

Joe Bozeman Interview, 2017

- JoyEllen Freeman: Okay, great. Well thank you so much for agreeing to do this oral history for the KSU archives. We appreciate it. We're just going to go ahead and get started if that's okay with you.
- Joseph Bozeman: That's fine, and I'm honored that you asked me to do this.
- JoyEllen Freeman: Great. Wonderful. Thank you so much. Alright. We'll just start off with some basic information. What is your full name?
- Joseph Bozeman: My full name is Joseph Lester Bozeman, Junior.
- JoyEllen Freeman: Okay. [00:00:30] And when and where were you born?
- Joseph Bozeman: Well, most people think that I'm a Kennesaw native, but I'm really not. I was born in Charlotte, North Carolina on October 8, 1944. My Dad had been transferred to Charlotte, and I was born while my family was living in Charlotte, although, my family is originally from Kennesaw.
- JoyEllen Freeman: I see. [00:01:00] Great to know. While we're talking about your family, can you tell me a little bit about your parents and what their names were and kind of maybe a little bit about how they raised you?
- Joseph Bozeman: My Dad's name was Joseph Lester Bozeman, Senior. I'm a Junior named after him. He was born in Kennesaw. My mother's name was Sarah [Skelton 00:01:28] and [00:01:30] she was also born in Kennesaw.
- JoyEllen Freeman: Okay. Your early years growing up in Kennesaw, do you have any, I guess, great memories? What did you do for entertainment? Did you have a lot of friends?
- Joseph Bozeman: People ask me what it was like growing up in Kennesaw in the 1950's. [00:02:00] The best way I can describe it is we had everything but money. Everyone was happy. We didn't have a whole lot of money, and what we did for entertainment we figured that out for ourselves. We played sandlot baseball, sandlot football and things like that. [00:02:30] There were very few organized things to do in Kennesaw. And did I have a lot of friends? No, not really, because there were only about 500 people in Kennesaw, but we were all friends in Kennesaw.
- JoyEllen Freeman: Okay. I saw a picture I think in the Images of America Kennesaw book of you and some other kids. You were in some kind of a store or some kind of [00:03:00] drugstore or something. Were there certain stores that you all would go to?
- Joseph Bozeman: The picture that you are referring to was the local drugstore.
- JoyEllen Freeman: Okay.

Joseph Bozeman: Dr. Black and his wife, Thelma, owned that, and we would meet there every day after school and eat hot dogs and drink Cherry Cokes. The picture that you're talking about, it's right funny you mention that. The boy [00:03:30] standing next to me in that picture is Butch Thompson. He owns a company called Butch Thompson Enterprises. It's a road paving company. And he's smaller than C W Matthews, but he's owns quite a nice business now.

JoyEllen Freeman: Wow. Oh my goodness. Was he from Kennesaw too?

Joseph Bozeman: Yes. Grew up on Moon Station Road.

JoyEllen Freeman: Wow. [00:04:00] Did y'all ever go into Atlanta at any point or did you mainly stay in the Kennesaw area?

Joseph Bozeman: Well, my Dad worked in Atlanta for Westinghouse Electric Corporation so we would go to Atlanta quite often and meet him to go out to lunch or dinner or something like that or to go to a baseball game. And went to Atlanta quite [00:04:30] often.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay. Which school did you attend ... or which schools, I guess, plural, did you attend growing up in Kennesaw?

Joseph Bozeman: In Kennesaw I attended the old elementary school, which is still there. It's the Martha Moore building now. I went there from the first through the eighth grade. [00:05:00] Then I went to a Georgia Military Academy, which is in College Park. It's called Woodward Academy now.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay.

Joseph Bozeman: Then I went to North Georgia College, which is in Dahlonega, Georgia.

JoyEllen Freeman: Alright. You went to North Georgia. What did you study at North Georgia?

Joseph Bozeman: [00:05:30] Business Administration.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay. Business Administration. Since you went to Georgia Military Academy, did you serve in the military at all?

Joseph Bozeman: No. I did not serve in the military. I went to a military prep school, which was Georgia Military Academy not a military college. But I suffered a severe injury to my right arm at North Georgia [00:06:00] College, and I was ineligible to serve in the military after that.

JoyEllen Freeman: I see. Okay. You got your degree in business. What did you want to do with that?

Joseph Bozeman: I really didn't know. I had planned on probably making the army my career, and when [00:06:30] I saw that wasn't going to happen I went to work with Westinghouse Electric Corporation too, like my Dad.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay. That was in Atlanta?

Joseph Bozeman: Yes.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay. How long were you working there?

Joseph Bozeman: I worked with Westinghouse for 17 years.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh, wow.

Joseph Bozeman: And after I'd been there 17 years, they sold the division [00:07:00] that I worked for to the Dutch company called Philips of the Netherlands, and I worked for Philips for 13 years after that.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay. Were you still based here in Georgia?

Joseph Bozeman: Yes.

JoyEllen Freeman: Did you enjoy the work?

Joseph Bozeman: Yeah. I did. I enjoyed it a lot.

JoyEllen Freeman: Since you and your father both worked in Atlanta, [00:07:30] I'm curious about the main source of employment for people that were in Kennesaw. Was there one type of industry that a lot of people worked in here?

Joseph Bozeman: In the early 1950's, there were two things to do in Kennesaw, one was to work for the railroad and the other was working on a farm. Most people worked for the railroad.

JoyEllen Freeman: [00:08:00] Okay. I'm really interested in your family's kind of relationship with the railroad. If I'm not mistaken, I think, was it your Great-Grandfather wasn't he a child during the Great Locomotive Chase? Did he witness something?

Joseph Bozeman: Yes. My Great-Grandfather, his name was James A. Skelton. He was the last [00:08:30] surviving witness of the stealing of the locomotive general.

JoyEllen Freeman: Wow.

Joseph Bozeman: He was a 14 year old boy, and his father had been killed in a railroad accident and left his mother and several brothers and sisters. He was the oldest. He wanted to get a job and help out his mother with the younger children. [00:09:00] He had heard from train crews that came through Kennesaw that

there was a job opening in Cartersville, Georgia. Two jobs were open up there. One was a fireman on a switch engine, the other one was a water boy. He decided he would go to Cartersville and apply for one of those jobs. He bought a roundtrip ticket to Cartersville, and boarded a locomotive or a train that was stopped in [00:09:30] Kennesaw on a Saturday morning on April 12, 1862. He had no idea that he was witnessing history

JoyEllen Freeman: Wow.

Joseph Bozeman: To quote him, "I boarded the train, and I saw a passel of strangers walk by." He said, "I opened the window to see what was going on, and I felt [00:10:00] them uncouple the car that I was in from the rest of the-

Joseph Bozeman: ... them uncouple the car that I was in from the rest of the train." He said, "All of a sudden the train took off and Captain Fuller, Jeff Cain, and Murphy ran out of the Lacey Hotel, said, someone stole the train, and it disappeared going northbound." I wish my Great-Grandpa had ran up the tracks with them and chased it. It'd make the story a whole lot better.

JoyEllen Freeman: [00:10:30] But it's still a really good story. That's so interesting. Did he kind of pass that story down or did he write it down at all?

Joseph Bozeman: He sort of passed it down. He was an honored guest at the premier of Gone With The Wind, and in the Atlanta paper that article, that article [00:11:00] is published in the Atlanta paper with a picture of him also entering the premier of Gone With The Wind.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh, wow.

Joseph Bozeman: It's pretty well documented.

JoyEllen Freeman: Right.

Joseph Bozeman: He didn't get to Cartersville that day. But he needed some money so he got the only [00:11:30] job that was available. He joined the Confederate Army. And at 14 years old he went into the Confederate Army, and that's young.

JoyEllen Freeman: That is young. I thought they had to be 16, at least.

Joseph Bozeman: I understand there were 12 year old boys in the Army back then.

JoyEllen Freeman: I believe it.

Joseph Bozeman: But my Great-Grandpa, he never served in combat. But in my opinion [00:12:00] he had worse duty than being in combat. He was a prison guard at Andersonville Prison, the infamous Confederate prison down at Andersonville Georgia.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh my goodness.

Joseph Bozeman: And I had personally rather been in combat than guarding those Union prisoners.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh my goodness. Wow.

Joseph Bozeman: It had to have an effect on his life. But [00:12:30] I can't imagine when I look at a 14 year boy today and I think that my Great-Grandfather was in the Confederate Army and a prison guard in such a terrible place as Andersonville was.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh my goodness. I imagine he didn't talk about that too much.

Joseph Bozeman: I never knew him really. He died three years to the day before I was born.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh. Okay.

Joseph Bozeman: But [00:13:00] I don't know how much he talked about it. I understand that he was a very grumpy old man. And I can understand how he got so bitter by having that in his childhood memories.

JoyEllen Freeman: Sure. That makes a lot of sense. Let's see. I want to talk about [00:13:30] a little bit of your involvement in Kennesaw when you got to be older. Now, I want to make sure I have this right. I know that you're named after your father. Is there someone else ... there's another Bozeman I'm thinking of. Is there like a-

Joseph Bozeman: Are you talking about a real estate guy and a land developer?

JoyEllen Freeman: Yes.

Joseph Bozeman: He was my father's brother.

JoyEllen Freeman: He's your uncle.

Joseph Bozeman: Yeah.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay. He was really involved [00:14:00] in, I guess, in the city, politics, and social scene. Right?

Joseph Bozeman: He was never in politics. He never ran for any office.

JoyEllen Freeman: He never ran for anything?

Joseph Bozeman: He had a real estate company. He was a house builder. He was a developer. He was the first one to do any developing in Kennesaw.

JoyEllen Freeman: I see. Is that why there's a Bozeman Lake Road and all that kind of stuff?

Joseph Bozeman: Well, my Dad ... Bozeman Lake is really named after [00:14:30] my Dad.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh. Okay.

Joseph Bozeman: My Dad bought a hundred and ten acres over what was called Shiloh Road back then. It's called Cherokee Street now. My Dad bought a hundred and ten acres up there in 1948 from an old family that was selling their property. And my Dad built a lake [00:15:00] on that property two years later. It's called Bozeman Lake, which is now part of Pine Tree Country Club.

JoyEllen Freeman: I see. Okay. Are there any other examples of, I guess, pieces of land named after your family in the area?

Joseph Bozeman: Yeah.

JoyEllen Freeman: Really?

Joseph Bozeman: Have you ever heard of Jiles Road?

JoyEllen Freeman: Yeah.

Joseph Bozeman: My Great-Grandfather, [00:15:30] Jiles, owned the land where Swift Cantrell Park is and most of the big subdivision over there ... can't think of it now, Legacy Park. My Great-Grandfather owned all that land from where Swift Cantrell Park is over to the railroad track there on Moon Station Road.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh my goodness. Wow. [00:16:00] I had no idea about that.

Joseph Bozeman: We sold all that land way too early. If we would have waited for it, it would have gotten valuable.

JoyEllen Freeman: Yeah. That's alright.

Joseph Bozeman: And my step-father, I guess he's a part of our family. His name was Steve Frey.

JoyEllen Freeman: No way.

Joseph Bozeman: Yeah.

JoyEllen Freeman: No way.

Joseph Bozeman: He owned where I'm sitting today.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh my goodness. I had no idea [00:16:30] you had that connection too.

Joseph Bozeman: That's my step-father. And his property, which is where Kennesaw State University is today adjoined our property at Pine Tree Country Club. I grew up

adjacent to where farm was that was owned by my future step-father after my [00:17:00] Dad passed away years later.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh. Wow. That is so interesting. Speaking of Kennesaw Junior College and Kennesaw State University. You remember, I'm sure, when Kennesaw Junior College kind of came into being. How did it affect the city of Kennesaw? Were y'all excited about it?

Joseph Bozeman: [00:17:30] When they first built Kennesaw Junior College, I think people were excited about it because it was going to give kids around here an opportunity to go to college, and it would be less expensive to go the junior college than to go off to regular four year college. It didn't have much effect [00:18:00] for several years. The thing I remember most about it was kids were coming here getting a good education, and it wasn't a party school. In fact, it was probably pretty boring to go to Kennesaw Junior College. I don't remember. I never had any affiliation with going to school here. I went to North Georgia. And [00:18:30] I was out of North Georgia about the same time that they finished Kennesaw Junior College.

JoyEllen Freeman: That makes sense. I did hear that is more you went to class, you went home. It wasn't, at first, a ton of things to do.

Joseph Bozeman: I don't think there was anything to do here.

JoyEllen Freeman: To do on campus really. Other than go to class.

Joseph Bozeman: That's about it.

JoyEllen Freeman: Yeah. Exactly. I guess, do you have many remembrances of the property before it became Kennesaw [00:19:00] Junior College? Did you frequent the property, because it was close to-

Joseph Bozeman: Yeah. Steve Frey's farm, which is where we are today, and our farm adjoined each other.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay. That's right.

Joseph Bozeman: And my Dad had a lake, which is called Bozeman Lake, and Mr. Frey had a lake, it's called Frey Lake. They were on the same stream, his lake [00:19:30] was downstream from ours. And I fished in his lake several times. And I would hunt on his land quite often too, squirrel hunt or rabbit hunt. There wasn't anything to do around here then. It was just woods and fields.

JoyEllen Freeman: That makes sense. We'll move on to more in the [00:20:00] 80s. I know a lot of people even to this day ...

JoyEllen Freeman: ... the 80s. I know a lot of people, even to this day, associate Kennesaw with the gun law that was passed in 1982, so can you talk a little bit about kind of how this, if you know, how this law came into being, and how people reacted to that?

Joseph Bozeman: Yeah. First of all, let me tell you, I own 38 firearms.

JoyEllen Freeman: You do?

Joseph Bozeman: Yes. [00:20:30] I'm opposed to the gun law.

JoyEllen Freeman: You are?

Joseph Bozeman: Yes. I honestly believe that the 2nd Amendment to the Constitution guarantees us the right to own firearms.

JoyEllen Freeman: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Joseph Bozeman: I also feel that it guarantees us the right not to own one. For them to make a law that says you have to own a firearm, I think, is plain ridiculous. [00:21:00] I'm going to give a little personal opinion here about the gun law.

JoyEllen Freeman: Sure.

Joseph Bozeman: There was a, and I don't even hear this talked about, but I remember it vividly. There was a mayor of Kennesaw at the time. His name was Darvin Ray Purdy, P-U-R-D-Y, I believe. He had great expectations of becoming an officer in [00:21:30] the National Rifle Association, and a nationwide officer. I think he pushed that law through under the disguise of maybe this would give him a nomination to a high position with NRA.

I oppose the gun law. If they want to do away with it, it suits me. If they want to keep it, it suits me too. It really doesn't bother me. [00:22:00] I feel most people in this town feel the same way, and felt the same way all the time.

JoyEllen Freeman: Were there certain people who supported it and certain people who opposed it, or were there just kind of ...

Joseph Bozeman: It really didn't, in Kennesaw, it really wasn't that big of a deal. It was a bigger deal everywhere else than I was in Kennesaw.

JoyEllen Freeman: Right, right, right.

Joseph Bozeman: I remember there was a couple of people really opposed it, and a couple really wanted [00:22:30] it, but I don't think it was really that big of a deal inside the Kennesaw city limits.

JoyEllen Freeman: Right. That makes sense. It's very interesting. I always wondered about that.

Joseph Bozeman: I think it was a political move.

JoyEllen Freeman: Yeah, probably. What I really want to kind of, we're getting to the end of our questions, but what I really want to talk about now is kind of your involvement in Kennesaw history, and how active you've [00:23:00] been in that. Do you know who started the Kennesaw Historical Society?

Joseph Bozeman: Kennesaw Historical Society, originally it was called The Big Shanty Historical Society. They started that back in the 1960s when we were trying to get the locomotive general down here and to place this, to display [00:23:30] it. That's when it was started. We got the general here, and the Big Shanty Historical Society went sort of away for a while.

A fellow named Robert Jones got the Kennesaw Historical Society going again. Robert's out of it now, and I'm the president of it, but I'm not [00:24:00] doing a very good job because Kennesaw Historical Society is not growing. The thing that I'm proudest of is Andrew Bramlett and his family. They're carrying the ball in the Kennesaw Historical Society now.

JoyEllen Freeman: Yeah, well I think you're doing a very good job as president, though, still. Actually, I've been talking to Louis, so we've got some really interesting things planned.

Joseph Bozeman: Good.

JoyEllen Freeman: I'm hoping, I probably should come to one of [00:24:30] you all's meetings, and talk about some of the things we're planning for this upcoming fall.

Joseph Bozeman: Please do.

JoyEllen Freeman: Yeah, we've got some really cool stuff in planning, so it'll be fun. I guess, in your own words, what is the society's main goal right now?

Joseph Bozeman: To educate people about the history of Kennesaw, and to try to [00:25:00] save the historical things in Kennesaw that are still there. I'm also on the Kennesaw Historical Preservation Commission. That's an arm of the city government.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay.

Joseph Bozeman: We can make things happen. I try to weigh things. [00:25:30] I believe in individual rights also, and I really don't think the government has the right to tell you this is what you're going to do with your property. If you own a piece of historical property, I do my best to work, save that without dictating to them what you're going to have to do with your property.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay, that's a really, yeah that's a great balance to [crosstalk 00:25:59].

Joseph Bozeman: It's hard to balance.

JoyEllen Freeman: It's [00:26:00] very hard, I know. Does that commission, does it mainly just deal with property, or does it also deal with like records, and documents of any type, historical documents?

Joseph Bozeman: It really, honestly, only deals with property right now.

JoyEllen Freeman: What makes you passionate about the history of Kennesaw?

Joseph Bozeman: Well, my family's been here since the 1830s. I [00:26:30] feel like that I'm really a part of it.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh yeah.

Joseph Bozeman: I love trains. Trains are part of Kennesaw history. Sounds weird, but I love the Civil War, and when I say I love the Civil War, I don't like the killing part of it, I just like to study the Civil War.

JoyEllen Freeman: I completely understand that. As [00:27:00] an archivist, I love war archive. It sounds, again, very strange.

Joseph Bozeman: Yeah.

JoyEllen Freeman: The letters, the photographs, the records. I can't get enough of it.

Joseph Bozeman: I'm the same way.

JoyEllen Freeman: Sometimes I'm in my office crying and no one knows why, but it's because I've encountered some type of record from the war. It's fascinating.

Joseph Bozeman: Yeah.

JoyEllen Freeman: I totally understand. It's very fascinating. Every war was so different.

Joseph Bozeman: Right.

JoyEllen Freeman: Yeah, Civil War, very, very [00:27:30] complicated and interesting. I guess I'd also like to know about The Images of America, the Kennesaw History book that you did with some other people. That was a great accomplishment. How long did that take?

Joseph Bozeman: It took us about six months to do that. Sallie Loy, who was the archivist over at the Kennesaw Museum, she and Robert Jones, and I put that together.

[00:28:00] The most difficult thing about it, for me, was is my family has been here so long, and my family has a lot of old pictures and old records.

Back [00:28:30] then we didn't take scenery pictures. We took pictures of people. Luckily, some historic things in the background of those pictures, but we got about a month away from publishing that book, and I told Robert and Sallie, I said, "We're not publishing this book like this."

This looks like a Bozeman, [00:29:00] Skelton, [Jiles 00:29:03] family photograph album. There's got to be some more people participating in this or I'm pulling all my stuff. This is not going to be an advertisement for my family. Luckily, my mother got some people to participate in it. I was not totally satisfied with that book, and [00:29:30] I wish that we would, and I think we will with the help of the [Bramlett 00:29:36] family, I think we'll do another book.

JoyEllen Freeman: Can I be involved, no.

Joseph Bozeman: Of course, you can. Of course, you can.

JoyEllen Freeman: I volunteer myself.

Joseph Bozeman: We would appreciate you being involved.

JoyEllen Freeman: That would be so much fun.

Joseph Bozeman: The picture on that book, on the cover, I did not like it.

JoyEllen Freeman: You didn't like it?

Joseph Bozeman: Have you ever seen the [00:30:00] book Images of America Cobb County?

JoyEllen Freeman: Yes. I can't remember the cover of it though.

Joseph Bozeman: It's a picture of the locomotive General, with about 10,000 people standing downtown.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay.

Joseph Bozeman: That should have been our cover.

JoyEllen Freeman: That should have been your cover.

Joseph Bozeman: Cobb County's cover should have been the old Cobb County Courthouse.

JoyEllen Freeman: Who's in the photo of this one?

Joseph Bozeman: The lady in the middle [00:30:30] is a lady named Betty Ellison, very good friend of my family's. I just don't think the picture does our book justice.

JoyEllen Freeman: Justice, right. Makes sense. That makes complete sense. It's still a great book, but I totally understand what you mean now.

Joseph Bozeman: They've slipped a few pictures in there that I didn't want [00:31:00] in there. One of them is a lifeguard standing on the diving board at Pinetree Country Club. I didn't want that one in there.

JoyEllen Freeman: That's okay. I guess that happens with books sometimes. That's all right though.

Joseph Bozeman: That was a 16-year-old boy, lifeguard.

JoyEllen Freeman: Yeah.

Joseph Bozeman: They slipped that in. I didn't want that picture in there.

JoyEllen Freeman: [00:31:30] I understand that.

Joseph Bozeman: Although I looked pretty cute.

JoyEllen Freeman: Did you enjoy being a lifeguard?

Joseph Bozeman: Yeah, I loved it. It was really, I would say, the most fun job I ever had.

JoyEllen Freeman: I bet.

Joseph Bozeman: Talked to a lot of girls.

JoyEllen Freeman: Yep, I bet.

Joseph Bozeman: Get a good suntan. It's not all fun because when you're [00:32:00] not sitting on that lifeguard stand, you're mixing chemicals, and you're cleaning the pool, and things like that.

JoyEllen Freeman: Not so fun.

Joseph Bozeman: Not for fun, but I enjoyed being a lifeguard.

JoyEllen Freeman: Good. Did you make good money?

Joseph Bozeman: I think I made a dollar an hour.

JoyEllen Freeman: Okay.

Joseph Bozeman: It was pretty good in 1961, 62. It wasn't bad.

JoyEllen Freeman: That's good. Well, this is our last little question. It's kind of an open- [00:32:30] ended question. You can take it wherever you like. There's two parts. What are the biggest changes you've seen in Kennesaw since you were young, and what changes would you like to see?

Joseph Bozeman: The changes that I've seen since I was young was when I was a kid, there were 500 people in this town. Now there's about 30,000. You [00:33:00] used to know everybody. Now, I go downtown, I don't know anybody. My southern drawl sounds funny on the street now, but that's okay.

I would like to see us, in downtown Kennesaw, [00:33:30] in the historic district is what I'll say, I would like to see it retain the old atmosphere rather than trying to change everything. I think we have entirely too much, too many apartments in this town, and I think it's going to turn out to be a bad thing.

JoyEllen Freeman: That makes sense, yeah. It's changing [00:34:00] a lot.

Joseph Bozeman: Changing a lot.

JoyEllen Freeman: A lot. A lot, a lot, a lot, but I love that that's why we're preserving history, make sure we remember where we came from, how we started, right?

Joseph Bozeman: I'm going to take you up on writing that book.

JoyEllen Freeman: Oh yeah. I'm fascinated by the history of Kennesaw. I did not grow up here. I'm from Connecticut, but I lived mostly in Alpharetta, so it's been really interesting to get to know Kennesaw and its history. I [00:34:30] can't believe we're already done, but I really, really, really appreciate you talking with me today.

Joseph Bozeman: I'm glad to do it. It was a wonderful time growing up here. It was like living in Mayberry RFD. Like I said, we had everything but money.

JoyEllen Freeman: I love that. That's my favorite quote. Thank you so much, Joe.