

LORRAINE POPELKA INTERVIEW  
FORST PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

SC: ....Popelka's house, this is 516?

LP: 611 Circle.

SC: 611 Circle. It's May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and we're here to do an interview with Lorraine Popelka for the Forest Park Historical Society Collection. Lorraine, let me ask you first, how long you've been in Forest Park and how you decided to come here.

LP: Actually I really didn't decide. I've lived in Forest Park all my life; I was born in Forest Park, LITERALLY BORN IN FOREST PARK! I was born at 536, 537 Circle Avenue, my parents kind of moved around a little bit for the next couple of years and they bought a home at 443 Circle and when I married my husband Marty, we bought a home at 611 Circle and I've been here ever since.

SC: So, you went to all the schools in Forest Park?

LP: I graduated from St. John's school and then went to Proviso.

SC: And, when, you I don't know if this is off bounds or not, but you were previously married, right?

LP: Yes I was, yes I was.

SC: And, when did you meet Marty and marry him? Well actually I was divorced in February of '56 from my first husband, I met Marty just after that, we were married in '58 and have lived together very happily since then until his unfortunate demise.

SC: When did you move into this house?

LP: We moved in this house in '59. We lived at, my parents owned 443 Circle and then they decided to move up to Wisconsin to a farm and I just didn't feel like I was the farm girl type so fortunately for me, my grandmother bought the house at 443 and I stayed

here and lived with my grandma. And, there was a flat upstairs so after Marty and I married we lived up there for a year because we were looking for a home in Forest Park, or not actually in Forest Park, just anywhere we could find one we could afford at that time and then this 611 wasn't even on the market. A friend of mine had heard about it, her godfather owned it and told me to go look at it, we looked at it, fell in love with it and bought it.

SC: You know, the first that I'm aware of you here in Forest Park outside of being your neighbor across the alley is your involvement in the Forest Park Pool. I'd like for you to talk about your involvement in the pool, how you got started there and the things that happened, but I guess I'd like to ask if there was anything that you did before that that would involve civic activities here in Forest Park.

LP: Actually there were-I was always involved in anything that was going on in the community. It was something I really enjoyed doing. I think the first thing that would come to my mind was, which most people aren't even aware of, but when the expressway was built, the Eisenhower, the railing across the Circle Ave. Bridge did not have any fencing. And, living here in this house I could look up the street and I saw these wonderful boys that would walk the railing or would stick their head through, throw stones over, and I was very concerned about it. So, I got a friend of mine, Judy Arnold who was on the Historical Society, she and I decided that we should do something about it. So we approached the village and asked them if they would put up fencing. And, they said they couldn't do that because it was a state project so we'd have to prove to the state that this fencing was necessary. And, then, once we did that they would set up an appointment with us with the state. So, Judy and I got busy and for weeks we stood at

the top and the bottom of the bridge counting kids that went over. At that time the Circle Ave. station was open so you had adults getting on and off and, of course, there were many, many kids that were crossing. The children that went to any of the schools on the south side were not bussed in those days. They walked back and forth to school. So, you had many crossing that bridge. But, we did a real conscientious job of getting a lot of information together. We even went so far as to measure a buggy because the sidewalk narrows considerably on the southwest side of the bridge, and the buggy wheels would not match the sidewalk. So, we had that documented also. And then Howard Mohr who was the mayor at that time set up a meeting with IDOT and we met at the village hall and gave them all our information-we had petitions signed, many, many names people understanding that there could be a tragedy there and the state agreed and they put the fencing up, which we were very, very proud of the fact that we could accomplish that because it definitely was needed. I think you would understand that more than a lot of other people because you too crossed that bridge quite often and I'm sure you were one of the walkers. (Laughter)

SC: Yeah (Laughter) Do you remember a fella who fell off there? Do you remember that?

LP: I remember someone falling off the bridge but I don't recall it being the Circle Bridge, I thought it was the Des Plaines Bridge.

SC: Was it the Des Plaines Bridge?

LP: Yeah, I'm pretty sure it was the Des Plaines Bridge.

SC: Because I think at that point, I don't think the highway was, maybe the highway was open, but I thought that he fell onto the railroad tracks.

LP: Oh, you know what Steve that could be. I don't recall that. To my knowledge, FORTUNATELY nobody fell off the Circle Avenue Bridge because it was wide open and the railing was kind of a wide railing! It was maybe a good 3-4 " wide where kids were enticed or daredevil thing to get up there and start walking that bridge.

SC: Yeah, I know that very well! (Laughter) Do you, speaking of the bridge and the expressway, do you have any recollections of the expressway going in. Were you in the 500 block of Circle when that was happening?

LP: No, I was at, in the 400 block of Circle Avenue. Actually it was very interesting, you know, to see the progress of it. They moved a lot of houses from down in this area like along Lehmer Street there were a lot of houses there. And, my kids used to sit on the curb and watch the houses go by down the middle of the street. So, it was kind of exciting to see all that. It was exciting to one point, and it was kind of disappointing in another point because when I was growing up and going to the park which I've been going there all my life, you could cross to get to the park at Hannah, Thomas, Beloit, Ferdinand and Lathrop. And, of course, once the expressway came through all those streets were closed down and you only had Circle and Des Plaines Avenue to cross.

SC: Was the park always there from the time you were a young girl?

LP: Oh yeah. The park was actually built, the WPA built that park, it was built they started in about 1937 and worked on it until about 1939-40. They actually put in the original pool that was at the park. When the WPA put that pool in it was supposed to be a lake away from the lake. The concreted area that was in the front, no longer is since the aquatic park went in, it was all sand! And, you could sit and lay in the sand and then you had to go through these gated areas, back into the locker room, take your bathing suit off,

dunk it in ice cold water, put it back, you'd go through a foot bath put it back on and then you went through another gated area into the water. They were trying to eliminate the sand from going into the water. And then that got to be too big of a hassle and it just didn't work, so they took the sand out and concreted that entire area and put a wading pool in the middle of the concreted area. Well, the wading pool didn't work out too well either because there were too many parents actually that would leave their smaller children in there and go in for a swim and expected the guards to baby sit them. And, it was just too dangerous to keep doing that and it wasn't, it didn't have a filtering system so it had to be drained, and cleaned, and refilled, and that was kind of a hassle-so they did concrete that in also, made that whole front end all concrete area.

SC: Interesting-I never heard about the sand over at the pool before.

LP: Originally it was sand, it was all sand. That, like I say, was supposed to be a lake away from the lake. That's the terminology that they used, you know, back then. But, it was quite interesting.

SC: Well, for those of us who swam in the original pool, we remember that the test was to swim from the far; I guess it would be the north side, out to the poles, and back-that's how the guards would test us to see if we were permitted to go into the deep end. Do you recall a time where those poles were ever chained together?

LP: No, they were never chained together, not to my knowledge. No, they were never chained together. Actually where you were swimming was like 4 feet of water and that's exactly what they did as you stated to make sure that you could swim in the 9 and 10 feet of water. And, they did that for quite a few years even after you were grown and not even

coming back there anymore probably. That's how they did it. I even tested the kids that way when I gave the learn to swim program.

SC: And, also, can you describe, now they have lockers over there, coin operated lockers. That wasn't the case when they originally opened was it?

LP: No, actually it wasn't. Actually I worked there, I was like about 13-14 years old when I actually started working at the park. I think at that time we got like about 35-cents/hr. but we thought it was great because we were inside of the pool and we could swim. Anytime we weren't working we could go in and swim. They had baskets, wire baskets and you came in, they were all stacked up in like the dressing room, you took a basket, you put all your personal belongings in there and then you went to a checking counter. You gave them the basket, they put a clip with a number on it on the basket which had a pin attached to it. They took the pin off, gave it to you, you pinned it on your suit which matched the number of the basket and you could go in and swim and come out and claim your basket.

SC: Also, can you see some light. I know that when we were in school, we would get an annual pass, a summer pass. Do you have any knowledge of when that started?

LP: You know, they started that it was for residents only and all the kids got it, all the kids in school that were residents of Forest Park. They didn't have to be in school; even younger ones got them. It was, the pool was there and they wanted you to utilize the pool and you know, times were tough then, and money was hard to come by. Even at that time it was 10-15 cents which today does not sound like a lot of money, but back then, you know, it was a lot of money. So all the kids, the board at that time, just decided to open it up to residents of Forest Park and on your last day of school I believe it was,

everybody got a free pass to the pool and you could come and go all day long if you wanted to. There were no set hours. At that time it was OPEN all day well like from about 1 o'clock it started opening and it was open till ten o'clock at night. And, the kids could come and go as they choose.

SC: I know the toughest thing for me was trying to make that pass just to hold up physically all summer. (Laughter) Really, it really took a beating and it was very difficult I think.

LP: (Laughter) Yeah, they were just paper like a, not like thin paper, like a cardboard type paper and your name was just typed on there. It was nothing like we have today where the passes are laminated and they'll hold up better in the water. And, there was always a big problem somebody taking somebody else's pass. And, it was the normal childhood pranks that go on amongst kids.

SC: How, the woman that was always there when I was a kid, and I just wonder if you have any knowledge of when she started. It was Mrs. Kissman. Remember Mrs. Kissman?

LP: Yes, oh she was there forever. She worked the front cage. She was there for well, all the years that I was there, well actually before I was even there started working at the pool. She was the head cashier. And every summer faithfully, Mrs. Kissmansan, and there was another woman that was there for many years, a Mrs. Jacobson. She worked inside, she did the checking of your feet and make sure you dunked your bathing suit, and she was there for many, many years too.

SC: Yeah and there, I think the only thing we left out is the wringer. You had to wring your suit out.

LP: Oh, yes, yes. (Laughter)

SC: As small kids..(Laughter)

LP: And it was a hand wringer! You really had to use the muscle because over the years it got very stiff and it was very difficult to turn.

SC: How about the concessions stands in that area. Can you, we've talked about the pool and the layout there. Can you talk about the concession stands and where they were located?

LP: Well, actually the original concession stand is, well it's not there any more, now it's on the south, I'm sorry, the west side of the pool, originally it was on the east side of the pool and it was just a very, very small area. You didn't have access into the pool like they do now where they have a little rest and seating area where you can buy something and go in there and enjoy it. You had to get everything from the outside. And, it was a very small area. They didn't have what we have today. It was primarily penny candy type things and ice cream bars.

SC: And it was actually incorporated into the park building wasn't it?

LP: Yes, it was, yes. That portion of it is still in tact. They don't use it as the concession stand anymore since they renovated with the aquatic park, but that portion, the original portion where the concession stand was is still there, right next to the boiler room.

SC: What about the businesses that might have been in the surrounding area that the swimmers would have patronized?

LP: Well, you had the drugstore across the street, Barone's. That was probably THE most vocal place in Forest Park for the kids. EVERYBODY hung out at Barone's! Everybody went in there and got Green Rivers. It was a very big thing at that time.



(Laughter) And, black cows-I don't even know if they make these things anymore, but everybody kind of hung out at Barone's. And, the park was very, very active. You always had softball going on at night. Little league wasn't in the very beginning, wasn't a very big thing, but then that got to take hold and it became a major past time in Forest Park for the kids.

SC: Yeah, I was talking with Cora about this and she didn't seem to recall it, but long before there was an ice rink it was tennis courts I believe, if I'm not mistaken, and instead of a warming house didn't there used to be a little stone shed on, it would have been on the far east side of the park where a lot of the activities were held?

LP: Yes, yes, there was. It was very, very small. It was just a small room and a couple washrooms were attached to it. Many years ago, there was a wading pool on that side of the park. It only went up to about 2 feet of water. And, they had an attendant there all day and moms used to bring their little children just to go and play in that little wading pool. And, there was a huge sandbox there and there were some activities going on for the little kids. But, yes, there was a stone shed and it did have 2 washrooms on the side.

SC: Now, the sandbox and the wading pool were not one in the same. I mean, they didn't turn the wading pool into a sandbox.

LP: No. No, they were 2 separate items. The wading pool, actually it was where right now where you have that basketball courts, that was where the wading pool was right there in that area.

SC: There was a little park area with swings and slides and stuff, and then right outside of that was the sandbox, right?

LP: Right, absolutely, absolutely. And, like I say, the wading pool was just kind of a little bit off to like the east of where the swings and that were.

SC: Interesting, I never realized there was a wading pool there. That was gone by the time I got there.

LP: Yeah.

SC: Well, we've sort of described the pool, now can you tell me how, you talked about the time you worked there as a checker in the locker room. How did you actually get involved in all the other-hold it, let me, do you mind if I shut this door here?

LP: No, not at all. No, I didn't even think about that-no, not at all.

SC: That will be a little better. How did you get involved in the learn to swim program? I'm not sure if that's what it was called or not, but all the pool activities because I remember you spearheading all the learn to swim, safety instruction things over at the pool, how did you get involved in that?

LP: Actually when my kids were real little I would take them over there for swimming lessons. And, at that time the Red Cross ran the program. They had it 2 days a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays 1 hour for the girls and 1 hour for the boys, they were not commingled, and they just had volunteers doing the program. Well, some days 2 volunteers would show up, and the next session maybe 4 would show up, some mornings none showed up, and I was a very good swimmer, always enjoyed swimming, so I offered to come in as a volunteer and at that time I went back and took a refresher course on a life-saving course, and then I took the instructors course. So, then I did go in as a volunteer with the swimming classes and I did that for probably about 14 years that I was there as a volunteer with swimming and I just felt there had to be a better way of doing

this because there were too many kids. One instructor had too many kids. And, I didn't feel like these kids were getting really an appropriate swimming lesson because there were just too many to handle. So, I approached the park and asked them if they would turn the program entirely around. And, they would set up, commingle the kids, and have them come in and let me hire instructors, so that I knew when I set up a class I knew there was going to be an instructor for that particular class. But, if you didn't pay them, you couldn't depend on the volunteers. And, they agreed to do that if I ran the program. So, I wanted to see it take off, so I decided to do that we did set it up exactly like I said. I hired instructors, came in and set up the classes, and I ended up retiring after 35 years. So, obviously I enjoyed it for all those years. I probably taught half the kids in Forest Park how to swim. (Laughter)

SC: What was the last year that you did that?

LP: I retired, oh my goodness, I would say probably about 8 years ago. Um, I did it the 8 years that I was the commissioner, but then when I ran for mayor it just got too involving and my time was too limited plus getting out of the pool with a wet head and have to maybe run to a meeting or something, it just didn't work. And, by that time I had committed myself to being a village official, so I retired after 35 years. And, yes, I miss it! I do miss it-it's, I always got a lot of satisfaction out of, you know, when you saw one child come in crying and wouldn't even put their foot in the water and by the end of the session you got them to put their face in and blow bubbles, it was quite an accomplishment.

SC: (Laughter) Were you involved in the replacement, or the rehabbing of the original pool? Were you involved in that? Can you explain the story, what happened there, what was wrong with the old pool and what were your efforts to get the...

LP: Yes, well the old pool they had what they called a sandbag filtering system. And it became, this was now about 19, this was the original filtering system that the WPA put in when the pool was built and it became totally obsolete. You couldn't filter the water properly. The pumps were always breaking down. You had to put too much chlorine in order to purify the water. And, the state came in and it was about 1958, I believe, and actually closed the pool down because the water was unsafe. So, once they closed it, the park went for actually 3 referendums. The first referendum that they went for they attached many things to it, baseball diamonds, lights, I can't remember what they all attached to it, and it was voted down. It was just too big of a package. So, then they skimmed that down and went for the 2<sup>nd</sup> referendum and that was voted down. So, I approached the park. My main interest, although I loved baseball too and worked that too for many, many years, but my love and passion was the pool. So, I approached the park and said if I can convince you that there's enough people interested in the pool, will you go for a referendum just for the pool and no attachments. And, they said show us that the people are interested and we will. So, I put an ad in the paper and explaining what I was trying to do and if people would call me I would come to their house and have them sign a petition. Well, it was overwhelming the phone calls I got! My husband Marty stayed here. He answered the phone, wrote addresses down, I'm driving around in the car getting signatures, come home, he'd give me a new list and I ran out and it just

got so overwhelming I couldn't do it by myself! So, I asked three of my friends if they too who were very interested in the pool if they would help me. They said they would.

SC: Just for the record who were they?

LP: Lou Sarantano, Renada Nicholson, and Garnett Griffin were the other 3 people that helped me do the pool. Together we got 1800 signatures. And, I think when it was voted down it was only voted down by 400, so obviously there were people out there that were interested in the pool! So, they said they would go along with it. And, they did. They put it on the referendum again. We did have opposition against going for the referendum. But, it passed overwhelmingly! And, the pool was renovated and opened up again in the early 60's!

SC: Did you have anything to do with the renovation plans with the rehabbing of the pool?

LP: Not really, not, none of the technical stuff. At that time they decided in order to make a better filtering system they closed the pool in somewhat. Originally it was like zero depth, in other words you walked right in. When they redid it, they had to put a curb in there and it was like, I think, about 3-4 inches when it first started and gradually went out and went deeper. But, I didn't have anything to do with the technical part of it. But, that's what opened the pool; otherwise we would not have a pool today!

SC: I think it was '69 it reopened when I was a Junior in high school because I got a job as a guard there that first summer that it reopened and it had been, it actually had been shut down over the previous summer wasn't it? There was a year when there was no pool.

LP: Right, exactly. You see, one of the big problems that they always had at the pool which a lot of people really don't realize is that you've got the train tracks right behind the pool and when they go down there was such vibrations from the trains going by that it was constantly cracking the concrete at the bottom of the pool. And, every year some major work had to be done to the bottom of the pool just to maintain the water in there. But, it was because of the vibrations from the trains that went by there.

SC: That's ironic because when they rehabbed the pool, what they kept was the original bottom wasn't it? They did keep the original bottom and they just filled in, they made more depth, they actually filled in pool area with a deck.

LP: They did, but there was some new things on the market that it wasn't just plain concrete. Somehow you could cure this concrete, or do something to the concrete, I don't know what the technical word is more or less seal it, and that would eliminate and expand it, so that when the vibrations obviously were still there because the trains were still rolling, but whatever layer they put on top of this eliminated a lot of that.

SC: Interesting. And they did manage to put in a whole new, I remember before there were cement bleachers back there right?

LP: Yes. Yes, and the filtering system was underneath, directly under those bleachers. And, they were there and getting pretty old and the concrete was all chipped and worn, they had been there many, many years. And, then when they put the aquatic park in, that was all taken down and kind of landscaped and beautified and they did a very nice job of doing that.

SC: Just out of curiosity, do you know, how many people have we lost in that pool over the years? I'm not familiar with too many.

LP: No, actually I really have no idea what the numbers is, the actual number is but to my knowledge 1. That's to my knowledge and that goes back many, many years-one, a little girl.

SC: I remember there was a fella who had a bleeding ulcer and hit the water, tried to dive and did a belly flop instead and passed out. And, I remember he was in bad shape when they pulled him out but he was still alive.

LP: They've had, as any pool does, you had some near accidents happen, but fortunately they weren't fatal.

SC: Who were the administrators over at the pool? For many years I remember Whelply, I think, ran the pool or was he in charge of the park in general?

LP: He was in charge of the park-Earl Whelply because there were several Whelpley's.

SC: And then was it his brother with the chipped nose? Howard?

LP: Howard worked; he was the general maintenance man at the park. Actually, Howard was such a hard workingman, he was really, truly, a wonderful person. I worked with him for many years. He actually died at the pool in one of the maintenance rooms! He had a heart attack as he was working and passed away.

CS: I remember the thing we kids always remembered about him was he had a chipped nostril, I don't know how that happened which sort of called him to all of our attention, but he was one of the nicest guys. We all really liked him a lot.

LP: Yes, he was. He definitely was. I worked, you know, a long time. He was always doing whatever he could do to make it easier or better, he was always there to do it.

CS: And, very nice to the kids too, which wasn't always the case with adults.

LP: Yes. Because kids can be very trying, you know. (Laughter) Especially in the summer when they're all out to have a good time! Howard had a lot of patience with the kids. He was really, truly a wonderful gentleman.

CS: Also, when they put in the aquatic park that exists there now did you have anything to do with the proceedings that built that?

LP: No. No, I had absolutely; I had already retired and been out of it. I knew what was going on just in general as I'm sure the rest of the public did also. And, then when they had their first open house I was very pleased.

CS: I was going to ask you your thoughts on the current pool today.

LP: You know, it's really nice. I've gone there-well last summer I went several times with my 2 little granddaughters, and truly enjoyed it. I don't think that you can swim laps like you did before. A lot of it was geared toward swimming laps. I don't think there's the room to do that anymore, but 95% of the, there are kids that go there, and they're the ones that are enjoying it. But you see the mom's that take their little ones there under those slides, on the slides, and under the waterfalls, so they're obviously enjoying themselves too. I think they did a beautiful job on the aquatic park.

CS: Interesting.

LP: I think it's very beneficial to Forest Park. It's a nice piece of recreation in this town.

CS: If we talk about the pool and we talk about your years as mayor is there anything else we should talk about before we dig into your years as mayor?

LP: Oh, gee, I don't know. (Laughter) I'm like I said, I've always been active in Forest Park all my adult life really.

CS: Did you have anything to do with the polio vaccine-were you involved with that?



LP: Yes, I was. Actually Dr. Phyllis Orland is the one that should take credit for that whole thing. And she set it up. We did it, I believe, it was in 3 increments. Well they had to have 3, we would put the drops on a cube of sugar and we did it at the park. And, it was free! Everybody came to the park and they got their cube with the vaccine on a cube of sugar and Dr. Phyllis Orland is the one that should take credit. I just went in as a volunteer to help. She takes full credit for that.

SC: OK. Well, then let's roll up our sleeves and dig into the years when you were mayor. I have to tell you that I really know nothing about this, so I'm going to be at your mercy here. Why don't you tell me when it was, the years that you were mayor, what led you to make the decision that you'd like to run for mayor, who was the predecessor, and how did the whole thing happen?

LP: Well, actually prior to being mayor, I was a commissioner for 8 years. The first time I ran was in 1979 and that was as a commissioner. And, the 8 years that I was a commissioner I enjoyed it. I felt like I was really involved and that I was making a difference. And then when I decided to run for mayor, Mayor Marundi was my predecessor, and he wasn't running again and I felt after the 8 years that I had gained enough knowledge that I could move up to that position, and decided that I would do it!

SC: Was Morundi an ally or did you find things lacking in his administration that you thought you could do better?

LP: No, not at all. No, Fred did a very good job of being mayor of Forest Park. At that time, unfortunately for him, he had a daughter that was very seriously ill and he just felt like he wanted to spend more time with her. And like I said, unfortunately she did pass

away. And, she was young, a very young woman when this happened. He just wanted to devote more time to her. But, you know, I ran for mayor, ran three terms.

SC: When was the first term? When did you start?

LP: In '80, oh my goodness I have to think back on this. Well 79, '86 or '87 that I ran and then I ran for twelve terms. It had to be '87.

SC: OK, who was the opponent in the election?

LP: I had no opponent in the first one! I ran unopposed in the first election.

SC: OK.

LP: So, obviously that was easy. (Laughter) The 2<sup>nd</sup> election the opposition was Armen Leducer (35:49), and the 3<sup>rd</sup> election the opposition was Armen Leducer and there was one more individual that ran, and obviously I won! (Laughter)

SC: OK. What did you find, were there many surprises when you got in the office?

LP: Not really that many surprises being that I had been there for 8 years already. As soon as I ran for office although it's a part time position, I took it as a full time position. And, I was there every day whenever the village was open. I was EXTREMELY FORTUNATE that I worked with Mr. Bill McKenzie! And, he was extremely knowledgeable, he knew everything that was going on in the village and I was kind of like being trained by him. And, I was fortunate that I had him to lean back on or ask questions of and get information from. I was extremely fortunate for that, and Morundi was very helpful also.

SC: So, what major improvements did you make during your terms as mayor in Forest Park?

LP: Well, there's always improvements' going on-they're kind of hard to pinpoint. You always had infrastructure work that was going on constantly. You know we had water breaks, sewers were busting because of the old antiquated system. And, those were all changed regularly as they were needed. There was never enough money available to like do the whole town at one time, and it wasn't necessary to do the whole town at one time. So those were all taken care of as the needs came up. Streets were being paved of course, and curbs and that sort of thing fixed. I think the thing that I probably if I think back that I'm very, very proud of is the annex to the community center. The original building that was built for the community center was built without any tax dollars. Howard Mohr was the mayor at that time. He gathered a committee, which I was part of, and we went out and solicited door to door funds to build this community center. Because, prior to that we really had nothing, or no like community room that you could actually go to. The park had, of course, the two floors but there's no elevator there, there's stairs, so that was always difficult particularly like for the senior citizens. So, it was decided to build this community center and we raised enough money to do that and through Howard Mohr's persuasion he had a lot of local contractors that came in and donated their time. So, the only thing that was really paid for was all the materials. The labor was all donated! But, then over the years we kind of outgrew that because there were more and more activities taking place at the community center and the space just wasn't available. We were very fortunate when the original torpedo plant was sold. The village was like the broker for that project. Now I was not on the board at that time-this is prior to my time. They interviewed and investigated a lot of different shopping malls or corporations that would want to come in and do a shopping mall and I guess it boiled down to 2 that I remember,

one was Kramer and Kramer and American Realty which is a Harry Chadick, and Harry Chadick is the one that got the, they gave it to him to build the mall. He built the original mall. The agreement that they made because of the village being like the broker per se that Chadik would pay the village \$100,000.00/yr. for 3 years and this money was just geared toward recreation. So, at the time after the 3 years, the money was there and thank God again for Mr. McKenzie who knew how to invest money very wisely and make the most out of the money that he invested, we did accumulate quite a few funds on that with interest. Interest was very high at that time. So, the park came along, and I can't remember the years on this, but the park wanted to enhance the corner on Harrison and Des Plaines. They wanted to put like a handicapped park there because the gas station was gone. And, they wanted to buy the property from the gas station and make it into, incorporate it into the park property, which they did. They needed funds at that time. We agreed on the board to give them \$125,000.00 in order to purchase that property and turn it into a recreation area. And, we could do that because that was the purpose of the funds was recreation. The village had no property per se to build a recreation, like a larger recreation area. We had the small parks that you see around town but you really couldn't expand on those. So, the park went ahead and put the handicapped park in there and they left the little house you see there which was still part of the gas station and now they just changed it and made it into a skate board, or roller skating-type thing? But that was because the village cooperated with the park and gave them \$125,000.00 odd dollars to do that. The monies that were left, which was at that time very close to \$300,000.00 it was decided to annex a building on to the old community center, which like I say, was just outdated. And, that's how the new community center got built for the annex to it and

really because of really all the work that Mr. McKenzie did as far as getting/accumulating the money for us to go ahead and do this and not use any tax dollars. The building was named after him-the annex is the William R. McKenzie Annex! The other portion, the old portion is Howard Mohr.

SC: How about the library, was that done during your years?

LP: Yes, it was. Yes, and I think there was a lot of opposition at the time, sounded like a lot of money. But, I don't think there's anybody in this town today that won't say that how fortunate we are to have the library that we do have. And, that, the main work that went into that you'd have to thank Chuck Brown? (43:31) for that. I mean he worked, and he was so dedicated and worked so conscientious to get that new library and it was very well needed in Forest Park. Years ago when I was a child, the library, not where you see the village hall as it is today, there was an old village hall in front of that where the parking lot now is.

SC: I remember that and they had a little rock garden up there in the corner?

LP: It was more like where the fire station is, the little rock garden. And, that huge stone, that is now on the Thomas lot, which actually is named the Popelka Park on Thomas and Adams, was in front of the fire station. But, that's where the library was also. It was on the second floor of the old village hall kind of like off in a corner. And, it was very small, it was very limited in space. But that was where the original library was.

SC: When did it move over to what was that the Haas's house?

LP: Yes, I don't remember the year that it moved over there.

CS: But while you were still around?

LP: Oh yeah, definitely, definitely. Because obviously when we couldn't go up there anymore, we went over to the library. And they did a lot of extensions to it because it just kept like outgrowing itself. There were more and more, not just kids, but adults that were going and using the library. And, I think that's a tremendous asset to this community is the library.

CS: Yeah, I thought that was done during your years. I have to ask you one thing. Why don't you pull that cord up-every time you tap the cord we get a sound through there or don't tap it.

LP: Oh, OK, I won't touch it.

SC: It comes through there. Um, what again, I know almost nothing about local politics. What, I know there's been a big furor over the last couple of years in the last elections, what in your take of it, what did the opposition party claim that you were not doing or what you should have been doing that wasn't happening? What were their grounds and were you responsible at all for Main Street renovation the things that are going on here? Did you have any hand in that at all?

LP: In the Main Street renovation?

CS: Yeah, things that are going on up there right now?

LP: You know Main Street is kind of an entity in itself, but the village supports it. They kind of do their own thing. I was more involved with the Chamber of Commerce than I was with Main Street. And, they both have a vital purpose for this community. You know what grounds they have to continuously criticize the last administration, in fact every time I see that in the weekly tabloid, which is what I call the Review, it's hysterical because they keep saying the prior administration. Well, 3 people on the present

administration were the prior administration! So, how can you say this wasn't done, or this wasn't done, we should have done this, they were there!! If they thought those things were so important, you know, we always had open discussions. They could have discussed it and we could have looked into it! So, I don't know what their problem is. I really don't.

SC: OK. All right I don't think I want to get into it any farther than that, you know. In fact I've been reading your tabloid there, I keep saying that, (Laughter) What else should we talk about? How about some memories of the village, perhaps businesses. Let's spend some time talking about some of the businesses that you recall around the village perhaps going up and down Madison Street.

LP: Well, you know, years ago you had a Kroger's that is now where Circle Video is. That was a big Kroger store, And then, down where, it's not Rex paint anymore, McPearson ,I think it is, paint store that was an A & P. And, next store to them was a Jewel. Very small in comparison to what we see today in these major stores but, you went up there and you did all your grocery stores, grocery shopping in those kind of stores. We had an IGA. You had a lot of...

SC: What was the IGA?

LP: It was like, almost a grocery store, but on a smaller scale. They were very similar to you know, Jewel, and A& P at that time.

SC: I've seen them other places. Where was it located in Forest Park?

LP: It was just a little bit west of, I'm trying to think of what store it would be in now. It was probably right around where China Night is. the Chinese restaurant.

SC: OK, that's like the middle between Hannah and Thomas.

LP: Right.

SC: OK, I remember there being a little school store, Maxine's I think it was called.

LP: Oh, there were so many of those in Forest Park it was like..

SC: Patty's Pantry and Maxine's.

LP: People actually used like the front part of their house and made like these little school stores if that's what you want to call them. There was one right here across from Garfield school. There was a little school store there. You had them all over, on Lincoln Court and Des Plaines Ave., the house is no longer there it's torn down, but that was a little.

SC: Where's Lincoln Court? That's a street I've never heard of.

LP: Oh, well Lincoln Court is actually the first block south of Randolph on the east side of the street. Do you know where Dove cleaners is?

SC: Oh, it's that little thing it just makes like a little square and doesn't go anywhere.

LP: Right, right.

SC: Other than out on to Randolph or Des Plaines.

LP: Exactly. Years ago it never had a name. It dead-ends into Brown Ave. And, it was just considered an extension of Brown Ave.! But then, because there was a family home that was built like on the corner but it faced Des Plaines Ave. so they had a Des Plaines address. Somebody bought that home many years later and put up a 12 unit, now they face the street, so the street had to have a name. And, it became Lincoln Court!

SC: OK, all right, that's the first I heard of that one. Um, let's see, what else was I thinking about? Do you remember, I don't know if you ever had an opportunity to go



there, a sewing store west of Des Plaines on Madison, south side of the street, Mrs Eullers. Do you remember that at all?

LP: Yep.

SC: I don't know if you were a sewer or not.

LP: Well, actually I was. When I went to St. John's through all the years that we went there, they had what they called sewing school. And, every Saturday from 2-4, I and my sisters, we went to sewing school. And, we learned to embroider, and crochet, knit, and actually I'm so thankful today. At that time you'd rather be out on the street playing, but our parents said no we had to go. And today I'm so grateful because I can do all of those things.

SC: Also, can you shed any light on, from the time I knew it on the corner of see what would it be on the northeast corner of Des Plaines and Madison was I think it was First Federal Savings was the earliest incarnation I knew. When was that building built and what was there previous to that building?

LP: There was, yeah, the northeast corner, actually that was a prairie-it was just a big, large prairie In fact, every years there used to be this huge carnival that came to Forest Park. And, they had all the rides and bingo and everything you can imagine and then the bank, which it wasn't called Hinsdale, it was called American First Savings and Loan..

SC: First Savings and Loan was the first one that I remember.

LP: Right, OK, you're right. They were like on Beloit and Madison. And then, they bought the property over there and built that building and after that they became Hinsdale and then now Liberty and now I understand they are going to change again. (Laughter) They're incorporating, but at that time when they had the carnival there the Forest

Theatre was right across the street. That was on the southeast corner was the Forest Theatre.

SC: And how far this prairie that you're talking about, the first I've ever heard of this prairie, did it go as far as, I know there's a tavern, maybe a half block east of Des Plaines then you run into the larger buildings, the hall there right?

LP: It actually went up to, as I recall, it went up to where that tavern is. That was all open space there. And just behind that open space there used to be a fairly large, it was called Veteran's Park. There were trailers back there. And, anybody that was a veteran or had somebody, like a family, there was housing for them. But that was pretty much open area there. And, the trailer court, Veteran's Park was back there.

SC: Do you remember a tot part on Madison St. where I guess it's a book store now, that used to be Bernice's and I'm not sure what it was before it was Bernice's? Do you remember where I'm talking about?

LP: Yeah, I know exactly where you're talking about but I don't recall a tot park there.

SC: I remember it was, I must have been 4 or 5 and it was run down then. But, there were monkey bars and swings there, and the reason I remember it was because one of the fellas that worked over at Harry's mean market, I think his brother Sal, they were selling pumpkins for Halloween one year in there and they were selling them out of there. I think within a year or 2 of that memory it was torn down and rebuilt.

LP: Yeah, I don't remember that.

SC: Cora said that she has a chart, a grid with all the addresses and we were going to gather the old timers together and see how many different businesses we could remember at each address.

LP: Oh, that would be great!

SC: It would be interesting. If nothing else go over 1900 to 2000.

LP: Yeah, that would be great!

SC: Do you have any recollections, I'm not sure again if this is touchy stuff or not, I haven't had anybody talk about it, I believe that it's had a major impact on Forest Park, the apartment buildings that basically house most of the black residents in Forest Park today. Do you recall the atmosphere at the time whether there was a lot of opposition, whether anyone realized exactly what that would mean, who'd be renting those buildings and who spearheaded the whole notion of building those?

LP: I don't, from what I remember, because you had a lot of large homes down there and they were all on fairly large lots and there were older people that had them. People that really couldn't maintain them anymore, and property was pretty cheap at that time in comparison, of course so were your wages, so it was comparable you know, to what you earned to what you were buying. And, somebody was actually on Marengo I believe when the first one went up. And, somebody approached the village about purchasing one of those larger homes, larger lot and putting up a condos-at the beginning it was all that was talked about was condos that were going to be built. I remember them saying the one building they put up where they were getting and I remember these numbers, \$335 taxes from that one home. Once they put the condo up, they were getting \$90,000.00 in taxes. So that kind of, oh wow, look at the revenue you're going to put up this building into Forest Park. And, it just really took off from there.

SC: Did anybody foresee that for an all white Forest Park and basically a citizenship that was vitally concerned in keeping it as an all white town if only for property values alone did anybody foresee that it would be???

LP: I don't believe so. I don't believe so. I think they really thought that they were going to be all primarily condos and unfortunately they were so saturated with them that at the beginning they sold as condos, then they weren't selling, so in order for whoever owned the building to start getting back some of the money they started doing rentals. And, it wasn't just black, it was a lot of just transient people that were coming in for a few months, moving out, going back and forth. I don't think they foresaw that at all. They just saw it as utilizing the property that was there to a better extent than these large homes that weren't being kept up.

SC: I've often it heard it mentioned that Mayor Mohr was responsible for that movement. Would you say that was true?

LP: He, definitely, he was really the major force behind bringing them in or starting to building of the condos. Now, many of them survived and are beautiful buildings today, very well maintained, but then you've got certain areas where for some reason or another they just didn't go there. And, it ended up being more transient.

SC: It seems to me that Forest Park has gone through it's White Flight period where the people who were worried about plummeting property values and the fact that the streets would be lawless and it would be an un-live able place, that period seems to have passed. Do you, what do you for foresee for the future of Forest Park in terms of it's racial balance and how things will hold up? Do you have any idea?

LP: Well, I think they're going to hold up. You're always going to have a certain amount of people, well, take me for instance. I have a 10-room home, and I live here alone. Well, my daughter just came to live with me, so there's 2 of us that live in here. Obviously as far as maintenance and everything else is concerned because I'm fortunate I have 2 sons, I have 3 sons, 2 that are willing to come over and help me do a lot of the maintenance around here or I wouldn't be able to maintain this house. I should probably look for something smaller. But, you know, I've always liked Forest Park, I have a lot of hope for Forest Park, so I have no intention of, I'm not saying I'm never going to do that because you never know what the future might bring, but I'm settled in here. And, I enjoy living in Forest Park.

CS: It's home.

LP: Without a doubt!

SC: Would you say that by in large we sort of weathered the racial crisis? You know the other areas that we've seen in Chicago and other suburbs that basically have just had their economic basis collapse that we probably won't be subject to that?

LP: You know what, I really don't think so, I don't think so. You know, you're certainly going to have the rentals, you're going to have Afro Americans coming in and renting those places, but I don't see there being any big, large-scale move outs. Too many people are settled here. Too many people like the convenience of jumping on the Eisenhower or taking the Lake Street El or the Garfield El. You can catch the metro up there. You can catch the Northwestern. It's just so convenient for wherever you want to go in whatever direction you want to go. It's just very, very convenient to do that. You know, you've got local schools, neighborhood schools that they like sending their

children to. I DO NOT agree with this that they continually keep saying the over crowding in Forest Park, then they'll mention that look at the schools the schools have to expand which is true, there are 2 schools that are expanding because they do need more room. I don't believe that's because of overcrowding, as they like to lead you to believe. You can just take my block for instance. People that are buying the homes in Forest Park are buying them with children. And now these children are feeding into our schools, rightfully so, so it's not because you've got ten people living in a 2 room apartment, it's because you have more families moving in that have younger children and they're feeding into our schools. So, I don't buy this big emphasis that they're putting on over crowding. I know that was one of the biggest cries when they were trying to push the home rule. There's laws on the books right now that if they find some place that's over crowded, they can take care of it! You don't need home rule to do it! It is available to them. We did it many, many times! And, they certainly can too. You don't need home rule to accomplish it.

SC: Just off the top of your head, can you recall maybe you can go through a line of mayors that you remember? Do you remember a chronology of people who were mayors in the times that you have been here? Maybe it would be easier to work back, I don't know

LP: Well I don't, yeah probably it would be because before me there was Morundi, and before Morundi was Rizzo, who was a commissioner and he moved into that position when Howard Mohr died. So then you had Howard Mohr, before Howard you had Earl Witts, and then you had Bill Meier, and before Bill Meier was.... (Laughter)

SC: That's as far back as I know because he was the grandfather to my friends the Airhardt's down here.

LP: Oh right, yes, yeah. I can go back to Bill Meier, and then. You had Vernon Right but that goes back many years.

SC: How about Police Chiefs? Do you remember Police Chiefs?

LP: Um, well you can go back, let's see. You had Gary Leisten, and before him was Conklin, and before Conklin was Art Grahams, before Art Grahams was Drane, before Drane you had Ed Zebel, and then you had Lou Good, now they may have been reversed, I don't remember that. You had Lou Good, and then you had Cortino, no you had John Tobin, John Tobin was in there and then I may not be saying them exactly in their order, and then Cortino, and Cortino was there like forever so I don't even remember who was before him.

SC: All right. How about Fire Chiefs. Do you remember any of them? I know you had a guy right across the street here.

LP: Yeah, Lange, he was chief for a long, long time. After Lange left you had Bill Marusek, was chief for a while and then you had, oh my goodness I can't think of, oh my goodness, I can't think of his name and he was chief for a long time. You had Hodges, he was chief, Tim Ryerson was chief, we have Rehorn now, after Lange is when I believe you might remember his son was shot, an accidental shooting between 2 boys, they lived on the south side of town.

SC: Oh boy, I don't remember that.

LP: His wife's name is Marge.

SC: It will come to you if you don't think of it.

LP: You know it will, because I know him so well, I know both of them so well and the name is just totally escaping me.

SC: Do you remember the centennial for Forest Park?

LP: Yeah.

SC: Can you, what are your recollections of that? Can you describe that? What year was that?

LP: Well I think the best part of it is because the town really got into it that was in 1956 I believe, and the whole town really got into it. All the men let their beards grow and they all walked around with cigars and long beards and the hat with the, what do you call it, the stovepipe, you know tall hats and .. The entire town really, really got into this. They had different kinds of activities going on almost every single night. I know they had a Hawaiian night at the park, I remember that one. And just, everybody participated in it. It was really great. It wasn't just, I think that was the nice part of it, it wasn't just Madison Street, it was the entire community. Most of the events were held on Madison Street but the entire community was involved in it. There were so many things that we have now it seems to be geared toward the Madison Street merchants. But, everybody participated in that one. And, it was a lot of fun. You know, the nickel beers. In fact, I still have, at that time they were selling wooden nickels-a wooden round nickel. I still have a few of them around the house.

SC: Is that right? I remember I have one of those.

LP: Yeah.

SC: Because I remember I was 4 years old at the time and they arrested my grandfather because he wouldn't grow a beard. And they threw you in some sort of hokey jail.



LP: Yes, they did. They had a jail.

SC: And then you had to pay a fine of some sort.

LP: In order to get out, yeah.

SC: And that just scared the hell out of me because they picked him up, he parked to go in the Forest Park Bank and somebody came over and arrested him. (Laughter)

LP: Yeah everybody had to have, the men had to have a beard, and I say there was so much camaraderie amongst everybody that it was really nice, uplifting for the community.

SC: You know, one of the things I haven't heard anybody talk about here, and I miss it so much are the Elms that used to be in Forest Park.

LP: Well, yeah, we had a lot of Elms and unfortunately they all got the Dutch Elm Disease and they all had to be, I had one right out in front here, and actually when they took the tree down they geared it to go down, drop towards Circle Ave. because it was huge. When the tree hit, it just exploded! It was so hollow inside, it had Dutch Elm Disease. They had to get them down or they would have destroyed every tree that we had. If you want to know anything about the trees in town ask Jerry Jacknow?

SC: OK.

LP: He is an expert on trees in town!

SC: That's a good recommendation because I remember the 600 block of Hannah just like a cathedral. There were just trees on both sides and they met together over the middle of the street and just from one end of the block to the other.

LP: Yeah. There was a lot of the Dutch Elms that we lost. They were usually the humongous trees. I think there were several on this block that you lost, but once that

disease takes hold it just goes from tree to tree to tree and, unfortunately, you lose them all.

SC: I wonder if they have a cure for that today-or a vaccine that prevents it?

LP: You know what, I don't know. You don't see too many Dutch Elms in like a residential area. You may see them out more like in a forest or grove type area, but not too much in residential.

SC: I wonder who was responsible for the original planting for all those trees because they certainly, you know, when we were much younger they were magnificent.

LP: Yeah, I have no idea. But, you're right, somebody had to as they kind of mapped out a block, by block, by block. Well, just as we did. We replaced so many trees. Now 20-30 years from now these trees are going to be humongous! So, they're not going to know who planted them either. (Laughter) But, now you've got all the young ones on the parkways that you're going to get some pretty big trees out of those eventually.

SC: I'm basically out of questions. Is there anything you'd like to say, anything you'd like to add something that you think's important that we haven't touched on?

LP: No, I think we pretty much covered a lot of things. I think one of the things that somebody can be even more knowledgeable than I am on this is for a small community, because we're just 2 ½ square miles, how many churches we have and different denominations and churches. You don't find that in a lot of communities. I mean you have every religion here that you could possibly want. Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic, several different kinds of kinds of Lutheran, Missouri Synod, American Synod-it's just amazing you know, the different churches that you have in Forest Park! And, well-established churches.

CS: In addition to Jerry Jacknow, anybody else do you think, again we're trying to assemble a list of about 10 or so people that we want to talk to. Anybody else do you think we should talk to, any old timers?

LP: You know, I can't think of anybody off hand. That might be a good question to ask Jerry. He's, you're going to get a lot of information out of him. He's pretty knowledgeable as far as, in fact he and I go round and round quite often. He'll mention maybe a store on Madison Street and I'll say "No, No, No, No! It was not, it was, etc." Well, then, we're both off and running to prove each other wrong. (Laughter)

SC: Did you ever see a movie at the Little?

LP: Yes, yes. It used to cause 10 cents and you saw 3 movies for 10 cents!

SC: And of the area, I don't know if you've been in it since the guy opened the antique shop in there...

LP: I have.

SC: What, where, I know that the office was right up there on front because you used to see that on the Terraza up front.

LP: Right, but there was a little stairway as you walk in, as it is now; if you walk in off to your left there was a very narrow stairway. I mean one person could barely, and that's where the washrooms were.

SC: That's where the projection booth was too.

LP: Right, right.

SC: Yeah, that's still there, that stairway is still there.

LP: Oh was it, see I didn't notice it and I've been in there.

SC: Because he puts the layaways up there in the projection booth. (Laughter)

LP: OK, ok. And is the stairway still there?

SC: And the washrooms were there too? The stairway is up to the left if you are facing the back of the theatre you walked in off the street-over to your left. Next time you go in there take a look. It's still there.

LP: OK, I will have to look because I spent a lot of time at the little theatre. It was like, that was your Sunday. I mean everybody that you knew scraped a dime together. If we had to take pop bottles back to get the 2 cents deposit, we went to the Little Theatre.

(Laughter)

SC: And where was there, there had to be a concession, there had to be a concession counter. Where was that?

LP: You know actually there was more, it wasn't even what you would call a concession center. You know how a projected, the ticket booth was up in front and then you would kind of walk around and then the doors were behind there and then it was like right off to your right. It was a real little concession stand. I mean it was just a...

SC: And how far inside the doors, well actually it would have to be right under the projection booth, right? And then the theatre itself started where the projection booth wall came down.

LP: Yeah and it went all the way to the front. It wasn't a large theatre at all. It was a very small, really, theatre. Forest Theatre was much, much bigger.

SC: Was that a single aisle down the middle-a couple of aisles?

LP: No, actually there were 2 aisles because there were no seats on the sides.

SC: OK. No wings.

LP: There were like right, just 2 aisles, you just went down and you kind of sat there.

SC: And when did that close?

LP: It was, oh man it's been closed, it's been closed I'd say a good 30 years, maybe longer than that.

SC: I know it's been, it was never open when I was a kid, and Diane and I are the same age. So that...

LP: Yeah it's been closed a long, long time.

SC: My earliest memories are '56.

LP: They never had first run movies. If, then you had to go to the Forest Theatre to see those. But, the Forest Theatre was like 25-30 cents at that time which was extremely expensive in comparison to the Little which was a dime, and they didn't kick you out.

They let you stay there all day. (Laughter) You certainly got your dime's worth. But they are all like B rated, goofy movies. Charlie Chan, you know, going way back so, but it was a nice place to go when you were a kid.

SC: Interesting. I don't know, I was just thinking, I was talking about how we used to get in trouble with Don all the time. What was our favorite thing we'd go out to the cemeteries and kill gophers? I don't know if that was something he mentioned at home, but we used to..

LP: No, actually I found out about that quite, after you guys had been doing it for quite a long time. (Laughter) A friend of mine happened to be AT the cemetery and spotted him. He never told me. But he did get squealed on.

SC: (Laughter) I see. We'd take all the water bottles and bamboo rods or baseball bats and then wait for the gopher to come up and then, we had more fun hitting each other than we ever did hitting the gophers. (Laughter)

LP: I'm sure, I'm sure.

SC: The other thing I remember vividly about Don was one day he and Dan got into a fight. And, of course, Dan was much bigger than he was and made Don kiss the toe of his shoe.

LP: Oh boy!

SC: And he did. Don got down there and kissed the toe of his shoe and he tugged us, "Come on, and let's get out of here!" And, he goes, "look what I did." And we looked at the toe of Dan's shoe and there was a big clam on it! (Laughter)

LP: Oh god, oh geese, oh God!!

SC: That's somebody I wish was still around to talk to was officer Zimmerman because we got to know officer Zimmerman, you know.

LP: Yeah, he too would be extremely knowledgeable, yeah, he definitely would. Yeah, Fred was a good guy.

SC: That's what it seemed like to me. He kept a lot of us out of..

LP: He always was. He was easy going, but stern when he had to be. I mean you respected him enough that you really didn't want to goof around with him. Because you know he's going to sit there and pat you on the back and laugh. But, if you did anything really that he thought was bad, he let you know that too.

SC: I remember one day we were over there and I was taking pop bottles and throwing them up as high as I could and watching them break. And, there were a whole bunch of kids over there and I was just throwing one after the other having the best time and I looked up and there was Zimmerman, and he said, "What are you doing?" And I said, "Well I guess I'm breaking some pop bottles." And he said, "Well I guess we better

clean this up, huh?” And I said, “OK.” And he said, “Come with me.” And, we started walking across the playground and he didn’t say anything and I said, “Where are we going.” He said, “We’re going to get a broom and a dust pan.” And, I said, “Where are we going to get it?” And he goes, “Your house!” (Laughter)

LP: Yeah, he kind of had, you know, the punishment fit the crime. And, he was really a good guy.

SC: Yeah my mom said he was standing behind me winking, you know the whole time.

LP: I’m sure, I’m sure.

SC: Well thank you very much for taking the time out to talk, I really appreciate it and it was really interesting to hear, I hadn’t heard about the bridge. I know that it was pretty scary to walk across that bridge.

LP: OK Steve. Oh yeah. Steve, I used to stand out in front here once I got aware of what the kids were doing, I’d go out in front there and just stare up the bridge. Well, after a while the kids caught on that, “Oh my God, there’s that old lady again, she’s going to start yelling.” (Laughter) I saw him run after me and I run up that bridge and I could move pretty good at that time and I grabbed that kid by the neck and I didn’t care whose kid it was cause I kept thinking, “Oh my God, one of them is going to fall over, one of them is going to fall over.” But that’s like Diane. She was playing volleyball at the park and they were in some kind of tournament and the people that were running it had stakes in the ground and they put the volleyball net up right where these stakes were coming out of the ground about this size. Well, she was going for a ball, got tripped, ripped her leg, the inside of her leg on one of these stakes and had to go to the hospital and have stitches. She ended up having 52 stitches in her leg. Put the stitches in, put her in a cast, put her

legs in a cast. And, of course, all of her girlfriends are coming over pulling her around in a wagon because this is really so neat and so much fun. (Laughter) So one day I'm going out in front and I look up the bridge and here's Diane in the wagon with the girlfriends on the side laughing their ass off, pushing her down the bridge to see if she could steer right! Her leg, the leg with the cast on is sticking out of the wagon, the other leg's over here and she's steering this wagon to see if she can get down the bridge OK. Sigh!!!! (Laughter) I wanted to put her head in a cast!

SC: You know, that used to be when they were putting in the expressway that used to be our playground. That was over here with the Airhardts and the Sissons across the street and everyday, my poor grandmother, I was waist deep in mud and I'd have 2 or 3 changes of clothes each day. You know, and one of my favorite memories, well actually Dave remembers this and I didn't remember it until he told me-he and his father and his older brother they had put up the supports and they had built the beams across the roadway, but they hadn't poured the concrete yet. So the 3 of them, the father tied them up with ropes around their waists, and decided they would walk out on the beam. And, they said they got about half way out there and they looked up and on the beam next to them was me riding my bicycle on the opposite one. (Laughter) I don't think my mom ever knew that one.

LP: Oh God, Oh God. And you guys wondered why we got gray hairs so young.

(Laughter)

SC: It was fun and when they were, when they laid in the sod, they had the guy come out with the water wagon and the water gun and we'd put on our swimsuits and run around



and he'd shoot us and water the lawn at the same time. Yeah, that was a lot of fun out there. Well, thank you very much for taking the time to do this, really appreciate it.

LP: Yeah.

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