

**NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
EDITED ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT**

JANET M. EVANS
INTERVIEWED BY JENNIFER ROSS-NAZZAL
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA – 7 AUGUST 2003

ROSS-NAZZAL: Today is August 7th, 2003. This telephone interview is being conducted with Jan Evans for the Johnson Space Center Oral History Project. Jan Evans is speaking from her home in Scottsdale, Arizona. The interviewer is Jennifer Ross-Nazzal, assisted by Rebecca Wright, who are in Houston, Texas.

We'd like to thank you for participating in our project today. I'd like to ask you when did you move to the Clear Lake [Texas] area?

EVANS: Jennifer, we moved to the Clear Lake area in 1966. Ron was selected as an astronaut. Actually, the procedure started late in '65. He was in Vietnam at the time that he was selected, flying off of the aircraft carrier *Ticonderoga*. He came home from the cruise as soon as they were through on the north line, got home the 28th of April, had to report to NASA the 2nd of May. So we did a lot of washing and ironing, and he was on his way. Then the children and I went down after they got out of school in June. It's been a long time ago, but it was an exciting move.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you tell us where you decided to locate once you moved here?

EVANS: We lived in El Lago. Ron picked out the home, and it was wonderful with all of us. We were on a cul-de-sac at the end of Woodland Drive.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you tell us a little bit about the area and the subdivision when you arrived?

EVANS: Yes. We had major places like Nassau Bay, Timber Cove, Clear Lake City, El Lago, and, of course, Dickinson was the surrounding area. The people were all from someplace else. Nobody was raised in the area, so there were a lot of astronaut families. There were a lot of people connected with the different contractors, and you soon developed very close relationships with families. In fact, in our neighborhood, we still have reunions. A lot of us have moved away. We usually go back to Lake Livingston every two years. Our particular close neighborhood goes back together in Bushnell, and includes all of the children and all of the grandchildren. Nobody wants to be left out of those. You just developed pseudo families. Everybody took care of everybody else. It was a wonderful existence. It's very friendly down there in Texas.

I can even remember when we moved out here to Arizona in '77, our children, who were [in] high school and ready for college, they, even at that age, said, "We don't like this. They ride down the street. They don't look left or right. They don't wave. They don't smile. They don't say hello." They were used to that laidback friendly Texas way of living, so it was very nice to raise children in that area.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You raise an interesting point, and that's a point that we're looking at. How did all these people from these various places come together and create that community that you talk about so fondly?

EVANS: Everybody was working on a very exciting, challenging project. Everybody had one goal in mind. That was to eventually send man to the Moon. I think that was in a day and age when most women were stay-at-home mothers. The fathers of the families were all gone a great deal of the time, and yet they had very strong wives and families who could function without them and look forward to when they would be back. Everybody just bound together.

The only difference between, say, El Lago, Nassau Bay, Timber Cove, and Clear Lake City, the only difference between these areas and the people in Linden was NASA Road 1. Everybody was alike. Everybody the same. Everybody's dad somehow worked for NASA, be it a contractor or what. So nobody was set apart from anybody else. That made it healthy for everyone, young and old.

ROSS-NAZZAL: So it was NASA that really created the community outside of the Johnson Space Center?

EVANS: Right. Only because NASA is where the jobs were. NASA, itself, didn't say, "Oh, here. We welcome you. Do have fun and do this."

ROSS-NAZZAL: As you pointed out, a lot of the men were working really very long hours. It was time-consuming, the Apollo Program. Can you talk to us [about] how your husband's long hours, extended travel affected your family if at all?

EVANS: Jennifer, I have always said that once we got to NASA, we saw much more of Ron. Because he was a Navy fighter pilot, he would be gone anywhere from six to ten months at a

time; home four months, gone again six, eight, ten months; home for month. So we got down there, and we got to see him almost every weekend for at least twenty-four hours. Sometimes he'd get home at Friday night and not leave again until Sunday. Sometimes he'd get home Saturday and not leave until Monday. Sometimes he'd get home on Saturday and leave on Sunday, but we at least felt like we were seeing him at some point each weekend. In fact, I felt like I was having Friday night affairs. So we really saw more of him than we did while he was in the Navy.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's great. We've heard other things from other family members before.

EVANS: You must remember, everybody's different.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, you are correct in that statement.

EVANS: I can really only speak for myself.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you tell us about your involvement with the Astronaut Wives Club?

EVANS: I notice you mention Astronaut Wives Club. There was no club. From the beginning, all astronaut wives are, I like to say, seriously loyal to one another and have been from the beginning and will be forever. We always used to tease Marge [Marjorie Lunney] Slayton and say, "You've got to be our skipper's wife," because most of us were military. Of course, it would just crack her up. "No way I'm going to be any skipper's wife." Just as a group, we

always said, “Hey, let’s have a room over here at the yacht club there in Seabrook and have it be available,” I can’t remember now which way it was. Say it was the first Monday of the month, and anybody come. “Let’s go have coffee and get together.”

Everybody showed up every time. But as a club, we didn’t recognize any particular organization or back any or promote anything, because we did not feel that we could do that. We didn’t feel that we were any different than anybody else and didn’t want to set ourselves apart. The only time we wavered from that is [when] we [had] a luncheon and invited all of the POW [Prisoner of War] wives from the Houston and local area. That was the only time when we actually showed our support to any organization.

ROSS-NAZZAL: So, this was primarily a social organ[ization]? You said it’s not a club, but primarily a social activity for the astronaut wives?

EVANS: Primarily to get together, yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What sort of things would you do when you got together, if you don’t mind me asking?

EVANS: Talk, laugh, you’d pick up. To this day, when we have our reunions, we pick up right where we left off last time. Just like anybody who gets together, we just have a lot of fun, and it’s just enjoyment. We didn’t have speakers. We didn’t anything. We just got together.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you tell us about your own personal involvement in community organizations once you moved to the NASA area?

EVANS: Mainly, of course, my children. I had one in preschool and one starting first grade. We were members of the Seabrook Methodist Church, and I taught Sunday school. Then I went on with Girl Scout leader and, of course, PTA [Parent Teacher Association] and room mothers. That's as far as my involvement went.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you tell us what role the wives of NASA employees played in these type of organizations, just based on your perspective?

EVANS: Jennifer, I don't know. A lot of it had to do [with] what age children you had. At that time, like I say, we were all stay-[at]-home moms, and raising your children was the top priority. As time went by, for instance, one of the wives was mayor of El Lago for about five years, which certainly was a community involvement. One of the wives was very active in the little theater down there, because she had that particular talent. Mainly church and youth activities was the most involvement. We had Friendswood area, too, in there. So with Scouts, that was about it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned a few organizations. Can you talk to us about your role in the PTA, for instance? Did you play any leadership role in the PTA?

EVANS: No, I did not hold an office in the PTA. But [I] spent more time in the classroom where you help the teachers and bake the cookies for this and get their projects lined up for them.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What about the Girl Scouts? Can you talk to us a little bit about your involvement with the Scouts?

EVANS: Yes. I was a Girl Scout leader, along with Naomi McPhail, who was a longtime resident down there. I think I did that for four years. Fortunately, she was very knowledgeable about camping, so she certainly helped out there. I taught them how to sew and how to make little book bags. So I was more arts and crafts with them. We met over at the Ed White [Elementary] School [Seabrook, Texas]. Like I say, I did that for about four years.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Could you compare and contrast your involvement in the community with that of your husband's?

EVANS: Ron did not have community involvement. I'm trying to think if any fellows did while they were actually active astronauts, because they couldn't say, "I will be at a meeting at a certain time." When he was in town, of course he was at church. When he was in town, he would go to PTA meetings. But not actively involved, only if available, which was too bad.

ROSS-NAZZAL: This was similar for all the astronauts in the astronaut corps?

EVANS: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I had a couple questions for you about your neighborhood. Can you tell us how your neighborhood changed as more people moved into the area and how it affected the growth of your neighborhood?

EVANS: Let's see. It just made more people to come to the block parties we'd have at the end of the cul-de-sac. The more the merrier. I think I noticed one day that when the children were—well, Jamie was in junior high, and Jon was in grade school. One of them would come home all excited because some new child had moved into an area somewhere, and they were in their class. This carried out through high school. Everybody in that school knew that this new person was here, they knew what their name was, they knew where they lived, they wanted to see them, they wanted to play with them. I remembered this happening for the first time, and I just thought this is the way this whole area is. Everybody is open arms to everybody that comes in. If another family moved in, oh, great, you had one more family to get to know, to see, to be with, and to share with.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have any neighbors who were not employees of NASA?

EVANS: Yes. That's right, the Coves were with [NASA]. There was one family—he was a pharmacist with the local drugstore there on NASA Road 1. Emory had shrimp and oyster boats. That's an interesting question, because somehow or other most all of the people were with contractors and subcontractors. Right offhand, let's see, who were the Moffatts with? Oh, isn't that funny? It wasn't important what they did. It's just that they were there and a part of it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned a few minutes ago the block parties that you would have. Can you tell us a little bit about those block parties?

EVANS: You just had to call a couple of people, and that would start the word passing through. Everybody would bring a casserole. Now this included children and everything. Everybody'd just bring their casseroles and their children, and our cul-de-sac was a good place to have them. You never knew how many, and it didn't matter because you'd just buy the big package of paper plates and napkins. We would do this. It was never planned. It was always spur of the moment. That's the way a lot of the neighborhood [functioned], our own close group of neighbors that lived around there. Sometimes you'd get a call and say, "Hey, I just put a roast in the oven." And you'd say, "Well, okay, I've got things to make a salad," and this and that, and you'd be together.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Would you have music or any sort of entertainment? Would you play any games or anything?

EVANS: No. Gosh, it would be so noisy. We'd usually have a piñata in the tree for the kids, but there was a streetlight at the end of that cul-de-sac so that helped. But no, there'd be too much noise to hear music.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did anyone have a swimming pool at the time?

EVANS: The El Lago Keys Club was the name of our community swimming pool, which, I think, everybody in El Lago belonged to. This brings up a point. All the different communities around there all had swim teams. So, of course, before school would be out, the children would go to swim practice and diving practice. We also had synchronized swim teams. This was a very involved pastime. If the father was in town that weekend, he might be judging strokes. He might be timing. He might be doing the announcing. The mothers were camp mothers. They were also judging strokes and scoring for divings. You would have your kids at the swimming pool by seven in the morning, and if you got home by four-thirty or five that afternoon, you were lucky.

This was great, because all the children, by the time they went to high school, they already all knew each other, because there was only one high school when we were there until our daughter went her senior year of high school at the new Clear Lake High School [Houston, Texas]. Everybody knew everybody by the time they got to high school together. It couldn't help but be a close community down there, because you all filtered into one.

Even with the churches, at the time we were down there, there were no Jewish temples. There was one downtown [in Houston], and then I can't remember. Down south somewhere there was one. I know a lot of the local ministers around there, whether they were Methodist or Presbyterian or Baptist, they a lot of times helped out with the Jewish families. Sometimes they even met in the churches to hold their own services and everything. Everybody was very open armed.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Sounds like a very open community.

EVANS: Oh, it was. It was. It was, and like I say, I use this term “fiercely loyal.” The secretaries at NASA, oh, my goodness, to this day they just treasure all the wives and all the kids. People keep in touch, and they just were so protective of all of us. Dee [Delores B.] O’Hara, who was the nurse that was with NASA from the very beginning when they selected the seven original astronauts, has always been a member, so to speak, of our wives group, if you want to call it a group or a club. Dee is part of all of our reunions. It’s just we were all in it together.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That’s great.

EVANS: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Could you give us the names of all the various swim teams that you mentioned, if you can remember a few?

EVANS: They would have been, of course, El Lago and Timber Cove, Nassau Bay, and Clear Lake City and Dickinson. Then it would have been Seabrook. I can’t remember the logos to know what we were called.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, I understand that. That was a long time ago.

EVANS: Right. This would get into serious competing because then you would have meets sometimes with some of the dads’ club and places like this, you know, on in Houston. A lot of

the children went on to swim on the Clear Lake High School team. So swimming actually lasted throughout our lifetime down there then. We would have mothers driving carloads to Austin and places like that for swim meets.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Could you tell us about your role with these swim teams? You mentioned, for instance, that mothers did a lot of judging. What did you do?

EVANS: Whatever needed to be done. Another lady and I did a lot of setting them up and ensuring that everybody was there, filling out all the paperwork of what child was swimming what stroke and what age group, and keeping track so they would legally be in the proper age group, and getting the people to work, so if we needed a tent mother for an hour or for a day, you did that. If you needed judges, we would line people up. This is when you were the host team. Otherwise, we would just do the paperwork and turn it in to the other team. When you're the host team, then you make sure you have all of the workers lined up. So we just spent a lot of time doing paperwork, and then whatever needed done that day, we did. You had to set the tents up, too.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, my goodness. Did you have to take them down as well?

EVANS: Oh, sure, of course, and make sure all the kids had packages of dry Jell-O to give them energy.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Goodness, dry Jell-O, I've never heard of that.

EVANS: Oh, I tell you, and the eardrops and the eye drops. Almost all parents were very willing to participate and help out.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was this the prime activity that your kids were involved in? Were they involved with anything else other than the Girl Scouts and the swim teams?

EVANS: Then our son had Little League football.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Would you help out with that, or was that something that Ron focused on?

EVANS: Well, I guess he did soccer, too. I was going to say he was in town one Saturday for a soccer game. That was the time he flagged goalie. One of our neighbors was also [called] Ron, Ron Ammons and Ron Evans, and everybody would get them confused. All of our kids were just so intermingled. That was the day that Ron was in town, but he had to run up to the place you buy lumber over there on Highway 3, and we were playing in Clear Lake City. But anyway, Jon got flipped in the air and broke his collarbone, and so the coach came up to Ron Ammons. Ron said, "Well, I'll get him on to the hospital. I'll go get the car." So I go with them to the hospital, and Ron Ammons is giving all the information, which he knew.

They're wheeling Jon up in the wheelchair to X-ray, and the nurse said something about, "Now, your daddy can come on up here with you."

Jon turned around and said, "That's not my daddy."

Even the coach had thought he was. Then, of course, about five minutes later, Ron came walking in. He'd gotten back to the game.

So when I say we all had pseudo families, everybody knew about everybody else. To this day, like I say, we all get together, including children and grandchildren. And we wives get together, too. We're together every two years.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned your neighbors. I was wondering if you could talk to us about how your neighbors dealt with all the publicity that you might have received with Ron being an astronaut, with all the TV cameras and the tours coming through your neighborhood.

EVANS: Right. When Ron, I think it was during Apollo 14, he was on the backup, and by that time you had to go into quarantine. I think it was right before that, the day he was supposed to leave for quarantine. The night before, we'd taken the children and gone down to the Astrodome to some, I don't know, cart races or big truck races. We got home, and we had this huge billboard electric sign in our front yard that was all lit up that said, "Jan's Motel." Of course, we just nearly died. We knew who had done it.

Of course, everybody's tired, and Ron had to leave the next morning for the Cape [Canaveral, Florida]. We got in the house, and, of course, the bed was short sheeted. There was an ice bucket there with champagne. We finally got the kids to bed, and Ron and I got in bed. All of sudden, there are voices coming out in our bedroom. We finally found that speaker up in the attic after we pulled down the attic steps and got full of insulation. Of course, they were all out in the back field behind us, hysterically laughing. Things like this went on all the time.

The next morning when he left out of Ellington [Field, Houston, Texas] to fly to Cape, the whole neighborhood was out there at Ellington to wave goodbye to him, parents and children alike. Things like this went on all the time.

By the time Ron flew on [Apollo] 17, I guess it can be talked about now, there had been a threat by the Black September group that had wreaked havoc with the Olympics over in Germany. They had made a threat on the families of the 17 crew. So as it ended up, they left for quarantine, we had security out in front of our house twenty-four hours a day. We didn't know about this until the day before they left.

I was down at the Ammons' house for dinner and the Lorens [phonetic] were over there and the Hertz [phonetic]. I came home, and there was a reporter outside. Of course, the security guy was trying to get rid of them. They wanted to know what it was like with them gone into quarantine. I said, "Well, you make do." Of course, to this day, they all still tease me. "Everything we do for you, and you say you make do." So that's always been one joke that has covered over it.

If your washing machine broke, one of the neighbors came down and fixed it. One time, the refrigerator went out. The next thing I know, the refrigerator off of the porch of one of the neighbors is coming down on a dolly and they hook it up until Ron gets in town the weekend and we can go buy a new one. So everybody took care of each other.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you tell us how this differed from the Miramar Naval Air Station [San Diego, California] that you moved from?

EVANS: You had squadron camaraderie, definitely. As a whole air group, there wasn't that much, because you didn't have the opportunity. You speak of that. Ron had two tours of Vietnam before we came down here. That changed in a lot of ways. You couldn't talk. You never said where your husband was. You never said what your husband's job was. Now, the wives would still get together, but you had some wives who were in great fear. Frankly, they were not pleasant to be around, because the majority of us, you know, you still went on to live and exist and still had your children and your activities to do.

The group of squadron wives that I would spend my time with every other Friday night, we would gather at one of the wives' house with the children. There might be eight of us. There might be ten of us. Everybody would bring their children and bring food. We would stay up all night with the coffeepot going. Nobody drank or that sort of thing. Coke was the strongest, or coffee, which I didn't like, that you ever had to drink. Nobody wanted to drive home after dark or late at night with children, so we would just stay up until daylight playing Tripoly. Then we would all gather up our little ones and bundle them up and put them in the car and go home.

In a lot of ways, that was the same type of togetherness and having fun. I can remember one night, one of the gals lost like seventy-six cents, and she hit her forehead and said, "Oh, my gosh, Roy just sat up in bed and cracked his head on the bunk above it."

I guess people with positive energy and positive attitudes are people that I have always been with. Those are things that I have myself, and I guess that's just what I seek out and that's what I enjoy.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I'm glad you have so many positive memories of those areas.

EVANS: Oh, yes, right.

ROSS-NAZZAL: A few minutes ago, you were talking about some practical jokes that your neighbors had actually pulled on you. Did you take part in any practical jokes on any other astronauts or any of your neighbors?

EVANS: Oh, right. One of them, we thought they were too slow getting these dead bushes out of their front yard, and so we spray-painted them green. Their kids got up the next day and thought they'd actually come to life, and ran and woke their mom and dad up. One of them was an immaculate housekeeper, and they were gone. They'd gone into town for something, and we had that planned. We all went over there, and the fellows moved all of their furniture out of their bedroom. We made a lovely sign and put the three lint balls we found on the floor on a red velvet cloth and left them in the middle of the floor of their bedroom floor.

Of course, firecrackers got set off in your doorways if you ever had a birthday. One time we put the motor out of a car in one of the neighbor's front yard. So, yes, we did a few things. My husband, at one point in time, which I still get embarrassed about—nothing embarrasses him. The homebuilder's office was in the lot at the corner before you came into our cul-de-sac. He had torn down the office, because all the homes were sold, and there was this big earthmoving machine out there.

Of course, you get a bunch of engineers, and they've got to go down there and check this out. This was on a Saturday evening before dark. So they're down there. Of course, then all the kids come and this and that and everything. Then pretty soon, my Ron's up on that thing, and

the next thing you know it's running. Of course, the kids are beside themselves with joy and excitement.

The next thing you know, there's an El Lago police car sitting there on the corner. Pretty soon there's another El Lago police car sitting on the corner. They're out standing by the doors of their car looking and talking to us. Of course, this excites the children all the more. You've got all these engineers climbing all over this thing trying to figure out how to turn it off. They finally had to literally cut the fuel line because nobody could figure out how to turn it off. So they were a bit embarrassed when they had to go apologize to the builder when it came Monday. Of course, Ron had to leave town Monday morning, so I went with the fellows over to apologize.

You never knew what a day would bring. Ron, when he would be home on a Saturday, he always loaded up his Suburban with all the little children in the neighborhood. Sometimes he'd have ten or twelve children. The only requirement was that they had to wear shoes, because they of course got stuck more than once. One time they got stuck, and he had to carry one little three-year-old girl home on his shoulders for over two miles because she didn't have shoes on. So after that, he said, "Everybody has to wear shoes."

He'd take them to the local dump, and they could pick out whatever treasured thing they wanted to take home with them. They all had to bring their own sack to bring it home in. The one day that they brought home a very large seed box with eight baby kittens in it, I put my foot down. Of course, we took a few days to find homes for all those kittens. Of course, it was a good lesson for all these children. They couldn't believe that somebody would take these living things to a dump and leave them in a box where they couldn't get out. So he had lots of fun with all the neighborhood children, and they all have fond memories of him.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's great that he would do that on his time off.

EVANS: Yes. Well, he loved it. I think it gave him an excuse to do such things.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You had mentioned all these practical jokes you and your neighbors would play on each other. I'm wondering did you have keys to each other's homes, or did you leave your doors unlocked?

EVANS: They probably weren't locked. I don't remember. We probably did have keys or probably knew where keys were.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was just curious about that.

EVANS: Because you know, that was the time. Because I was alone most of the time, I always made sure my door was locked when I was alone, because I just felt more secure that way. If you would let the local police department know you were going to be out of town, they would drive by your houses several times during the nighttime and all. But you know, Jennifer, we either knew where they were or had keys. They probably locked them if they were actually gone, in their car gone away from home.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Could you share with us any events that stand out in your memory as something that helped create community between either the wives or the community of NASA or within your subdivision?

EVANS: Well, let me see. A personal one, which was very emotional for all of us, Jamie and Jon and Ron and myself, was after the fellows returned from Apollo 17. Of course, we were out at Ellington to meet them. I don't know if you're familiar with El Lago, but Lake Shore Drive is an entrance that comes in there and curves around by the lake and then curves up and another block up and then you would turn into our cul-de-sac. Both sides of the street, all the way from the entrance into our cul-de-sac, was lined with flagpoles with the flag flying. That was just a bit overwhelming. That was something that the whole community decided to do, and all children in the community had been informed about it, or so I found out, and there were people on horseback carrying flags, and any child that had a bicycle or tricycle had red, white, and blue decorated streamers and in their wheels and everything. Everybody felt a part of this program and a part of this community. They were proud.

ROSS-NAZZAL: There was one tragedy and one near miss, the Apollo 1 fire and the Apollo 13 flight. Can you talk to us about the type of support that you and your neighbors had for each other or other NASA employees at the time?

EVANS: Yes. At the time of the fire, Ron was on a support crew for that. In fact, he'd been in that spacecraft running tests the afternoon before that fire. This was a very crushing blow. When something like this does happen, you gather around for moral support. That's all you can do. It's there. Anything and everything is there for you to reach out if you needed. You just have to say, "I need somebody to hold my hand," or whatever, and you've got hundreds of people there to do it.

I think, physically and emotionally, this helps. This helps anyone in any trying situation. Every flight Ron and I always had a big party at our house. We'd move our plastic couch and our two plastic chairs out of the family room, and the floor would be open. It would be a picnic. You didn't know if you had forty people coming or sixty—the people from [North American] Rockwell [Corporation] and the people from Grumman [Aircraft Engineering Corporation] and places coming into town would be there and a bunch of the different astronauts and wives. They all knew that it was there if they could make it. We'd just have brisket and things like that.

One night the phone rang. A lot of the news media were there, because we knew them so well. One night the phone rang, and Tom [Thomas P.] Stafford was over by it. Everybody had just gotten their plates pretty filled and were sitting around on the floor ready to eat. Tom got the call, and Roy Neal was standing next to him. Then he said something to Ron. Within five minutes, the entire house was void of all men, very quietly, nothing said, no big to do. It's just all of a sudden, all these women thought, "Hmm, something must be wrong. All the guys are gone."

So you really didn't see your husbands again for a couple of days, and then they began calling and saying, "Hey, there's a problem. We're all working in the simulators or we're doing this."

Everybody said, "Oh, okay." You don't panic, because that doesn't do any good. You just say your prayers, you offer your support, and you gather around those people involved. And that's it. They worked out a new way to get the fellows back.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you spend any time with any of the family members involved in the flight?

EVANS: Yes. Yes, the wives are always around in the homes of the people that are on a flight, whenever, be it a happy flight or a sadness like there was in [Apollo] 13. Yes, everybody gathers around the home. You are together when they step out of the lunar module on the surface. You're together during launch, and you're together during splashdown. The trying, exciting times of the flight, you're together. The house is full of people, full of people all over. Fortunately, NASA connects a squawk box in our home, so we can listen to all the air-to-ground communication. People like to sit around and listen to that, too. And food everywhere.

ROSS-NAZZAL: When Ron was on flight on Apollo 17, were you then the official hostess when everyone was over at your house?

EVANS: You didn't have to play hostess. Everybody felt at home no matter what. If they were hungry, they got something to eat. Whatever they wanted to do. People would just be in and out and in and out. It was my home, so yes, I would be. But I didn't have to take care of them as guests.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Could you share with us any places that you think helped create a community among the wives or of NASA or your subdivision?

EVANS: Any particular places? I don't know, other than probably the swim club, that sort of thing. Like I say, everybody went and had their own grade schools. I think just the local usual things that everybody does, your churches and your school activities and your swim team. I'll tell you what, as far as local places, I think you mentioned there wasn't a whole lot of shopping

there, but, as all husbands said, every car had an auto pilot to Foley's up there on I-45. We knew how to get there.

I've mentioned that we belonged to the Seabrook Methodist Church, and at a later time then, there was the Ed White Community Center that was built on the church property, which was open to the entire area and community. Of course, that took an awful lot of work and fundraising by everybody in the community. A lot of Houston people helped with that as well as everybody's beloved Bob Hope, who we all lost recently. He was down there several times and helped with raising funds and creating that. I hope it is still a going place down there. I don't know.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I believe it is, yes.

Can you talk to us about your fundraising efforts for the Ed White Community Center?

EVANS: As a wife, I didn't do any of that. The fellows would do it. The fellows would make personal appearances, and you went to some of the parties. If you're going out of your own local community to do anything, [everyone is excited to see an astronaut]. "Oh, gee, an astronaut." The husbands are there, and people get this big shock of, "My goodness, they're just like everybody else." It is a magical title. It is a magical word. To raise funds, that does help. People who don't live around them all the time or work at NASA, it does mean something to them to have an astronaut come and talk to them, visit their club, or inform them about what's going on. So as a wife, I didn't have any personal thing in raising the funds.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You did mention the Foley's off of I-45. Did any of the wives play any role in pushing for economic development in the Clear Lake area, or did you have any role in that?

EVANS: Jennifer, I am not aware of any wives' involvement in that whatsoever. I would not know the answer to that. And, no, I personally did not.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Could you tell us a little bit about the stores that were in the area at the time when you moved down here?

EVANS: I know the grocery stores had birds flying in them.

ROSS-NAZZAL: They did? Was this purposely?

EVANS: They would just get in there and didn't seem to know their way out. I don't know if [it was] the same one all the time or different ones every time.

Let's see. We had the restaurants over in Kemah, which, of course, were always favorites. That's where you would usually go to eat. Or you had the one on NASA 1 across from the entrance of El Lago, Louie's on the Lake was there. Then I can remember when they built that one shopping center over on Nassau Bay, and then Sakowitz [phonetic] had a second store in there. Across from that, oh, Jennifer, thirty years has passed. Of course, I always know about RentWay and the rental party store, because our neighbors, the Ammons, owned RentWay after he left one of the contractor companies and started a rental business. Our son started

working for him when he was eleven years old, and to this day has his own two rental stores in Austin. So that paid off.

I can picture the stores where we went, be they clothing or to hardware, out there on Highway 3 and this and that, but names are failing me.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I understand. I just thought I would see if you remembered. We're just trying to get a sense of what the area might have looked like.

EVANS: I can tell you how to get there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: We can go see if they're still there.

EVANS: League City had some places where we would go over to. You know, League City had a swimming team, too, didn't they?

ROSS-NAZZAL: I believe so, yes.

EVANS: Yes, I can remember Dickinson, but League City in between, yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Living so close to the lake, did you guys ever take part in any boating activities?

EVANS: We had a little Sunfish sailboat, and I'm not particularly a water person. The first time that I went out on the boat with Ron, the children and I were in it. The little Sunfish is very, very

little. You just kind of sit on the edge, and your feet hang in this little square opening down there. This is what they call Mud Lake down there at the end of the Hallow Wood and I absolutely can't remember the other name of the street.

But anyway, the sails died or whatever, and we're going over. Of course, I'm letting out a scream, and the kids are laughing hysterically. Ron's holding a can of pop in his hand, rolling on over, and saying, "Uh-oh, here we go." Of course, I'm thinking this is the end of all of us. So that shows what I knew about boats, but we did get used to it.

A couple of the wives in the neighborhood, their families had these also. I remember the day we all parked them in the cul-de-sac, because we were all going to learn to put up our sails by ourselves. We were going to learn to take these boats out ourselves. We had them all lined up on their trailers in the cul-de-sac, which was an accomplished feat to begin with.

To show how little we knew, you put a sail up when that boat's not on the water, and the wind's going to try and take it right off of the trailer. So that didn't work too well. We had one real mishap and some other near ones before we could get the sail that we were putting up down, and our husbands all took one day and took us down to the lake and taught us with the boats in the water. But we were game to learn.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I just have just a few more questions for you. I wonder what impact the women's movement may have had on your life while you were living down in Clear Lake.

EVANS: Jennifer, the women's movement has never had an impact on my life. I'm sure it has on what has gone on around me or what's available, but I was liberated the day I was born by my loving parents and my sister and my husband. I never had to ask permission. I was always

appreciated. I was always thanked. We were always a team so I can't say that it was. I can't point out in any way, that this movement had anything to do with my life.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Okay, that's great. We're happy to hear that.

EVANS: Well, good.

ROSS-NAZZAL: We usually hear the other stories.

EVANS: I just don't feel that way. Like I say, I'm a positive thinker. I like positive energy.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I think that's all the questions that we had today, unless you can think of anything else that we may have overlooked in terms of communities or neighborhoods.

EVANS: I can't at all. You've evoked a lot of wonderful memories. It was a very wonderful family experience being down there and being a part of the program and makes you feel proud. I cried at the national anthem ever since I can remember hearing it as a child, and I still do today. It was wonderful to be representing our country, our neighbors, and citizens. So it was just lucky, and I wish Ron were still here, because he loved talking about it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's unfortunate. It's good that you're here as his representative, though.

EVANS: Thank you very much. That was a nice thing to say.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Let me ask before we close out today, do you think there's anyway you could sum up in your own words the best ways to describe your years here in the NASA area?

EVANS: Wonderful is a lovely word. My years there, they were years of growing. They were years of raising the family. They were years of developing. We all came down there, as I look at it now reaching seventy years of old, we came down there as mere children who had our own children and were given this tremendous opportunity to contribute. It was, and to this day I feel it is, a privilege, a very beautiful thing, that I was privileged to do and to be a part of.

ROSS-NAZZAL: We're happy that you shared your memories with us today.

EVANS: Thank you, Jennifer.

[End of interview]