

## The Ravenswood Manor Centennial Oral History Project

**Beth NEWELL MURPHY and Susan NEWELL O'CONNELL**

***Oral History: FULL TEXT VERSION***

Interview Date: September 25, 2014

Interviewers: Jim Peters, Jackie Klein

Interview Location: 4530 N. Mozart Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625

Transcriber: Linda Montalbano, 2015

Hi. My name is Jim Peters. I'm age 62. Today is September 25, 2014. I am sitting in a residence at 4530 N. Mozart in Chicago. I'm an interviewer on behalf of the Ravenswood Manor Centennial Research Committee.

My name is Jackie Klein. I'm 48 years old. Today is September 25, 2014. I am at 5530 [sic] North Mozart, Chicago, and, I am an interviewer.

My name is Beth Murphy. It's September 25, 2014. I'm at 4530 North Mozart and I'm a storyteller.

My name is Susan O'Connell. I'm 62. Today is September 25, 2014. I'm at my own home at 4530 North Mozart and I'm a storyteller.

**Jim: We'll start off with a story about how long each of you have been a resident of Ravenswood Manor – how far back you were a resident, and whether you are now?**

Susan: OK, this is Susan. I am currently a resident of Ravenswood Manor. I have, um, I moved here to 4500 North Mozart only 6 doors down from, um, this house, um, when I was 3 years old with my parents and my uh, brother and sister. And my sister, who is here. And, uh, we uh, really the story of my, uh, being in Ravenswood Manor – and I've lived here off and on I didn't live here while I was in college of course and um – well, I guess I could have lived here, but I didn't live here when I was in college – um, I lived in New York – and um, I also lived on my own for a number of years, but when the time came to purchase a house, just by, it happened that we found this house in Ravenswood Manor, and moved back to Ravenswood Manor.

**Jim: And you specifically chose to move back to the neighborhood you grew up in?**

Susan: Actually not. We were looking around the city for houses and it just so happened that this house was the one we liked. We were rather hesitant to move here because it was so close to my parents, who were still alive – still living in their house, very much active in their house. We – I

didn't know if I really wanted to live that close to my parents but we decided to take a chance. And one thing was we couldn't see their house from our house. We couldn't really, uh – no one could watch their comings and goings. And, as it turned out, I was afraid – I don't know why I thought this – that I would – my parents would be an imposition on me, but, of course, with – my parents lived very independent lives – we were more the imposition on them, yes, so that was how I came to be here. So, we moved here in 1983. In January of 1983, and then my daughter was born in October of '83.

**Jim: So your first time was from, during the '50s and '60s, and your second time...?**

Susan: Right, I would say from '55 to '69 and then from '81 to 2014.

**Jim: OK, and how about you, Beth?**

Beth: I moved here with my family when I was 5 months old in 1955. I think I neglected to say I'm 59 years old in the introduction, um, and I moved out, uh, when I went to college, and I've been here as a visitor of my sister and my parents, but, I did live across the river in Ravenswood Gardens, at one point.

**Jim: Alright, and, uh, what are your current or former occupations, each of you, and I'll start with Susan?**

Susan: I'm an accountant and I've been an accountant pretty much my whole career.

**Jim: Independent, or working with companies?**

Susan: No, I work, mainly work for not-for-profits. I'm currently working for the Environmental Policy Center and before that I worked for the American Board of Medical Specialties, and I've been, I did work in public accounting for a little while.

**Jim: And how about you, Beth?**

Beth: I'm self-employed. I own Murphy's Bleachers and I own Mrs. Murphy and Sons Irish Bistro.

**Jim: And how long has that been the case?**

Beth: Well, my husband died in 2003, so, I'd say, I've owned Murphy's Bleachers and actually the Bistro, since then.

**Jim: And both – Murphy’s Bleachers goes back quite a ways.**

Right. Right. He founded it in 1980.

**Jim: And for those of you who don’t know, Murphy’s Bleachers is in the shadow of Wrigley Field, or vice versa.**

[laughter]

Beth: Yes. Thank you.

**Jim: So any, do either of you know why your family chose to move to Ravenswood Manor? Family being your parents.**

Susan: This is really a story that begins with my mother and in many ways this is my mother’s story. She grew up at 4225 Francisco [Avenue], which is, if you know the area, just really a few blocks south of, of this area. She used to come here as a girl. She had a friend here – my mother did not own a bike – her family, she didn’t have a bike – she had a friend here who had a bike, who had bikes, whose father was a doctor – lived over on Richmond [Street], and my mother would come here to ride her bikes.

**Jim: Because?**

Susan: Because my mother didn’t have a bike!

**Jim: Oh so she needed a bike.**

Susan: She needed a bike. This is her, you have to know – this is so much like my mother and the way her life worked. She came here to ride her bike and she – the house they lived in, which, if you know this neighborhood, is one of the premier houses of the neighborhood...

**Jim: This is 4500 Mozart.**

Susan: ...it’s a corner house, it’s very distinctive, it’s rather big. It was her dream to live in that house.

**Jim: Oh, so, she remembered it as a kid?**

Susan: Oh, yeah! She may have seen it being built, because it was built later than,...

**Jim: ...in the 20s.**

Susan: Yes, it was built in the end of the 20s. So her dream was to live in the house, and my mother was one of those people – maybe Beth would concur – whose dreams tended to come true one way or the other – so she wanted to live in the house, and, uh,...

**Jim: How did they get the house? Probably somebody else owned it?**

Susan: Yes. This is another story. My, she married my father, y'know, they had – my father was a doctor, y'know, World War II, they were married then separated for about 4 years. He came back. Practicing medicine back then was not the way it is now. He kind of struggled to set up his practice, but finally got his practice set up. He was at Northwestern [University], and they...

**Jim: And he was [what kind of doctor], eye?**

Susan: Eye. He was an ophthalmologist at Northwestern. He worked to get his practice set up, and, um, he met a man from, uh – he actually met him during World War II – from Northwestern, who helped him set up his practice. So he was practicing at Northwestern, and then, really, the aim of this man, Dr. Vale, was to kinda seed all the ophthalmologists in the universities around Chicago, so, the opportunity came up for my father to be at the University of Chicago.

**Jim: On the south side.**

Susan: So, they moved, right, they moved from the north side, which – they lived in a house on Odell [Avenue], and, uh, my father was, actually literally said to my mother, 'if I continue this commute to the University of Chicago from the far north side it's gonna kill me, so we have to move!'

**Jim: So you moved to the south side, and then you came back...**

Beth and Susan: No! He never moved.

Susan: No south side, these were north siders! [laughs]

**Jim: So did you move here?**

Susan: My dad came here, and, without consulting my mother – I think this is the way house purchases worked in the '50s – he bought the house.

**Jim: But did he know she wanted to live there?**

Susan: I don't know.

Beth: This is Beth. She thought he bought the house that is on Wilson and Mozart when he gave the address. And, that's a lovely house, too, but, he actually had bought her dream house, uh, which was 4500 North Mozart and, um, but definitely she moved in sight unseen. I mean, they, he took care of it and the people who sold them the house – I think they were the Schmidts?...

Susan: Yes.

Beth: ...thought it was prestigious to be selling to a doctor. So, um, they got the house, I think the house cost \$36-or-37,000 dollars and they gave him a little bit of a break on the price.

**Jim: What was it like growing up in that house, because it was a very prominently situated, distinctive house? Do you remember? Did people look at your house all the time? I mean, everybody knew where you lived, right?**

Beth: This is Beth. A friend of mine came in the house once and said, 'Oh this is how the other half lives.' And, um, I think we always knew that we had a special house. And I think I was proud that people noticed our house. I don't know how you felt.

Susan: Yeah, no, it was was a very – my impression, the house even as a child, was that it was very big and it was even as a child people came over to the house and play hide and seek and run up on, you know, special places...

**Jim: So, a lot of room inside?**

Susan: Right! There was a third floor, there was a landing going up to the third floor, we had – there was an attic in there that had this huge door that was about as thick as a, um, oh, probably about a foot thick door, and, uh, my dad had his office on the third floor. And, uh, we just, uh, it was – my impression [laughs] always to this day of the house is it was big. And I felt it was a difficult house to manage. I mean...

**Jim: Particularly for a neighborhood in which the homes are not massive, it's one of the bigger ones.**

Susan: Right.

**Jim: Did you play in the yard? Did you play in the alley? Where did you play?**

Well, we had the classic story about the yard. I have to tell you. Uh, we had, uh – the backyard, if you've seen the house, is not real big. It's relatively small. The house takes up a lot of the lot. But, um, we were growing up – especially my grandparents – gave us every piece of gym equipment that you could possibly have. We had a swingset, we had 2 sets of, um, what would you call, jungle gym, parallel bars. We had a slide, we had a sandbox. I mean, this is a small yard.

**Jim: When you stayed, that's where you mostly played? in your own yard?**

Beth: This is Beth. Not me at all. We would play, um, in the alley – well, play on the street.

**Jim: [laughs] So, best intentions.**

Susan: Yes.

Beth: Well, I, obviously we played in the backyard, but, um, but my memories of play are being on our bicycles we had a lot of games that we played in the alley.

**Jim: Like what type of games?**

Beth: Well, the most unusual – so, i'll start with that – is called Draw A Round Circle. And it's: 'Draw a round circle, color it purple. Guess who poked.' And so the person, um, hid their eyes while that was drawn on their back, and then they turn around, and it was 'Who's got the guilty finger?'. If they didn't pick the person that poked they had to run to the end of the block and back and it was a game of hide and seek after that. And, um, and you had to get to ghou before the person who was "it" got to ghou and would, it was 'Noffrey, noffrey on Ellen running down the alley!' or 'Noffrey, noffrey on, um, Jeannie behind the brown fence!'.

**Jim: Were there a lot of kids?**

Beth: Yes.

Susan: Oh yeah, lots of kids in the neighborhood.

**Jim: And did you play by the river at all or was that forbidden territory?**

Susan: The river, at the time when we were growing up, was regarded as a, uh, I think, liquid

sewage. It was, um, the insult growing up was 'your mom takes baths in the Chicago River' – that was the put down! And I do remember, y'know the lot next to the river on Wilson where there's 4 new houses – relatively – not really any more,...

Beth: ...but in 1962...! [laughs]

Susan: ...there was [an] overgrown lot. It was just full of, and we'd go to library – Hild on Lincoln Avenue – and we'd hear all these stories of these terrible things that happened on in this lot so you'd run with your little library books!

[laughs]

**Jim: Was that the scariest place in the Manor, would you say, or were there houses that were equally scary?**

Beth: This is Beth. I was told not to play near the river and I don't think I was ever tempted to go near. The river was pretty horrible and uh, it smelled, but I do have one memory of again going to Hild Library – um, crossing the river we would wait until we saw a condom go by before we would cross the river. Now, I don't think I knew what a condom was, but I knew what it looked like!

[laughter]

**Jim: Floating by in the river?**

Beth: Floating by. Yes! [laughter] And, um, you didn't have to wait too long. [laughs]

Susan: Right.

Beth: I mean, it wouldn't have been a game if you were there for 45 minutes. You were there for, you know, 5 minutes, 10 minutes. And, uh, I don't know what I thought I was looking at, but that was one of our....

**Jim: So, uh, how about other places that you went? You said where you play – you said you went to the library – stores, or candy stores, restaurants – do you remember any of the favorite places?**

Beth: Well, this is Beth again. There were 2 small grocery stores in the neighborhood that were nicknamed after [laughs] not the owner, but the lady who checked you out [laughs] at the...

[laughter] at the counter – you know, the lady who checked out your grocery – one was Anna's...

Susan: Right.

Beth: And the other was Ida's? [laughter]

Susan: Yeah, they were the checkout clerks! [laughter]

**Jim: Where was, where was Anna's and where was Ida's?**

Beth: They were on Montrose [Avenue] in the middle of the, um, block. My memory is they were together. They were right next to each other, although we never went into Ida's, so who knows? Everybody had one store or the other. And, um, they had real butchers, and, um, sawdust on the floor, and popsicles...

Susan: Right.

Beth: ...blueberry popsicles, um, in one of those reach-in, um, freezers and, um, just, y'know, very small produce, uh, section. But when I think back on those stores – I mean, it's like from another era. It's, it's, so, but, you walk to the store...

Susan: ...with your list.

Beth: My mom would give me a list. I hated – there was one nice butcher and there was one, the mean butcher was the guy who owned the store – and, so if you get the nice butcher that was fine but, y'know, instructions that, y'know, a split chicken breast? And then if there was any question, I had no idea, um, y'know, but or whatever, y'know, it wasn't that complicated, but, it was, um, so you'd go to the store and um, buy whatever y'had to buy. I do have a memory of one, um, time the milk carton was leaking, and so all of the groceries fell on, onto Mozart, and I didn't know what to do, and some nice lady came out of the house and set me up. And um, I was just, um...

**Jim: So you went down to Montrose?**

Beth: Mmhmm.

**Jim: You didn't go up to near the [Francisco] L station?**

Susan: No, we didn't do that, that wasn't our grocery store when we lived here, you had your grocery store, y'know? No rhyme or reason why you decided, and our grocery stores were between Francisco and Mozart on um, Montrose.



Beth: On Montrose. And there was also, at Francisco and Montrose, a candy store...

Susan: Right.

Beth: ...named John's.

**Jim: John's Candy Store?**

Beth: Yeah and, uh, that was delightful.

Susan: Yes. Penny...

Beth: ...the penny candy.

Susan: Right.

Beth: And it really was a penny! And um,...

**Jim: Now I forgot to ask where you guys went to school grade school, both grade school high school?**

Susan: Well I went to grade school I went to Our Lady of Mercy,

**Jim: over on Kedzie?**

Susan: ...which is now closed, um, and for high school, I went to Sacred Heart which is also closed! [laughs] Or the high school is closed over on Sheridan Road and Rosemont, and, uh, Beth?

Beth: I'm just slightly more complicated I went to Our Lady of Mercy. well actually I went to Bateman.

Susan: Right. [laughs]

Beth: Oh! This is an important Ravenswood Manor – 'Room 100 Bateman kindergarten' you're gonna hear about room – that was the best kindergarten room it had a slide in it.

**Jim: Hmmm.**

Beth: it's like a wooden slide, it was the most horrible slide but anyway that was a very cool room!

**Jim: So you just went there for kindergarten?**

Beth: I went to Bateman and half of first grade that was in a time because of the baby boom, that they were starting kids at school in January. So I went to 1st grade for a year and a half, they thought I was like a genius. When I came I could do everything, but I had already gone to, y'know, it was so boring. So then I went to, um, Our Lady of Mercy for the next year of, um, 1st grade. [laughs] I used to go to class – I was like was the visiting reader! [laughs] it had nothing to do with anything but i'd already been through it!

**Jim: The Einstein of the day...**

Beth: [laughs] Yeah. I know, my god! From Bateman, um, and my class at Our Lady of Mercy, my 1st grade class had 63 kids in it!

**Jim: All in one classroom?**

Beth: In one class, yes. This was one classroom. There were other 1st grade classrooms. They had temporary, like, um, trailers outside to take care of the kids and, um, and so I went to Our Lady of Mercy for the 1st um, uh, 4 years til 4th grade through 4th grade uh my 4th grade nun had had a stroke [laughs] an, um...

Susan: I shouldn't laugh!

**Jim: Susan's laughing.**

Beth: And would just tell [laughs] sister Mary Vernadine [?] – I'm very serious – this is Beth she had had a stroke and she just told stories.

**Jim: So she continued to teach after the...**

Beth: Oh, yeah! She never left the room because it was hard for her to get around because she had had a stroke, um, and, um, my parents decided that maybe it was time to change schools so I went to Sacred Heart with David – who is my brother – went to Hardy, which is the boys school...

**Jim: ...in grade school...**

Beth: Yeah, and Susan was going there for high school and both of them took the entrance exams

and both of them took me in based on their scores! [laughs]

**Jim: And how did you get over to Sacred Heart 'cause that's quite a ways from here?**

Susan: We took the, um, Brown Line to the Red Line and got off at Granville.

**Jim: OK. Alright so you were transit kids.**

Susan: Yeah, mmhmm.

**Jim: And that was at that time accepted – kids just got on the train...?**

Susan: Well my little brother who started at Hardy when he was in 1st grade would get on the train and he knew all, y'know, he knew all the conductors he had a friend, he'd wave, and so my brother who was then in college – it was a big gap – brought his girlfriend from – he went to the University of Wisconsin – he brought his girlfriend who grew up on a farm in Wisconsin – and was kind of 'ooooo! his first trip to the big city!' y'know, he took her to get on the L, y'know the big, and it was my little brother went with them and y'know everybody was like "Hi, David!" [laughs]

**Jim: [~set us all back?~]**

Beth: This is Beth...

Susan: ...these are the conductors...[laughs]

Beth: ...my friend who grew up across the street, um, Margaret, we used to take the L just around the loop and back and then that used to be an activity and um...

**Jim: do you remember anything about the L in those days, different from today?**

Susan: Well the Brown Line used to get the oldest cars...

Beth: Yes.

Susan: ...so we used to get on, you'd get cars with wicker seats, and the over...

Beth: The straps that are back...

Susan: ...has leather straps and I mean they were really kind of beautiful, and I think until really I

started to work – they had a stove – pot belly stove...

**Jim: in the station?**

Susan:... in the station. you probably have heard about that, that they actually fed wood so at the time went to the railroad museum – my son was very into trains – and um they had an exhibit on urban transit and we went and it looked and it looked just like the Brown Line! [laughs]

Beth: The Francisco L stop.

**Jim: Do you remember anything else about the station was there a newsstand in there or anything?**

Susan: I don't think so I don't remember a newsstand because they had the grocery store there where people probably bought the paper and people bought papers from the, um, the machines I think they still had machines I don't remember a newsstand.

Beth: Because I remember buying a paper from a machine at Francisco it was 7 cents, so that had to be a long time ago.

Susan: But my mother had the thing about there was a newsstand at uh, Wilson and Kedzie, that was – my parents were very big newspaper readers – I mean serious – especially my father, and, uh, my father this is how Kedzie was back in the day – my father was home with pneumonia so he was home from work for a long period of time and my mother started buying the newspaper every day there at the stand for him at Wilson and Kedzie...

**Jim: At Wilson and Kedzie, quite a ways away?**

Susan: Pardon?

**Jim: Quite a ways away?**

Susan: Yeah, so I don't think there were newspapers too easily, she might have been going to church – she was a big churchgoer, so she might have been going to Our Lady of Mercy – anyway, about a week after buying she got the racing form enclosed in it for her [laughs] her picks!

[laughter]

**Jim: What was on Kedzie? We talked about Montrose, were there any stores you went to**

**on Kedzie, Lawrence?**

Susan: Kedzie was when I was very young here in Ravenswood Manor, Kedzie was like some of the areas like Williamsburg in Brooklyn or something. It was orthodox Jews and you would see the kids and men with the beards and the hats and the kids with the...

**Jim: Mostly on Kedzie?**

Susan: Right. And y'know, we had the Bagel Bakery was there at the time, and Ada's the...

Beth: The delicatessen.

Susan: Yeah. The delicatessen. So it was, um, that's probably when as a very young girl and – taught, of course, very much by my mother – not to say anything or not to, y'know comment on the way people looked, or...they... it was very much frowned on by not just my parents but pretty much everybody like the nuns – you just minded your own business! You lived in a diverse area and you didn't...

Jim: But you kept to yourself?

Susan: Well it wasn't you kept to yourself. You didn't, you weren't there...

Beth: ...to harass people or comment...

Susan: ...harass people or comment. That was really frowned upon by um because it really wasn't...is it's – maybe even more than it is now – it was a very mixed area. I mean lots of different people.

**Jim: Do you remember other languages being spoken or people, older people from different countries? Was there an awareness of that in the neighborhood?**

Beth: I remember Germans,...

Susan: Yeah, I remember that...

Beth: ...this is Beth. People speaking German. And, um, and I remember it vividly, uh, oh god! I can't remember the name of the family but we had a game called Germ Man like germ man – not German – and we were playing this game and this kid burst into tears and went and told his mom that they were calling him German and she said you are a German. No, we're not playing

Germans – we were playing Germ Man and it was you were contaminated if you were touched by the Germ Man.

**Jim: Oh, OK. OK.**

Susan: I mainly remember people speaking German – and that would have been on, I mean y'know davis was a German-language theater I mean it really was a German presence, and in fact when I was touring Orchard House, uh Orchard Street in New York and they were saying they asked the question of what ethnic do you remember an ethnic group growing up different from and German would be what I because most people would said Spanish, I think.

**Jim: Any colorful characters you remember? Or, people you were afraid of in the neighborhood or people who were different or distinctive or had odd pets or...?**

Susan: Well, the man who lived in this house he wasn't distinctive but he was lovely, Mr. Pollack, who owned the house before us.

Jim: This house now?

Susan: This house now, because my brother – when they would play ball in the alley, and they'd be hitting the ball...

Jim: ...this direction...

Susan: ...into people's backyards and there were various reactions to hitting the ball into your backyard. I think even now there would be reactions to that. and he remembers Mr. Pollack, who lived here, as always very nice.

**Jim: A nice man...**

Susan: ...but we had a man who lived in our across the alley actually from us who we as kids called Superman.

Beth: Yeah, I just thought of that.

**Jim: Because?**

Susan: We thought I think he looked like Superman.

Beth: This is Beth. I think because he looked like Clark Kent.

Susan: OK.

Beth: But we'd say 'Hey, Superman!' when he was, and he was single...

Susan: [laughs]

Beth: ... and he used to come by with the kids with his girlfriends, because... 'hey, Superman!' [laughs] ...he wasn't particularly cool or anything it was just his nickname. And then I remember Julian.

**Jim: Julian was?**

Susan: He lived in the house grew up in the house next door to us and he had, um he was developmentally disabled you know he was um, um, and he would walk the dog, I don't even remember the name...

Beth: Candy

Susan: Candy the dog and my brother I have an older brother who hung out with a whole group from the neighborhood there was always y'know 8 guys traveling together and again, verboten never say anything to Julian making fun of Julian was absolutely forbidden your mother you would never see the light of day for ages if your mother with any of the these boys so y'know, and Julian would call the boys by their full name so he'd say to my brother, 'Hello, Frank Newell, and y'know 'Hello Jimmy Pasani', laughs], one of them has a memory of being at the park and making out with his girlfriend probably over at Horner Park sitting down at the bench making out with his girlfriend a teenage all of a sudden someone walks over and says 'hello Jim Pasani!' [laughs] it was Julian. so, uh pets? he was but y'know a nice, a very nice guy but I think it just I think this neighborhood has always been a little like that this and it's that spirit of tolerance and not... um... behaving well towards other people, uh really if there was any lack of tolerance it was almost a lack of—[--interview stops and resumes--]

**Jim: What were your parents' names again?**

Susan: My mother's name was Marian and her maiden name was Glennan and they're Newell and my father was Frank Newell.

**Jim: OK. And we wanted to come back to the idea of parks, so what was the park that you**

**hung out in and what did you do there? We'll start with Beth.**

Beth: Well, we spent a lot of time at Horner Park and, um, one of the things that I did there was um we'd take drama classes. They used to have a little revue with songs, um, vaudeville songs and vaudeville routines. Lady that ran it was Mrs. Minter, and I think she was a chorus girl on Broadway in the 20s. Um, she was an older lady with blond hair and a bow in it and um she would um er just like to sell the song and actually my sister, Susan, and I do a routine from drama school – Me and My Shadow – that, if you were a twin, you would have to do in the show. And, um, we sang another opening we came out there was a black light and it was done at the gym at Horner Park and I remember spending a lot of time at drama. I don't think you took drama.

Susan: Once.

Beth: Once [laughs]

**Jim: What else was taught at Horner Park?**

Susan: Um, they also had a craft uh craft shop in the basement where they allowed children to come learn things like using a lath is that what it's was called?

Beth: I don't know. That was for boys! [laughs]

Susan: You know using a sander, and, um, other tools and, uh, poor Mr. Ross, who was assigned to this craft shop I believe hated children, so he hung in there but I – I do remember both Beth and I remember 'You dumb kids!'

Beth: "You shtoopid, you shtoopids!"

Susan: [laughs]

Beth: And he uh the boys made lamps out of bowling pins that looked pretty much like a bowling pins with a lamp shade...

**Jim: ...with a lamp shade on. What other things would they make?**

Beth: Well, we made, well, Susan made cocktail stirs, and I made keychains I thought everyone needed hundreds of keychains. I mean, I think I gave my grandparents – for their anniversary or something – about 20 keychains and um and they weren't nice. But, nothing I made was nice.



Susan: Well, usually they were clubs you know spades heart clubs the cards. they seemed like inappropriate things for children to be making. [laughs]

**Jim: Did you do anything else in Horner Park besides the fieldhouse?**

Beth: We sled on the hill. I mean the hill was a little more of a hill than it is now but it wasn't much of a hill. Uh, we had picnics there. Um, I don't remember we played softball in the street so I don't remember playing I never played organized ball. but we played softball right outside the house, so we wouldn't bother going to the park.

**Jim: Riverview? Did you go to Riverview?**

Beth: Oh, yes!

Susan: Yeah.

**Jim: ...which is the amusement park farther down the river.**

Beth: Yes. Well, Mrs. Greich [?] who, um, was the mother across the street from us, loved roller coasters and so um, um, one of my memories is of her her riding the fireball with her nephew, Jeffrey, and she rode on the first car 'cause she loved the roller coaster and she came out big smile on her face and he was in tears and he was like he was an older kid for me. I mean he was just a little older than me, but you didn't see Jeffrey in tears. And then my grandmother took us to Riverview. We could do everything we wanted in Riverview we could ride the rides as many times we wanted but there was no Freak Show and no African Dunk. And I don't know what it was called when we went to Riverview but it was a dunk tank with black guys in it and, uh, she would not allow us – she didn't even want us to look at it but I think we looked at it, we looked at the freak show, too.

**Jim: So was it devastating when Riverview closed – or did it seem like it was time for it to close?**

Beth: Oh no, I was devastated!

Susan: Yeah. Riverview played a huge role in our – my father loved Riverview. In fact my father went there the day my older brother was born his first child was born, he went to Riverview.

**Jim: To celebrate it or to avoid it?**

Beth: He said no one was paying attention to him! [laughs]

Susan: [laughing] Because of the birth of his first child! [laughter] But my dad would go and it was always interesting because of course we loved the rides. And my dad would go and he would want to play the games you know – Shoot, Knock Down..., I remember thinking how odd that was that anybody would think that was a reason to go to Riverview.

Beth: And Margaret, my friend from across the street, her grandmother took us to Riverview and she liked all the games of chance, too.

Susan: Yeah!

Beth: ...and they had cars that went around the track...

Susan: Oh! Right!

Beth: ...with live monkeys in them...

Susan: [laughs]

Beth: ... like they were chained in them. i-i, even at the time, thought it was horrible! But she loved all this stuff and picking the ducks and out all that. we didn't go on any rides we just did all this um, um, as I said games of chance things and, um, that wasn't as good as going on the roller coasters.

**Jim: So how would you say the neighborhood has changed over time, you were growing up in the 50s and 60s – how do you think it is for kids today versus how it was then?**

[croaking sound]

Beth: That was not me [laughs] um, quite frankly I don't think Ravenswood Manor has changed that much but the surrounding areas of Ravenswood Manor – one thing I do remember from being a child is I was afraid, um, in certain areas like Uptown, y'know taking the Montrose bus home or taking the L home sometimes it was, um, it was a little dicier than it is now.

**Jim: So the city has gotten a little safer, at least on the north side?**

Beth: The city seems safer to me, yes.

**Jim: But you always felt safe in Ravenswood Manor?**

Beth: I always, yes, I always felt safe in Ravenswood Manor and, in fact, the times we can talk about that there were incidents in Ravenswood Manor are memorable to us because they were unusual.

**Jim: Um, how about neighborhood concerns what have been the issues that, uh...?**

Susan: Well, I think one of the big issues was the closing of the Francisco L stop I believe that was in '67 where they considered closing it and I think Ravenswood Manor along with, uh, Evanston got an injunction y'know like midnight running down to CTA headquarters they gave...

**Jim: so the idea was to close the station so maybe you'd have to walk to Kedzie or Western?**

Susan: Mmhmm, or Rockwell, I suppose. I think that was a huge issue and also there was, issues is I would say, the perception of the decline of the city, houses being divided up into multiple family units, and things like that.

**Jim: And did that happen in the Manor?**

Susan: Y'know, not because they had that very strong neighborhood association. And, uh, they – and even then, I think I think my parents thought they were a little extreme – but they were very aggressively um...

**Jim: So what would they do, what was the neighborhood...?**

Susan: I think that they were always, there were always a lot of lawyers who lived in this neighborhood and they were all y'know they would um y'know knew the right people knew the way to petition, I mean I believe they actually got an injunction against the closing of – within just having just hours to do it y'know like [former Mayor Richard M.] Daley announcing Meigs Field was closing well this was just hours to get it from, y'know, somebody coming through with a bulldozer so, again this might be going into...

**Jim: But always a sense of an active community?**

Susan: Yes. Very much a always a sense of the active community. I mean, um, I even knew who the head of RMIA was and I was just a kid at the time because my parents would talk about them.

**Jim: Was, who was the person?**

Susan: Uh, there was Mr. LaPointe as in LaPointe Park, and then there was Virginia Boyd, who lived on, on...

Beth: Francisco.

Susan: Yeah, lived on Francisco, yeah.

**Jim: Her name has come up as somebody who chased people out of Manor Park when they were playing ball.**

Beth: Yeah, I could see that.

Susan: Yeah. She did other things, too, I mean, I'm not – there were mixed reviews I'm sure. [laughs]

Susan: This is the tribute from my son-in-law who is from New York, born in the Bronx grew up in New Jersey, lives in Brooklyn now, who says – about he and my daughter, his wife – “we are looking for a Ravenswood Manor in New York. That’s our goal.” [laughs]

**Jim: So that’s his model of a neighborhood?**

Susan: Yes, that’s his model, yeah.

**Jim: Good luck in New York.**

Beth: Yeah!

**Jim: How about you, Beth, what do you say because you’ve lived throughout the city, various neighborhoods – what do you tell people?**

Beth: Well, I – the one thing about Ravenswood Manor that, um – people know what Ravenswood Manor is. And, um, it really has an identity, and when I went to college some of my friends thought it was the suburbs and it’s not the suburbs. It has a lot of differences, and one is the transportation, one is the L, and, um, yeah, it was a great place to grow up.

*[--End--]*

