different times, I auditioned for one of them. I got a part and then I got so interested I finally decided... well what it was, was they had a show scheduled, *Plain and Fancy*, and we didn't have a director for it. So this is one of those things that happens to me. So they said, "Well Mary Beth you always that you wanted to direct someday, why don't you try this?" I said, "A musical?" And they said, "Well sure, you can do it," so I thought, well if they think I can do it then I guess I can do it. So I did it and I directed six musicals then. I did *Plain and Fancy*, *Brigadoon*, *Bells are Ringing*, *Show Boat*, *Oklahoma*, and *Finian's Rainbow*.

KP: And those are not little shows, those are big shows.

MBS: Oh yes and they are wonderful.

KP: Classics.

MBS: Then I did about eight regular shows and three melodramas. Somebody said to me yesterday, they said, "You know, why don't you do a melodrama again, they're a lot of fun; I would try out for that." So I said, well I'll have to think about it.

KP: I think that was one of my first experiences when we moved to Alliance, was coming to a melodrama at Carnation City Players. You were probably involved with that at one point too. We didn't really know

any of the cast of characters to speak of, but it was a lot of fun. So yes I agree. We need to do another melodrama. So, the early days, back in the, Tri-County Players started in about 1960.

MBS: '60, I believe it was

KP: And that was the days before the Firehouse Theater. So where did they rehearse, and where did they put on shows?

MBS: We rehearsed different places, schools or churches, wherever. In fact, one thing we did, I don't remember, Ann Frank it might have been, I'm not sure, anyways one of the shows we did actually perform it in a church. In St. Joseph's school, we did one there. And Rockhill School was where a lot of them were, and then the Strand Theater down in Sebring.

KP: So it was more than just Alliance that was involved?

MBS: Yes, it was three counties Stark, Columbiana, and Mahoning, I believe it was. I don't remember the year but eventually we got around to changing it because those counties weren't participating anymore, and it was mostly just Stark. So we decided to call it Carnation City.

KP: So was it Carnation City Players before the Firehouse Theater or about the same time, do you think?

MBS: Oh no, we were the Carnation City Players before we got the theater. *Mame* was our first show we did in the Firehouse Theater.

KP: And that was about 1970...?

MBS: Don't ask me dates.

KP: It was in the early '70s, I remember. I think '72, but I will have to check on that.

MBS: I should have gotten my schedule out and looked at different dates, but I wouldn't probably remember them anyways probably.

KP: Well we do have that information available. Did you rehearse in; I understand there were rehearsals in people's homes and things, or just schools and churches?

MBS: Just schools and churches mostly. Once in a while if it was a small group they would maybe rehearse in a home.

KP: Did it make it difficult for building sets and things, without of having a set space to?

MBS: Well yeah you couldn't do as much, you know. My husband was in charge of set construction, set design for a number of years before he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, and then after that he couldn't do it anymore... We have a wonderful crew now.

KP: Talk about that a little bit.



MBS: Well yeah, Gordon Harrison, Keith Brown, Bob Henry, and different ones come in to help too, you know, but those are the main ones. They do a wonderful job.

KP: Yeah the sets are incredible, what they come up with these days.

MBS: Oh, yes. Yes they are.

KP: So some of the things that you're involved with the theater, different offices that you held.

MBS: Well I'm assistant treasurer and box office chairman for about 18 years, I think. There I am again, with the long... just like with the state. After I was National Commander, I'd go back and I was state treasurer for 18 years.

KP: You're good with the money.

MBS: Because they trust me. So...the Carnation Players is really a wonderful organization, and we don't have any pre-Madonnas, you know, who think they are so much special more so than the rest of the cast or anything. Everyone gets along fine and we work together. It's just wonderful.

KP: One of the nice things, I don't know if everybody knows this or not, but when they call the box office they're not actually calling the theater because you transferred the phone to your house. So that friendly voice that's on the answering machine is yours, right?

MBS: Yeah, I answer the phone when it rings and take their reservations. We have some awfully nice people that call in. They say well now Mary Beth, I would really like the third row if that's alright, if there's any seat there. They don't complain or gripe about things. Everybody is just so nice. I get between two and three hundred calls for each show. I go down two weeks before the show opens and put the phone on call forwarding to my home. That way I can take the calls and get the tickets in envelopes and get it all ready.

KP: It's a pretty smooth running operation.

MBS: Yeah it goes real nice. Well now Phyllis Kibler is going to be co-chairman now and she is co-chairman this year for me. She will probably take over for me, when I quit. I told them at the board meeting the other night...

KP: You're not going to retire.

MBS: You were there, you know. I told them that next year when it comes election time I'm dropping everything, and you were one of them who said "oh no".

KP: We will definitely miss you when you stop doing that. You are doing such a great job, having everything run there.

MBS: Thank you.

KP: Tell us some of your favorite moments of Carnation City Players, working with the cast and crews, or maybe a director moment, or something, working with the board...Put you on the spot.

MBS: I get along with everybody, if anybody has any gripes about me they didn't let me know yet. But... I might say that... I received an award from Ohio Community Theater Association and two years ago, two or three, I forget when, I received an award from Youngstown Area Community Theater Association, and I really appreciate it.

KP: That was in 2006, right? Youngstown Area Community Theater Association's Lifetime Achievement Award.

MBS: (reaches for a paper of dates and reads it) Yeah the Achievement Award was in 2006 and the induction into the OCTA Hall of Fame was 2004.

KP: That's pretty good, and you are an honorary lifetime member of CCP.

MBS: Yeah I'm an honorary lifetime member and a member of Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, I think I mentioned that.

KP: So is there a particular show that you have good memories about?

MBS: Not one in particular. *Showboat* was very good. Dick and Rita Hamilton were in that and they are both gone now. But it was a very good show and my husband was set construction for that. I remember him making the things, like the railing on a ship, you know, and he did a wonderful job on that set. Another show that I liked was *Bells are Ringing*, and that was a lot of fun and a good show too. I think Carnation Players does all good shows. I very seldom ever seen one that I was disappointed in. They do a wonderful job.

KP: It's all volunteers.

MBS: All volunteers except the directors. In fact, most of the musicals I directed I didn't get paid because we didn't pay then, back in those days. I was always a volunteer. But we have people coming from Canton, Akron, Salem, and down that way, from everywhere and they say they really enjoy coming to our shows and they like our theater thanks to the City of Alliance.

KP: That's one thing that a lot of the community theaters in the area don't have the advantage of.

MBS: Oh yeah, right.

KP: Is that we have a wonderful facility provided by the City of Alliance.

MBS: Oh yes, yes. We are very fortunate.

KP: So they have us there as the caretakers of the facility.

MBS: Yeah.

KP: What do you see in your future with theater and all your other activities that you are involved with?

MBS: Well I don't know.

KP: Don't tell me that you're getting to old for these things because I know.

MBS: Well I will be 88 in January. I saw a lady the other day and she walking along and having trouble and I thought that poor soul she must be getting pretty old. Then I thought, geez I hope I'm able to walk good. When I was out in Las Vegas, I'm telling you that was a lot of walking to go from the North Tower over to the South Tower for all of our meetings. I was so glad to get home. I said that somebody the other day and they said, "Glad to get home from Las Vegas?" and I said, "Oh yes. That was too much walking for me." Alliance is a great place; we have a lot of good organizations in Alliance and people are very nice.

KP: So you have anything else that you want to share with us? Oh we didn't talk about Civil Defense.

MBS: Oh yes, my husband and I were in Civil Defense for about four years, I think. That's funny how you remember only certain things about... The only thing I remember about Civil Defense was one time, one night we went to a meeting and the person in charge said now Doctor so and so was supposed to be here to give a training session on emergency child birth, but he has an emergency with a patient and he won't be able to be here. So they said we will have to have somebody do the training. You know, we all said "Oh". And they said, the person, I forget if it was a man or a woman, who was in charge, anyways, they said, "Well Mary Beth how about you?" I said, "I didn't know anything about child birth. I have had children but I don't know what to do." Well that's all right, we have a slide projector here and slides and this commentary, you can do it. So I said ok. So I did it.

KP: So that was your early introduction to acting.

MBS: Oh well that it could be.

KP: What was the Civil Defense group supposed to do?

MBS: We met at the armory and it was war time, you know, and I guess we were supposed to be able to help out in an emergency or something.

KP: Would that be kind of similar to what the Red Cross does, or something different than first aid?

MBS: It's a little different.

KP: I remember there used to be these Civil Defense kits. Like little wooden or cardboard barrels that had emergency food and things like that. Where you involved in that at all?

MBS: Yeah, I don't remember to tell you the truth.

KP: Okay, like Cold War Era.

MBS: I don't know it was a long time ago.

KP: Oh well. Well I think we covered quite a few things here, and I want to thank you again for joining me today.

MBS: Well thanks for asking me, my goodness.

KP: And sharing things about the D.A.V, Carnation City Player, and Girl scouting, here in Alliance. Thank you so much.

MBS: Well Okay. Thank you.