

The Ravenswood Manor Centennial Oral History Project

JOHN BYRNE and PEGGY BYRNE

Oral History: FULL TEXT VERSION

Interview Date: September 11, 2014

Interviewers: Jim Peters, Jackie Klein

Interview Location: 4669 N. Manor Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625

Transcriber: Linda Montalbano, 2015

My name is Jim Peters. I am age 62. Today's date is September 11, 2014. We're here in an office at 4669 N. Manor. I am one of the interviewers.

My name is Jackie Klein. I'm 48. Today is September 11, 2014. I'm at 4669 N. Manor. I'm an interviewer for the Ravenswood Manor Centennial History Project.

My name is Peggy Byrne. I am 63, it is September 11, 2014. I'm at 4669 N. Manor in Chicago and I am one of the storytellers.

I'm John Byrne age 61. Today is September 11, 2014. We are at 4669 N. Manor, Chicago and I am one of the storytellers.

Jim: Let's start off with a basic question. What's the relationship of you two? You have the same last name.

Peggy: We are brother and sister.

John: Right.

Jim: I'll start with Peggy and then move to John with questions. What is your current occupation and are there any former occupations for each of you?

Peggy: I am a lawyer. And uh I've been a lawyer for 32 years, 33 years. And I had a few previous occupations. Such are not noteworthy.

John: Uh, I'm a realtor and I have been a real estate salesperson approximately 36 years and uh I didn't really have any jobs before that.

Jim: And I would observe that we're sitting here in the law offices of Peggy Byrne which is

in The Manor and John Byrne sells real estate but a lot of the real estate you sell is in this neighborhood.

John: Yes.

Jim: So how long have each of you been a resident of Ravenswood Manor?

Peggy: Uh, my office has been here since 1983. I was born in this neighborhood in 1951 and lived, lived here, uh, until I was about 21. Um, so my, but my office has been here since 1983, but I – I don't live here any longer, sadly.

Jim: But how many years did you live here?

Peggy: 20. I lived here for 21 years before I moved out of my parents' home.

Jim: OK

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: And I've lived here all my life. So i've lived here since 1953.

Jim: In the same house or different houses?

John: No, I, I uh, I lived in my parents' house 'til I got married and then, uh, I lived in an apartment on Manor and now I live in a house on, uh, Richmond.

Jim: So truly a lifetime resident of Ravenswood Manor.

John: Right. Mmhmm.

Jim: Do you remember why your family moved here? Both of you were born, uh, and so your first house was here, any idea why they moved here?

Peggy: I don't remember our parents talking about why they moved here. The house they lived in for over 60 years. How long did they live here John? 65 years or so my mother lived here...

John: About 65 years.

Peggy: Um. I don't remember them talking about why they moved here but my guess is that

these were, on Wilson Avenue there between Francisco and Richmond there, are sturdy nice brick houses with nice yards, um, otherwise I don't know why they came here. Do you know, John?

John: No

Jim: So no family connection or anything. They were the first members of the family to live in the neighborhood.

Peggy: Yep.

John: Yes. right.

Peggy: My mother was a south sider.

Jim: And what was your parents' names?

Peggy: Uh, my mother, uh, Katherine Mann Byrne, and our father, John Byrne.

Jim: What's your earliest memory of the neighborhood? Peg, I'll start with you.

Peggy: Hmmm.

Jim: Do you have an early memory or something that jumps out?

Peggy: Hmmm.

Jim: If not, maybe John, while you're thinking.

Peggy: Yep.

John: Our first friends were right on the block – Frances and Morris Glicksman and, uh, their family and then other kids that we'd meet. The O'Connors, uh...

Jim: So you remember kids?

John: Yeah.

Jim: I guess you grew up here, that would be your early memory.

John: The Newells. The Newells.

Peggy: Yeah. Mmhmm. (pause.) I'll tell ya, it's a sad story, but, I think but when you say earliest memory, I, I'm,... there were many Jewish families who lived here, and since John mentioned the Glicksman family, you know Mrs. Glicksman...

John: ...is a...was a Holocaust survivor.

Peggy: Yeah, right, and um...

John: One of my 1st memories...was seeing on her arm...the...terrible markings that had been inflicted upon her.

Peggy: Yeah. Mmhmm.

John: ...And I was about 6...years old or so...and coming home and at dinner saying to my mother 'there was something on Mrs. Glicksman's arm, what was that?'

Peggy: Yeah. Mmhmm.

John: That was one of the first things that, if you're looking for a long, many years ago. Uh, she was a Holocaust survivor.

Jim: And so then did your parents explain to you what that meant?

John: It...,when I was 6 years old it was probably....What could you say to a 6 year old about the horrendous things people do to each other?

Peggy: [choked up] It was a number.

John: It was a number.

Jim: Wow. Um, do you remember places that you played?

John: Well, we played in the street quite a bit, and in the alley.

Peggy: Yeah. Yeah!

John: [laughs] There weren't as many cars parked on the side streets.

Peggy: Yeah.

John: Certainly you weren't gonna play on Wilson but – that would be stupid – but on a street like Richmond there weren't a lot of cars parked during the day on Richmond, so...

Peggy: We played baseball.

John: We'd play baseball and throw a football around on...on Richmond.

Peggy: Mmhmm. Yeah.

Jim: You don't see happening – now!

Peggy: Yeah, right! [laughs] And if a car came by we'd just step aside.

John: Just step aside.

Peggy: I mean there wasn't a park before they built – they turned the garbage dump into Horner Park, so the...

John: ...but I don't remember that as a dump. I only remember that as Horner Park but it was too far. [laughs]

Jim: Oh, really? So, Horner Park, which is only on the south end of the neighborhood, was too far?

John: Yeah. yes. [laughter] We were lazy!

Peggy: But there were empty lots. And we would play in empty lots. Do you remember that?

John: No I was, yeah, the corner of Sunnyside and uh, Francisco. No, I don't remember playing there but you and Jim...

Peggy: Yeah. So there were...it's so funny that that's what they were called 'empty lots'. I mean they were just places where there had never been a house built yet.

Jim: And then were they weed-covered, or?

Peggy: Yeah. Weed-covered. Yeah. There were trees. It was just a...

John: Something to do.

Peggy: ...undeveloped area. Yeah.

John: We also played in the alleys quite a bit.

Peggy: Yeah.

Peggy: We would play softball with a 16 inch softball.

John: ...in the alley.

Peggy: ...in the alley, or, occasionally break windows in people's garages.

John: Yeah.

Peggy: And I remember playing in, um, Francisco in the middle of the street and there's a home there you can still see there – I'm sure you know the address – that had beautiful stained glass windows and the guy would stand there in front of the house just waiting for us to hit, hit the ball through one of his gorgeous windows.

John: I'm glad, I'm glad we never did.

Peggy: I don't believe we did.

Jim: And was he going to catch the ball and stop it?

Peggy: I think he was trying to and just couldn't believe that we were there playing ball just a few feet from his GORGEOUS windows!

Jim: Do you remember playing in Manor Park itself?

John: Yes. Yeah, well I, we would play uh, uh...games, uh...yeah, we would play a little bit of football, like,...yeah.

Jim: Did you get chased out?

John: Yeah. The Reem sisters would call the police, the police would come and we'd runaway. It was, that was better than the game.

John: [laughs.]

Peggy: The Reem sisters! Ha ha ha!

John: Yeah. They lived in the courtyard building.

Jim: Oh, OK. That's what I heard is that they would, uh, chase the kids out, that you guys were the juvenile delinquents of the Manor.

Peggy: [laughs]

John: Yes. Correct. Correct.

Jim: So, uh, what about the river? Did you,...i – i'm not suggesting that you played in the river – but uh did you play down by the river, was that a factor?

John: No. No.

Peggy: I would sometimes go down by the river at River Park.

John: Yeah, at River Park, but never over here. I mean here...no we wouldn't.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

Jim: Did it smell? Was it dangerous?

John: No it just wasn't uh, an attraction, I guess, to us.

Peggy: Yeah .I don't know. I used to go but when I was in high school for some reason I used to... it was a funny little place at River Park.

John: Where you could almost walk across...

Peggy: You could jump across!

John: You could almost walk, you could almost jump across the river...

Jim: Oh, right – where the waterfall is?

John: Yes.

Peggy: Where the waterfall is, mmhmm.

John: Right above the...right, right, yes.

Jim: OK.

John: So that was like an attraction for kids to horse around.

Jim: OK. So how about stores?

John: OK, ya gotta talk about B&D – Ben and Dorothy's. That was the main...

Peggy: Did they know? Do you know about that?

Jim: That was the name of the store?

Peggy: Yeah, Ben and Dorothy's.

John: Where the...the, uh, the ballet studio has now taken over that spa – i believe it's 46...42?
North Francisco?

Jim: Mmhmm. That was a grocery store?

John: Yeah. That was the center of the Manor. Our mother wrote a wonderful article for the
[Chicago] Tribune about B&D.

Peggy: Yeah.

John: ...that they printed, I believe.

Peggy: Sure.

John: ...in their magazine...that...see, Ben and Dorothy, if you wanted to know the the

sadnesses, and the the births, y'know, the...

Peggy: It was the hub!

John: ...it was the hub. If you want to know what was going on in the Manor y'just go in....

Jim: Was it because Ben and Dorothy would talk to people...?

John: Yeah, sure, sure. And you'd let them know what was going on and yeah...

Peggy: Right.

John: ...and they worked there 6 days a week with seldom a break.

Peggy: Yeah.

John: Maybe in the summer they'd be closed for a week.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: ...and about 51 weeks a year.

Peggy: Yeah.

John: They were there 6 days a week.

Peggy: He had a little butcher...

John: Yeah.

Peggy: ...he had a butcher shop and a walk-in freezer with like huge sides of beef hanging on, on hooks!

John: Right. Right, I mean...

Jim: Ben was serious.

Peggy: Yeah, Ben was a butcher.

John: Peggy has the picture. I gave it to ya. Right.

Peggy: I gave you a picture of Mr. Tepper. You know about Tepper?

Jim: Yeah. Let's talk about Tepper.

John: Aw, what a wonderful guy.

Peggy: Uh-uh. So all of these little places right near this law office that we're sitting in, uh, there were a few little shops that opened and there was a tailor right where the cleaners is now, he had a cleaners...

John: Right.

Peggy: ...a cleaning business but he was tailor. I think I have a photograph that you gave me of Mr. Tepper that you gave me.

Jim: Yeah! And this is of Mr. Tepper – his first name was Hank or something?

John: Henry.

Peggy: ...and he was um, also like he was Jewish, Yiddish or he would...these many people had...I mean it is correct to say like a Yiddish accent or something? were they Russian accents, or?

John: I don't know, but what a wonderful man. Again worked like crazy! He could fix things...

Peggy: Yeah.

John: ...you know if you needed cuffs on a pants, or you didn't want cuffs on a pants...

Peggy: [laughs] Yeah!

John: All that...I mean, he was he was like a genius.

Peggy: I think we would probably go in there, with, like, your older brother or my older sister's clothes to have them slightly altered or something so that we could wear them to some event...

John: Right.

Peggy: ...and he'd have you stand on a chair. He was quite bent over probably from many years of being a tailor ...

John: Right.

Peggy: ...and bending down to reach somebody's cuff, and he was completely bent over from the shoulder...

John: Yeah, osteoporosis – some type of medical – but a great person.

Peggy: Yeah.

Jim: John, now you told me in the mornings and evenings he used to also operate a newsstand?

Peggy: I don't think Mr. Tepper was the one who ran the newsstand – in the train station?

John: Right.

Peggy: I don't know about that. I don't remember that it was Mr. Tepper.

John: OK. I could be wrong, but I thought he was, had a connection...

Jim: But there was a newsstand in the L station?

Peggy: There was a newsstand – sold candy and...

John: ...and I remember that newsstand took up the space of the top of this table, that's how big the stand was.

Jim: Which is about a 3 foot wide table.

John: 3 by, 3 by 8.

Peggy: There was a – I remember there was a wood, or maybe it was coal-burning...

John: ...pot belly stove!

Peggy: ...pot belly stove in the train station.

Jim: in the train station

John: In the train station.

Jim: OK.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

Jim: So you had a tailor, you had a grocer that did meat – butcher, how about a pharmacy?

John: Well that's before...

Peggy: Black's?

John: Well, see, yeah,...apparently where the ballet studio was there was one, which our older sister, Kathy Lee, may remember. We're too....

Jim: But it was not open by the time you guys had memory...

Peggy: I have a vague memory of that drugstore being there, I mean it had a soda fountain.

John: Yeah. I don't remember that.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: Along Montrose [Avenue], there were several drugstores. Black's was our nearest one at the southwest corner of Montrose and Sacramento, and then going west, there was Schwartz's was at Albany and Montrose.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: And Stone Drugs was at the corner of Kedzie and Wilson, so there were 3.

Peggy: And then my favorite store was – was it called John's Little Egg Store?

John: That's what we called it.

Peggy: It was, there was a guy many of these people were immigrants and uh...

John: The wonderful things about that store was very – the square footage of that store was almost identical to the front of this office.

Peggy: So how many feet is that John?

John: Less than, it was less than 700 square feet.

Peggy: Mmhmm. So this guy, and that's the corner of Francisco and Montrose

John: So the year is about 1960 and this guy has a store that's about 600 to 700, no, it's about 700 square feet, and he probably lived behind the store.

Peggy: Oh yeah, he lived behind the store.

Jim: And he sold eggs?

Peggy: He sold eggs out of a basket.

John: A wire basket.

Peggy: A wire basket so you would go in there and...

John: You could buy 4 eggs or 5 or 9.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

Jim: And that's all he sold?

John: No.

Peggy: He sold groceries.

John: Probably groceries as well. But, and by the way, you had to walk down, approximately 4 steps, that was a,...

Jim: So it was in the basement of the apartment building?

John: ...that was a, which was that is still an office today, with those 4 stairs...

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: ...are still there.

Peggy: Yeah. I think it was one of those places where you, y'know, you could buy things on credit.

John: Probably.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

Jim: I think you also at one point mentioned to me there was a guy who sharpened skates?

John: and knives

Jim: ...and sharpened lawnmower...?

John: Yeah. Oh well, oh, that's...oh gosh Mr. Johnson had the locksmith shop.

Peggy: Oh! Where was that?

John: Just to the north, where the architects' office is today.

Peggy: Oh.

John: Which is, uh, next to B&D.

Peggy: [laughs]

John: I can remember him once picking a lock – Volkswagen Beetle where the person apparently had lost the key to the...the, uh,

Peggy: Wow.

John: ...to the door or to the trunk,...

Jim: So he's a locksmith but he also sharpened blades?

John: He would sharpen your skates in the winter, your push mower in the summer.

Peggy: And then, on the other side of the tracks here was uh a barber, Mr. Puzzo.

John: Right.

Jim: mr. Puzzo?

Peggy: Puzzo, P-u-z-z-o.

Jim: OK.

Peggy: The Puzzo family lived until very recently...

John: On Wilson.

Peggy: ...John sold their house on Wilson across from our parents' house. Our parents' lived at 2917, but the Puzzo family was right across the street, and Mr. Puzzo was a barber. He had a barber shop here.

Jim: OK.

Peggy: On the other side of the tracks.

Jim: So you really had a lot of services here.

Peggy: There were a lot of things around here. Mmhmm.

John: Right. And B&D Foods would actually deliver, and Tim O'Toole worked for them and for many years and people would call up, Dorothy would take their order, and so they might order a couple different types of meat,...

Peggy: Yeah.

John: ...some eggs, milk, cheese, some cereal, and butter, and maybe, uh, 4 bananas and a [laughter] tomato and Dorothy would put it in a box and Tim O'Toole would – usually he would walk it over.

Peggy: Yeah.

John: Just put it in a box and Tim would deliver it. They delivered to many, many people in the Manor.

Jim: Yeah.

Peggy: Wow. You know, when you talk about the knife sharpener, um,...I remember a horse!
[Laughs] You know, that was a guy...

John: ...in the alleys.

Peggy: ...in the alley with a horse – what was he pulling? What was he selling?

John: He wasn't selling, he...

Peggy: It was old rags and iron.

John: Yeah. He would yell, "Old rags and iron!" And you...

[laughter]

Jim: Not to sell, but to...

Peggy: ...to collect. He wanted old rags and iron. And he'd be yelling it out – that's how you knew he was in the alley, and you'd bring out your old rags and iron.

John: I once gave the guy some old window – uh, the lead weights from in between some windows.

Peggy: But was he buying it, or was he just collecting it?

John: I think just collecting. If ya got some...

Peggy: If you have some old rags, bring it out.

John: Yeah, if you have some old things like the weights from in between...

Jim: Yeah.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

Jim: So today it would be the guys drivin' around in the trucks...

John: The recyclers. The recyclers – no different.

Peggy: But he had a horse.

John: But he had a horse.

Jim: But he had a horse.

Peggy: [laughs] I mean I remember the guy with a horse and he'd be comin' along – we'd love to see the horse, y'know, it was totally cool.

Jim: Oh.

Peggy: And there was another guy who'd come along the alley – I mean that certain services were delivered to you. There was another guy on a bike...

John: ...to sharpen...

Peggy: ...who had a knife sharpener on his bike.

John: And for about 35 cents I believe they – he would, uh, sharpen your knives I mean beautifully. I mean, he had a – he probably hand cranked...

Peggy: Yeah.

John: Oh! No, no, his feet...

Peggy: ...it was a wheel, his feet on the wheel!

John: ...it was his feet going like this...

Peggy: And there was a...

John: A big wheel.

Jim: And this was in the alley?

Peggy and John: In the alleys.

John: Yeah.

Peggy: All of these things would be happening in the alley.

John: Yeah, I think it was about 35, 25 or 35 cents...

Jim: It's a lively place!

Peggy: Oh yeah.

John: You also had, of course, the milkmen would come. We had milk delivered to our parents – you know, our parents had, uh,...

Peggy: Yeah. And they would have dry ice in the back of the milk truck to keep the milk cold.

John: OK.

Peggy: Yeah.

Jim: So, um, we've been talking about this neighborhood up on Lawrence [Avenue] – clothing [stores]?

John: Yeah, that was Tots and Teens. but that was it. That was the bees knees for us!

Peggy: [laughs]

Jim: Tots and Teens?

John: Yes.

Jim: And, and, uh...

John: approximate address?

Jim: That was kids clothes and...?

John: Tots through teens!

Jim: ...through teens. OK.

John: If we needed t-shirts or uh, socks...

Peggy: Yeah. We would go to Tots and Teens.

John: Our parents would take us up there. And, I mean, so the distance from our parents' home to Tots and Teens was probably 7 blocks.

Jim: OK.

Peggy: There were also 2 movie theaters not far away. The Terminal, and what was the other one called, do you remember?

John: Well, the one on Irving was the Commodore.

Peggy: The Commodore.

Jim: Those were still in operation when you were kids?

Peggy: Yeah.

John: Right.

Peggy: The Terminal was it near the end of the line train station?

John: Yeah, it was on the south side of Lawrence, near Kimball.

Jim: So you would walk to these places?

John: No, we would get driven by our parents because it was the evening after they had – my father came home from work right?

Peggy: Probably. Yeah.

John: Put us in the car and go over there and get something.

Jim: What about transit? Did you take the L? Did you take busses? streetcars? anything?

Peggy: Yeah. I do remember those...

John: I wasn't a bus person but I mean, we took the L.

Peggy: We'd take the train here. But I remember those busses that were electric.

John: Yeah, they had – on Montrose – they had, they had...

Jim: Overhead wires.

John: Overhead wires.

Jim: OK.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: At the back of the bus...

Jim: That was on Montrose, but not Lawrence?

John: Yeah, and there'd be a thing kinda like this that went up to the...

Peggy: Sometimes they would come off. [laughs]

John: [laughs] Yeah, occasionally it would drop off. The guy would [laughs] just have to get out and push it back up.

Jim: Wow.

Jackie: I want to mention that we are hearing the train quite a bit because we're sitting right next to it. This office is right next to the Brown Line.

Peggy: Yeah.

John: [laughs]

Jackie: A little ambience.

John: [laughs]

Jim: So, you would take, you would take the train to go maybe downtown?

Peggy: Downtown. Mmhmm. To the Art Institute or to Marshall Fields.

Jim: Did you go to Lincoln Square ever? Was that a destination?

Peggy: Not that I recall.

John: Oh, yeah, Pop would go there to, uh,...

Peggy: ...to the bank.

John: Yeah, to Commercial National Bank. He would also go to Leutke Cleaners sometimes. Sometimes we'd go there. Uh, although we – my, my father was very loyal he taught us I think at an early age to shop local. So, Mr. Tepper, would get the business and B&D, uh, and then, um, also our next door neighbor Kirshner – we would go to his store for shoes,

Peggy: Oh yeah.

John: Which was Adam's Bootery on, uh...

Jim: So you really did shop local?

Peggy: Mmhmm, sure! Adam's Bootery...

John: ...which was at Irving Park and Elston.

Jim: OK. [laughs]

Jackie: Were the shopkeepers happy to have you in there as children? Were they, were they welcoming?

John: Oh, B&D – sure!

Peggy: Yeah, I don't think it was a problem.

John: No.

Peggy: And kids would...I think kids...y'know, I think by the time we were how old we'd be walking to the store ourselves – 8 or something?

John: Yeah.

Peggy: I mean, I took a couple of classes at the Art Institute when I was in like 7th grade, and I would just get on the train when I was about 12 I'd take the train downtown to the Art Institute – on a Saturday morning or something.

John: Yeah.

Jim: Now, I forgot to ask where did you go to school – both grade school and high school?

Peggy: We went to Our Lady of Mercy to, uh, grade school.

Jim: And that's on Kedzie?

John: Uh, well, yeah, uh, Troy, Troy and uh, Sunnyside or Troy and Montrose.

Peggy: It's a charter school now, the school. The Catholic church is still there. It was a little wooden church. Do you remember the small church where they built the...

John: No.

Peggy: It was a beautiful, very small wooden church until about 19—

John: '60.

Peggy: '60.

John: So of course they tore it down – in the tradition of mistakes made, right?

Peggy: [laughs]

Jim: And so that was grade school...

Peggy: Yeah.

Jim: ...and then how about high school?

John: Lane Tech.

Peggy: i went to Saint Scholastica on the north side there.

Jim: Which is up on Ridge [Boulevard].

Peggy: Yeah.

Jim: Also now a charter school.

Peggy: ...also a charter school. There's a pattern here!

[laughter]

Jim: So did you have any memories of Horner Park, or its time as a brickyard or landfill? I guess the brickyard would have been well before your time, but, as a landfill, or?

Peggy: I – I believe I remember when it was being made into a park. That it had been a place where landfill was dropped off.

John: Yeah. My recollections of Horner were, um, our father took us over there once with a huge kite he had made and flew a kite there on, uh, on the hill. Um, also, they had a wonderful wood shop in the basement which when I was in like maybe 6th or 7th grade, we'd go over there in the winter quite a bit. And uh they had not only wood there but plastic, uh...

Peggy: Things to make keychains.

John: Yeah little plastic things that you could buff, and sand and make into a pretty keychain.

Jim: Mmhmm.

Jackie: it's still there.

Peggy: Yeah. I think I went down there one time and saw it and just couldn't believe it all those machines with like big saws and everything, we'd be like 3 feet high and we'd be like 'uhrrrrrrr'.

[laughter]

Peggy: Our mother, Kate Byrne, who died in [20]’09, was an essayist and she was quite a chronicler I think of life here in the Manor. She wrote many articles that were published over the years in the Tribune and, um, in the Tribune magazine, and in magazines all over the country actually. Just, she was a freelance writer and just one at a time she would write these stories about the Manor – true stories about the Manor. One of them, in 1993 won an award as the best essay for that year among all the essays in the Sunday magazines and she was very proud of that. and she managed to just find the...just one – the piece that she won the award for was called One More Time Around the Block, and it was just about her walking around and observing, y’know, this is the house where this happened, and y’know, here, this is where a guy lived who shot himself in the head one day, and this is this was the house where the man taught violin lessons in the basement and, um, y’know, it was a lot more than that, it wasn’t just a this and that – she managed to pull it together

John: Yeah.

Peggy: As you say, John, just the, y’know, the good and the bad of just ordinary...just an ordinary city block in the...

John: Yeah.

Peggy: ...y’know, the families and the...

Jim: Now, are those collected anywhere? Do you have, like, the entire set?

John: Yeah, Peg has, Peggy has them.

Peggy: We have some. Yeah. We have some. I have some here probably, somewhere. You’d be welcome to see them. They’re great. Yeah.

Jim: It would be wonderful to share with the neighborhood.

Peggy: Oh yeah! Mmhmm. I mean she wrote many other kinds of essays but she a lot of her essays were about the Manor.

John: Right.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

Jim: Do you remember how your parents and other family socialized? We know how you as kids played, but what did people do? evenings, weekends?

John: Well with 5 kids [laughs] there wasn't probably a lot of socializing going on! Probably just trying to keep us...

Peggy: ...clothed and fed!

John: Yeah.

Peggy: Yeah.

Jim: [laughs]

Peggy: I...

Jim: You don't remember anything – somebody had mentioned something: “mortgage dinners”?

John: That I never heard of. No.

Peggy: I don't recall.

Jim: ...that was supposedly when you had paid off your mortgage you'd have a big feast and – don't remember?

Peggy: Y'know, my mother had just a few close friends in the neighborhood like Marian Newell...

John: Right.

Peggy: ...and um,...yeah.

Jim: So how about any unique characters, I mean you named some of the people who ran the stores, do you remember any other characters in the neighborhood, or people with foreign accents that were distinctive?

Peggy: [laughs]

John: Mmmm. No.

Jim: Scary people?

Peggy: [laughs]

Jim: Crabby people?

Peggy [laughs]

Jim: Usually in the neighborhood there's always some crabby eccentric person but nobody stands out necessarily?

Peggy: Y'know, there, in our alley across from in the alley behind our home, the 2 closest homes were the Browns and the Sulkys.

John: Right.

Peggy: And was Sulky the judge?

John: ...or a man who...

Jackie: He had been a judge.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: Yeah.

Jim: And Abe Saperstein...

Peggy: Yeah, right.

Jim: ...with the Harlem Globetrotters – lived in the neighborhood.

Peggy: Yeah.

John: Yeah.

John Right.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: Now, uh, one of my friends at Mulvihill grew up directly across the street from Abe Saperstein's daughter's home on Eastwood – in the 2900 block. Abe was – I was told – actually lived like at 2948 Eastwood, but his daughter lived at approximately 2921 Eastwood. And so I do recall Abe Saperstein's grandson Avi wearing just the most perfect all leather Harlem Globetrotters warm up jacket...

[laughter]

John: ...and Avi was probably 5 years old at that time?

Jim: So, you were envious!

John: Oh you had to be, I mean, come on! [Laughter] I was probably 12 at the time so I mean...

Jim: So nobody stole [laughter] Avi's jacket?

John: Oh no, you couldn't do that. No! Come on. No.

Jim : Well, especially not in the neighborhood.

John: No.

Jim: So do you remember any specific neighborhood concerns? And by that you know uh closing the L stop, running an expressway through the neighborhood?

John: I don't recall that. I mean, I think occasionally there may have been some rumblings about – what? That the stop didn't have enough customers?

Peggy: Yeah. When was that? Not that long ago? 10 or 15 years ago?

John: Right. But I...

Jim: So how would you describe the...

[railroad crossing bell sounds]

John: Oh, by the way, this was an A stop.

Jim: Right. There was a skip stop, The A and the B stops, right?

John: So Rockwell was a B.

Jim: Oh, we were an A. What's the biggest change that you've seen in the neighborhood?

Peggy: Well, when we were little, it was a very ordinary neighborhood,...

John: Yes.

Peggy: ...of working class people. Our father was a school teacher. Next door was a guy who y'know sold shoes,...

John: Well, he was the owner of the shop .

Peggy: He was the owner of the shop, yeah.

John: Irv was the owner of the shop.

Peggy: Mmhmm. There was a doctor on the corner but...

John: Mr. O'Connor was a salesman.

Peggy: Yeah, mmhmm.

John: Reverend Larkin lived on the corner so, I mean. I don't know. The changes? I mean, the city – it's a big city it has a lot of problems y'know – there were probably problems then too, right?

Peggy: Yeah. But would you agree, John especially because you know very well about the prices of houses in the neighborhood – because you've probably sold every one in the neighborhood...

John: No.

Peggy: ...at least once – I just think it was, I mean, my impression of it was it was just an ordinary little neighborhood and now I find it an extraordinary neighborhood of, y'know...it's just an amazing little enclave, uh, that is, overall, probably one of the safest places to...

John: Y'know, back when we were little, weren't there many of the homes where you have, like the Berg's, was a brother and sister living in the house...

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: ...next door to Pop and Kate, our parents, were they were they 2 sisters?

Peggy: Oh yeah, mmhmm.

John: Olga and Esther, mmhmm.

Peggy: And Esther.

John: Olga and Esther. I can remember many homes back then going back to like 1963...

Peggy: Yeah.

John: Were, uh, 2 sisters sometimes even 3 sisters living in...

Jim: So, family?

John: Marie Walter, Marie Walters lived with her 2 sisters on Eastwood.

Peggy: Mmhmm. That's interesting.

Jim: Do you think that's just what the times that was happening more, that families were...

Peggy: Do you think it was their families' home or they never married and they just stayed in the home? They stayed together in the home.

John: I really don't know.

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: Sue Skulnick and her sister, Bobbi, lived on Sacramento.

Peggy: Uh-huh. That's interesting.

Jim: And now it's more families?

Peggy: Mmhmm, yeah.

John: Yeah, I see, yeah.

Peggy: I mean another change certainly is we would play outside and you just don't see kids that much playing outside y'know. Now they have play dates!

John: Oh I see one thing different. When I walk up and down the alleys, on any given block I'll see 2 or 3 basketball hoops behind, behind garages OK just down one alley. When we were growing up our father Pop, he put up a hoop on our garage and I think Kevin Waite's father or family had one and that may be well there was one next to [*that Mobile?*] – I don't think there were more than – I don't remembering seeing more than those 3...

Peggy: Mmhmm.

John: ...when I was growing up and how you see 3 on in one alley! I find that just fascinating that on one block there'd be 3! Why would you need 3 if you have one wouldn't you go and...

Jim: ...play on the neighbor's? Oh no!

[laughter]

Peggy: Not today!

John: ...and, and try to get that kid to come out and play with you? I just find that kind of fascinating. that, [laughs] I bet there are 50! [laughs]

Jim: Oh yeah! In the whole neighborhood.

John: Easy!

Peggy: Mmhmm.

Jackie: Right.

Peggy: If there would be one there wouldn't be a need then other kids would be using your hoop, of course!

John: Yeah.

Peggy: You'd hear it! The bouncing ball and you'd know somebody was out there.

Jim: And then you could go out and play.

John: Yeah!

Peggy: And people, when kids would want you to come and play, they'd yell for you...kids would yell for you! I like that. they'd say, 'yo Johnny!'

John: Yeah. Just 'yo!'

[laughter]

Jim: Come here and play give me your rags and iron!

Peggy: Your rags, all rags and iron.

Jim: So what's the first thing that you tell your friends about Ravenswood Manor? I mean, if they said, didn't you grow up in Ravenswood Manor, what kind of neighborhood is that?

Peggy: Well it's a great place. it was a great place when we were little and it's still a great place. I mean it's kinda crazy to be working – we started to talk about this earlier – the office that I work in now I worked in when I was about 13 or 14 years old. it was a office for a guy who was a rubber pine tar importer and I typed little bills of lading or something in multiple copies for him.

Peggy: How about you, John?

Jim: So when you were a teenager you worked in the same space...

Peggy: Yes.

Jim: ...that you now occupy as an attorney?

Peggy: Yep.

Jim: How about you, John? You sell houses here. What do you first say about the

neighborhood to people, if you gave a description, what description?

John: Convenient to downtown and a real nice to be.

Peggy: i think it's a great place to raise a family. It really is.

[Jim to Jackie: Do you have any final questions? No?]

Jim: Thank you very much!

Peggy and John: Thank you!

Jim: Both of you have great stories. Thank you.

John: Thanks.

Jim: So my question is what do you remember about Dr. Newell?

John: Is that he had...his hands... I think...I think his hands were very,...um, did he have,...like they were,...like, special. [laughs]

[laughter]

Peggy: Yeah, his hands, his hands were like, insured or something! [laughs]

John: No. I mean, but I mean...

Jim: Distinctive. Distinctive?

Peggy: Yeah!

John: But they were...how would you...?

Peggy: They weren't rough, is that what you mean? They were...

John: Yeah, no, yeah. I mean, but...

Peggy: Very soft. Handsome though, right?

John: Yeah. Yeah. I mean...

Jim: And was he, did the people in the neighborhood know him? He was very well known nationally and locally. But did you ever have any dealings with him?

John: Yeah. Well I told you about Joe bringing little Jen there and having him – did he look at one of Jen's eyes that had astigmatism or something?

Peggy: Yeah. Oh yeah, mmhmm. I think he would. Would he look at peoples' eye problems from like his house or something?

John: No, no. He didn't. For Kate, yes, but I don't think for anyone else would.

Jim: OK.

[--End--]