
BEVERLY WHITLEY CRATCH

North Carolina 1960s Counterculture Oral History

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Foundations of Her Journey

My name is Beverly Whitley Cratch. Came to East Carolina in 1969 starry eyed And as my late dad said, I never really left eastern North Carolina.

The causes of the 60s caused me to probably go into health care I think that that's where we came out, realizing that we had seen people put in institutions, locked away. We found the keys to those places in the 60s, and by the 70s, we were ready to unlock those doors.

So, we were the counterculture that was Eastern North Carolina. And I'm glad I wouldn't have wanted to grow up at another time. I like being born in one of those progressive times. Yeah, I'm glad I was a 50s baby, a baby boomer.

Music is still extremely; that's probably one of the most important things in my life as I get older.

ECU's Counterculture Trip, Far Out and Up Close

It was my freshman year, and when I came to ECU, I was 17 years old, so I didn't even have an official 18-year-old ID to get in any place. So, I needed a fake ID when I got to Greenville. I went to the party school, and I had a really good time.

It would be the first Earth Day at ECU and that was in the spring of 1970 and somehow, I was the flower child on the front of the Fountainhead, copy for Earth Day. When it comes up for Earth Day every year, I think I was a flower child for Earth Day.

I can remember protesting in Greenville, North Carolina...we had our signs. We protest would usually start on Jarvis Street and come up by the Chancellor's house. Protest against the Vietnam war. We did get that big, but we'd have protest. We marched down Fifth Street with our signs and flags and anti-flags, and we were always peaceful, though. We did not have any problems with law enforcement, but we certainly had our protest on campus and off campus.

The *Fountainhead* newspaper was probably the most radical group there, on the campus at that time.

Downtown nightlife in Greenville was definitely counterculture. It was walkable, everything was Fifth Street in downtown Greenville. It was the Rathskellar, the Attic, the Elbow Room, or, at the time, Coaching Four and the Buccaneer. And you walked from there over to what was Lums that later became the Crow's Nest. I worked at the Rathskellar, and when we locked the doors at 1am most of us were still there that worked to watch the sun come up the next morning, because we've been there playing pinball and foosball all night. That's what downtown Greenville and the counterculture was like in 1969 and 70.

You saw your counterculture having more of a social life and being sought after, or equal to your fraternities and sororities. It wasn't just the college people, the locals came into town, the Marines came in from the bases. So which was kind of interesting, when you had the protesters, the long-haired protesters who were coming in and coming from Rocky Mount, coming over because it was hippie land in downtown Greenville, and they wanted to be cool, and they were coming, and then you had the jarheads coming from Camp Lejeune.

That's where I think we learned a lot of tolerance. Because really, if you think about it, we met in the middle, and that's what I think the hippie culture grew up to realize, and that's the wisdom from the hippie countercultural thing.

Greenville was pretty much it, and it was the calling card for eastern North Carolina.

Love Valley, Through Her Eyes

I went down to this little festival on July 4, 1970, where Jimi Hendrix burns his guitar playing the American, you know, the Star-Spangled Banner at midnight on July 4. Well, Terry and I were there for the front row of that, and that kind of sparked the bug on July 4. We just done the Atlanta Pop Festival, which was the first thing I had ever seen like that.

It was like two weeks later, and the best we can recollect is we must have just heard about it. And we jumped in a car with somebody and went.

My sister, she says to me, she said, Did you have any money? And I went, No. We were college kids. We didn't really have any money. What did you do for clothes? I go, we didn't take any clothes. Where did you sleep? I said, we slept on the mountainside. We ate food that was there. I burned my foot. We put mud on it, and didn't even go to a hospital for three days and hobbled back because we were too busy having fun and listening to the music

I can still remember, like the euphoria, the crowds. The non-judgmental acceptance was the first thing that I became addicted to. Yep, that would be it, the euphoria of peace and love, unconditional love, with a lot of music and a little drugs sprinkled in here and there.

I just didn't see the free sex thing at all in any of those early festivals. I just think that was totally and I did a lot of those festivals, and I have never, I've never seen anybody having sex at a festival. Honestly, I've seen some skinny dipping, you know, it's some partial nudity, but I've never seen actual sex occurring at any festival by anybody.

I know it's a mountain side and a town side full of people I would say over 100,000. And I'm sure it was 100,000 people there, because there was a lot, and there were traffic jams and but you could still, like I said, you could still find people

.I think there's some grainy footage, a home movie that somebody shot of the Allmans playing. You don't find still pictures. You don't find videos. I think it was the media who didn't pick it up. It was a conservative media, not a progressive media and they did not realize what they had going on.

The reason Love Valley lives on now is because it's always been a real turning point in my life.