

## The Ravenswood Manor Centennial Oral History Project

### Don and Eileen VALENTIN

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

Interview Date: September 19, 2014

Interviewers: Jim Peters, Jackie Klein

Interview Location: 2825 W Leland Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625

Transcriber: Jackie Klein, 2015

My name is Jim Peters. I am age 62. Today is September 19, 2014. I am in a residence at 2825 West Leland in Chicago. I am the interviewer and I am with the Ravenswood Manor Centennial Research Committee.

My name is Jackie Klein. I am 48. Today is September 19, 2014. I am in a home at 2825 West Leland and I am an interviewer.

My name is Eileen Valentin. I am 76 years old. Today is September 19, 2014. I am in my home at 2825 West Leland and I am a storyteller.

Hi, my name is Don Valentin. I also live at 2825 West Leland. I am 78 years old. The date is September 19, 2014. I am married to Eileen Valentin.

**Jim: Let's start off with your former or current or both occupations, each of you.**

Eileen: Well, I am a retired nurse and I managed the emergency department at St. Elizabeth's hospital for 25 years. I worked there for 10 years before that and it was quite an experience. And I did a lot of that at night and during the day I had 5 children who were a handful. They went to local schools and then I retired 12 years ago.

**Jim: And where was St. Elizabeth?**

Eileen: St. Elizabeth was at 1421 N Claremont, so right near North Avenue and Western.

**Jim: Oh, okay. And you Don?**

Don: I was a printer, color separator really; I was on the photographic end of printing. I've worked in that all my life. At one point I worked at a place by the name of Shaw Graphics. It was at the corner of Kedzie and Wilson. I worked there for 12 years and we lived 4 blocks from there so I walked to work for 12 years. It was wonderful.

**Jim: And have you retired from that?**

Don: I'm retired now for 18 years. I'm 78 now, so I retired when I was 60.

**Jim: Okay**

Don: Printers Union had a good deal.

**Jim: And how long have you two been residents of Ravenswood Manor?**

Eileen: It's about 50 years.

Don: We're married 54 years October 1<sup>st</sup> and we bought our house on Eastwood Avenue in 1964.

**Jim: Okay, and do you remember why you bought in Ravenswood Manor? How did you discover the neighborhood? Any recollection?**

Eileen: The house was owned by a Elroy Sanquist Jr., and he was running for Attorney General for the state of Illinois and a friend of mine was working for the campaign and we had decided that we had \$5,000 saved up and we could buy a house. So, Ann told us about this house and we drove by it and then we really didn't have any awareness of the neighborhood. I didn't have any awareness of the neighborhood, but we drove around the house thinking that if we could not see them then they could not see us. But that was wrong, because the house provides a lot of visual input into what is going on in the whole neighborhood. So we drove by the house frequently for 6 months. But Elroy . . .

Don: But we first made an offer on the house.

Eileen: Of \$23,000 dollars

Don: and he was sick because he was asking \$40,000

**Jim: Oh, he was?**

Eileen: Yes, so he was kind of horrified at that. But, he was busy with his election and he just had an open house, and it was at the end of a dead end street and he didn't have a realtor. He had an open house on Mother's Day, Father's Day, so then Uncle Dick helped us write a letter.

Don: Dick Valentin from the Boys Club.

Eileen: We just really liked the house. Oh, we were crazy about the house it had this big yard and a standing above the ground pool.

**Jim: And what's the address?**

Eileen: 2819 Eastwood.

**Jim: Eastwood, okay.**

Eileen: One day Elroy calls and says, "I give up. It's your house." And then we came up to \$25,000.

**Jim: Good deal!**

Eileen: Oh, it really was and it was a wonderful house. There was room for everybody.

**Jim: And how many kids did you have at the time?**

Eileen: Well, we had three when we moved in and then we had two more so there were 5 kids.

Don: So it was 5 bedrooms and we had 5 kids and it was a wonderful house.

Eileen: It worked out well.

**Jim: And you lived there how many years?**

Eileen: 44 years.

**Jim: 44. And then you moved into this house? Same neighborhood.**

Eileen: Yes.

Don: Same neighborhood. We never left the Manor.

**Jim: And you liked the neighborhood.**

Eileen: Oh, just loved it. An interesting thing was going on when we bought our house and that was the white flight to the suburbs. All our friends were moving out to the 'burbs and they just did not understand us staying in the city at all.

Don: One of our friends told us "why would you want to live by an open sewer?" Now the Chicago River at that time was in pretty bad shape. But we just loved it here and over the years, now I see crew teams going by at three o'clock every afternoon . . . there are two crew teams with 9 people in each boat. It's wonderful.

**Jim: So let's go back to that issue about your friends all leaving for the suburbs. Why did you not?**

Eileen: We just decided that the city was a far more interesting place to be and that they were all involved with driving kids here and there and our kids could walk. We had a park at the end of the block. The train was right there if they were a little older and wanted to go to the Cubs game, they hopped on the train and they were there.

Don: And they went to the Queen of Angels School and they all walked to school.

Eileen: Part of what was going on in the city then too, is there was there was great concern about the older big houses being turned into sleeping room only . . .

Don: In Ravenswood Manor in particular . . .

**Jim: Oh really?**

Eileen: Like the mansion at Eastwood and Manor. The beautiful, beautiful brick house, big brick house. There was such concern that it would be turned into some kind of a flophouse.

Don: Or rooming house.

Eileen: They had the same concern about many of the other bigger, older houses in the neighborhood and we just loved walking around and looking at the old houses.

**Jim: So you never felt this was a neighborhood in decline?**

Eileen: No. We knew that there was a possibility and the scariest thing happened after we were in the house about two days. A woman from the Ravenswood Manor Improvement Association rings the doorbell to ask us to join the Association. But she told us the mid-town expressway was going to come along the River and that our house was smack dab in the middle of it and that's why nobody else wanted to buy it, because it was going to be torn down. But fortunately that never happened.

**Jim: And do you remember actually getting involved in that fight to not have the put the expressway there?**

Don: There never really was a fight.

Eileen: It just didn't happen. It sort of just . . . the whole issue just went away.

**Jim: And the issue was the expressway, which would have connected up at McCormick down to the Kennedy, would have gone right along the River.**

Eileen: Yes.

Don: I never really heard anybody else talking about it. But she really did . . .

**Jim: But she knew about it.**

Eileen: She knew about it and the Association knew about it, but at that point in time we just really joined the Association and it was not quite the active group that it is now. It gradually, very shortly, became a very active group when the CTA wanted to make a choice between closing Francisco or the Kedzie station people were out there with counters to see how many people got on the train, how many people got off the train and that's how we held on to the Francisco station. So the RMIA was probably an active force from almost the day we moved into Eastwood.

**Jim: And is your sense of the neighborhood that there was fear at that time or were people leaving, but did it ever go down and come back up or was it pretty stable the whole time. I wondered, Don, because . . .**

Don: I never felt in this neighborhood, the people that Eileen was talking about, this fear, were in other areas around the city. Most of them moved to the suburbs but in this neighborhood I always felt a very warm, welcoming thing and the people did not seem to have that fear.

**Jim: Okay. So let's talk about some of the stores you went to, because you came in here and you were already a family established and things, so where did you grocery shop? Where did you get skates sharpened or lawnmowers?**

Don: We both, I know, would say the same thing, but there was a butcher's shop right by the L track, right by the L station. What was the name of it again?

Eileen: I think it was Manor Grocery, but Ben & Dorothy . . .

**Jim: Ben and Dorothy . . . Was Ben the butcher?**

Eileen: Yes.

Don: Ben was the butcher. And they were wonderful people, and oh my god, they would get any kind of cut of meat for you. Eileen would make a Italian beef roast and then she would take the roast over to Ben and he would slice it up into paper-thin slices for Italian beef. And he would always tell Eileen, "I have to do this the very last thing at night because it would . . . cleaning rules . . . "

Eileen: Because cleaning the slicer.

**Jim: So you had a neighborhood butcher. Which is pretty remarkable. There's not many neighborhoods that have one.**

Don: And half a block from our house . . .

Eileen: And they watched out for the kids in the neighborhood. Our darling Marybeth, she was just a daredevil and she learned that when the gate is down . . .

**Jim: On the train. For the train . . .**

Eileen: When the gate went up, if you could hang on there long enough and jump down. So Dorothy calls me one day, and she's so polite, and she said, "I hope I'm not interfering, but I think you should know what Marybeth is doing." I told her I really appreciated her information very, very much. It was such a dangerous thing to do.

**Jim: So Ben was the butcher and Dorothy ran the place?**

Eileen: Yes, they pretty much they worked together. Then Don had been in a car accident and our youngest daughter, Susie, had a kinda nasty cut down the side of her face, and we were very concerned about it. And so . . .

**Jim: So, how long did they stay there? They were there in '64 when you moved?**

Don: They were probably there ten years, anyway.

**Jim: And do you think they closed because they simply retired or had the need for a grocery . . .**

Don: I think they were retiring and no one else was interested in taking up the business, so . . .

**Jim: Do you remember any of the other stores around Manor Park?**

Don: Well, the ballet school was there on the first day we moved in.

**Jim: Oh, that's when they opened?**

Don: No, they were there already. I don't know how long before 1964.

**Jim: That had been a pharmacy prior to that.**

Don: Oh really?

**Jim: Yeah.**

Don: On the corner?

**Jim: On the corner.**

Don: Okay. And our daughters, all three of our daughters, took ballet lessons there. It was wonderful. Mr. LaPointe.

Eileen: Arthur

Don: Arthur LaPointe, and Kitty LaPointe, and they were very proper people. A few times we invited them over for coffee in the evening because, with our kids all taking ballet lessons there we got to be good friends with them. And, the one time we were talking and, what's the name?

Eileen: Arthur

Don: and Art said to me, "you know how I met my, Kitty, he said I was an airline pilot in the early days of aviation in the 1930s and she was my wing walker. I used to, in Chicago, I'd put on shows in the different neighborhoods. There was an airfield at Western and Grace. A small airfield and he would take off from there and she was the wing walker. I guess that was there first interest in ballet.

**Jim: And then I think he ended up, he taught aviation at Lane Tech for many years.**

Eileen: Yeah.

Don: Ah, was it Lane Tech or the . . .

Eileen: the Chicago Vocational?

Don: Yeah.

Eileen: . . . high school on the south side?

Don: Yeah and in fact he told us one story that during WWII he was teaching aviation in the high school and it was on Ashland Avenue and they finished an airplane. They had an old beat up old thing and the students kept working on it, and when they finished the plane they closed off Ashland Avenue and the students lined up the two sides of the street and he took off in the plane and landed at Midway Airport.

**Jim: So what other stores? Where did you go for groceries? Or clothing? Clothing the kids?**

Eileen: Well, actually, Sears was probably . . .

**Jim: Oh, over on Lawrence?**

Eileen: And in Lincoln Square, the Small Fry's shop. But my daughters didn't want to go in the Small Fry's shop and buy ordinary things. They wanted to go to Brown's Jewelry. They called it the trinket store. They thought it was far more exciting to buy trinkets.

**Jim: And would that have been on Lawrence?**

Eileen: That was on Lincoln.

Don: It's still there today, Brown's Jewelry.

Eileen: The Brown's Jewelry, but not the Small Fry's shop is long gone. It was convenient.

Don: And we bought the kids shoes at . . .

Eileen: at Brumlich's

Don: On Lincoln Avenue. Brumlich's . . . they're all gone.

**Jim: Any tailors, drycleaners?**

Eileen: Well, the Manor Cleaners was still there and there was an old guy . . .

**Jim: Tepper? Was this Mr. Tepper?**

Eileen: Yes, Mr. Tepper. And he was bent in half. He had terrible back problems, and he would go over to the grocery store to get something, a sandwich, something they would fix for him, and he would go back to the cleaners and the kids were just fascinated with how he could walk that bent over.

Don: And we would have our shoes repaired. In those days people did get their shoes repaired rather than replace them. But there was a place called the Shoemaker Meister on Lincoln Avenue. A wonderful old German name.

Eileen: There was another . . . let's see, there was the cleaners, the ballet school, the cleaners, there is something I am missing?

**Jim: How about any other stores? Wasn't there a petroleum store?**

Eileen: There was a Texaco office there that belonged to the Miller family that lived in the mansion at Eastwood and Manor.

**Jim: The big house on the east side of Manor.**

Eileen: Yes. And they were there for quite a while, and during the Christmas season, they had an organ and they would play Christmas carols.

Don: It was a pipe organ.

Eileen: Yes.

**Jim: Really. So you could here it on the street, the Christmas songs.**

Eileen: That didn't last for long because they died shortly after we moved in.

**Jim: And what did they sell? Or it was just their office?**

Eileen: It was just an office.

**Jim: Okay. It's not like they sold Texaco products.**

Eileen: No, it was just an office. I think maybe that is all I remember.

**Jim: Okay, and this is very close to the L station. Don, any memories of the L station?**

Don: Well I worked downtown and Collins, Miller & Hutchings and I would take the train every morning and it was wonderful because it had a cast iron coal-burning stove in the station and they didn't have very many of them at the stations along the route. I remember that once a week there was a work train that went through there and they'd stop and they'd deliver coal. They'd keep it in bins inside of the station, but it was very comfortable. Well, now they don't have any heat.

**Jim: Was there any recognition of what coal was. Had things switched over yet?**

Don: It's funny, but our son Joe, at that time people were all switching to natural gas, there really wasn't any coal being burned at home, and he wanted to know what coal looked like so we took him over there a few times. He was probably three.



**Jim: So, how did you, you were raising kids so I know socializing and parties were probably not high on your list, but what did adults do in the Manor? Did they get together? Were there parties?**

Eileen: No, there was not the tendency to have block parties. This is the party block of the Manor, I think, but there wasn't that sort of thing.

Don: There was an annual meeting, and the Garden Club existed, and you know, getting back to when we just moved into the neighborhood, a lady came to our door once day with a petition for us to sign. Now, we had five kids already and she wanted us to sign a petition because she was horrified that someone had suggested we put playground equipment in the park at Manor and she had printed up a petition and wanted us to sign it.

**Jim: She was against . . .**

Don: She was opposed to it. She was horrified with it.

Eileen: Yes.

**Jim: And why was she horrified with it?**

Eileen: Because modern mothers don't pay any attention to their children. They're going to let them run out into the street and be killed.

**Jim: Oh, so this would be an attraction for kids.**

Don: That's right.

Eileen: Yes, yes.

Don: Yes, and we invited her in and introduced her to our five kids and then I said we really wouldn't be interested in signing something like that.

**Jim: So, did she have kids?**

Eileen: No, not that I knew of. It was Virginia Boyd.

**Jim: Oh, and she was the secretary or treasurer of the Manor . . .**

Eileen: Yeah. And she had white gloves and a little hat. Very proper, telling me what useless people modern mothers were.

**Jim: Well I think, because there had been the community center in the park that got torn down in '57 . . .**

Eileen: Yes.

**Jim: And I think they were used to having gardens and passive recreation.**

Eileen: Yes. Virginia wanted to plant some more trees, so the children would not be playing ball in the park.

Don: You know, there were not that many children in the neighborhood at that time.

Eileen: No, there were very few children.

Don: That was something that, with our five kids there was nobody on the block for them to play with.

Eileen: Yeah, the Wilkes had two kids, no three kids. And the Yamati family. Now their house has been torn down and it's just a vacant lot on Eastwood. It's just a vacant lot, the second house . . .

**Jim: Oh yeah, that was a big house.**

Eileen: Yeah, so those kids were there. In the summer the kids played out in the alley and played tag and stuff like that.

**Jim: So if there weren't kids, who were your neighbors? Were there elderly people, childless couples?**

Eileen: Yes. Our next door neighbor Mrs. Cook. I'm from a large family and Don's Uncle Dick used to come over quite often and when we moved in she was kind of upset with us. It took me a little while to find out that she thought we were running a business because we had so many people coming and going from the house but they were my sisters and their kids and my brother Vincent lived at 4426.

**Jim: So it was a more sedate, quite neighborhood.**

Eileen: Yes it was, definitely.

**Jim: So do you get the sense that there were just people that had lived here a long time?**

Eileen: Yes.

Don: Mrs. Cook, who I had mentioned, out next door neighbor, she was in her 80s at that time, and she told us that people in the Manor always leave feet first. And she was proud of that and she indeed did leave feet first.

**Jim: People in the Manor leave feet first.**

Don: Yeah.

**Jim: So, they basically buy and stay there until they die.**

Don: Yeah, and her husband was a professional baseball player and he would be in Florida and they would go to Florida for I suppose, it was professional ball, but it was never . . .

**Jim: This is Mrs. Cook's husband?**

Don: Yeah, but she came back to Chicago and they lived in that house for years. Next door to us.

Eileen: And she was so happy to come back to Chicago because she hated the bugs in Florida.

**Jim: In Florida.**

Eileen: And then next to her was Mr. Woodson and he used to go on a rattlesnake hunt to Oklahoma every Summer and one day he brought all these rattlesnake skins for our kids to see. He was so proud of these things.

Don: And he had a movie projector showing him catching rattlesnakes in Oklahoma.

Eileen: He was describing this whole thing.

Don: He was originally from Oklahoma.

**Jim: And wasn't there on Eastwood, not far from you, Little Al, Al Temener.**

Eileen: Oh, Little Al. John Freedman lives in that house now.

**Jim: So what do you remember? Little Al owned a chain of record stores.**

Don: Little Al owned a chain of record shops. Nice man, but one time, shortly after we moved in the house, again, I was upstairs taking a shower and Eileen yelled up to me, "There's something wrong, come down quick." So I put something on and Eileen was already out in the street. Al Temener, Little Al, had been shot.

**Jim: Shot?**

Don: Yeah, shot in front of his house. The river house on Eastwood Avenue.

Eileen: Well, he used to go to the county jail and hire people that were leaving jail, so that they would have a job. He was a very benevolent kind of guy.

**Jim: So is that one of the people who shot him?**

Eileen: Well they think that's what happened.

Don: We never found out for sure, but he was laying there in the street and Eileen immediately went out there, with her being a nurse she never would leave anybody laying there and the story was that this guy came up, he was wearing a mask, and he told Al to get in the house. Well that house that Al lived in was three rows of brick thick and if he got him in the

house, where Al said his wife was also, there was no telling what would happen. So, he was sprinkling out in front when this guy approached him so he turned the garden hose on him and the guy shot him.

Eileen: He just shot him in the thigh.

**Jim: He shot him in the leg?**

Don: But he never forgot Eileen. He said she came out there and risked her life.

**Jim: Wasn't there also a fire in his house?**

Eileen: Yes. After Dora died, he was going to make breakfast one morning, and it just got to be too much for him, so he just closed the door and he was going over to that restaurant at Lawrence and Kedzie and the pot that he left on the stove started to burn.

Don: And we smelled the smoke, remember?

Eileen: And he had all kinds of parrots. I forget now who called the fire department.

Don: Well I called the fire department, but the fire department got there and were able to put out, it had not spread beyond his kitchen, but he had five parrots and the parrots all died.

Eileen: He was so . . .

Don: He was so sick over that.

**Jim: And he's also the guy who had Bernardo, right, the St. Bernard.**

Eileen: Yes, the Saint Bernard and his next-door neighbor, Mrs. Ogden, hated that dog. Well, Al didn't believe in cleaning up the yard where his dog was pooping and there were mountains of poop and the . . .

**Jim: From a St. Bernard, you could imagine.**

Eileen: . . . and the flies and all the rest of it. That was an ongoing battle with Mrs. Ogden and Little Al.

**Jim: So, you lived close to the river, you mentioned people warned you that it was an open sewer. Do you want to talk about . . . did you let your kids go down to the river.**

Eileen: Yes. Well . . .

Don: We'd let them go to the bridge on Wilson.

Eileen: We'd feel, when that . . .

Don: Randy Alman, remember he got . . . Randy Alman our neighbor directly across the street . . .

Eileen: There was a cement supply place down the river . . .

Don: Oh . . . Material Service . . .

Eileen: Yes. And they used to have big barges that would go down the river and you could feel the ground shaking and hear them coming long before you saw them. So during this summer the kids had run down and the Captain of this barge would blow his horn for them and that was the excitement of the day and they just really enjoyed it. But, Randy . . .

Don: Well, Randy Alman, he was like 15 years old who lived across the street and he got a rowboat with an outboard motor on it and his mother came over one day and he had asked our so Joe, who was 5 at the time, if he wanted to go for a ride with him. And his mother had said, "Well obviously Mrs. Valentin won't let him go." but Eileen thought it would be wonderful if Joe got to go for a ride in the Chicago River with Randy.

Eileen: Well he had a little jacket, a life jacket . . .

Don: She goes just make sure he has a good life jacket, because I think we bought the life jacket, and Randy's mother was sort of horrified that we allowed this, but he knew how to swim.

Eileen: And Randy took you to work a couple of times.

Don: I worked right at Lake Street and right by the Chicago River at Lake Street downtown and one time I told the guys at work that I was going to be coming by water and I got some white tennis shoes and Randy drove me to work. There's a dock right there at Lake Avenue and I just walked up the stairs and went to work.

**Jim: So you have used the river to commute.**

Don: Yeah, it's about 25 minutes very slow on a boat.

**Jim: But the kids never swam or played around . . .**

Don: No.

Eileen: No.

**Jim: How about parks. Did they go down to Horner Park? Did you ever go to any of the parks?**

Eileen: Yes, and I clearly remember going to the park when Abe Saperstein's team, the Harlem Globetrotters, did some practicing at Horner Park. Now my son Joe has not recollection of being there, but I know he was there.

**Jim: Horner Park was pretty new when you moved in.**

Eileen: Yes.

Don: Yeah, Horner Park, when I was a child Horner Park was a brickyard. No, I'm sorry, when my dad was a child, Horner Park was a brickyard and he used to tell me stories that they would go to Horner Park and watch them make bricks. Now my dad was born in 1904, so probably 1910. And then when I was a kid, Horner Park was a garbage dump. The very deep clay pit that they had from the bricks . . .

**Jim: They just dumped the garbage in it . . .**

Don: But they made it a garbage dump and then when I was probably 12 years old, there used to . . . on California Avenue, a few blocks from Horner Park, there was a corrugated metal fence about two stories high all the way along, then they tore it down and decided to make a park. It took years and years, very slowly filling it all in and starting to plant trees.

**Jim: And then the reason the mountain or hill is there is that is garbage?**

Don: Yeah.

Eileen: Yeah.

**Jim: And has it indeed shrunk since the time you remember?**

Don: I know that on the river side the ground has caved in quite a bit.

Eileen: I remember going to the ceremony when the old Mayor Daley . . .

Don: The original . . .

Eileen: . . . the original Mayor Daley dedicated the park to old Governor Horner.

**Jim: Oh, okay.**

Eileen: So, they had a band and quite a celebration.

**Jim: So, Don, you mentioned that you remember this and your dad does, did your family, before you moved to the Manor did you grow up in Chicago?**

Don: I grew up, My dad was born on Bell Avenue right next to St. Benedict's Church on Irving Park and Bell. I was born there and my dad never left that house. He was there all of his life, he died at 97 and when I married Eileen 54 years ago on the first of October I lived there until we got married. My dad tells me the story that probably in 1909 or 1910 they built St. Benedict's church and he used to comment that he lived to see a landing on the moon and he said when they built the foundation and the basement at St. Benedict's church they used horses to dig the hole. The horses would plough and he was used to be amazed that he saw a man land on the moon from the St. Benedict's church basement that was dug with horses.

**Jim: And how about you Eileen, did you grow up in Chicago?**

Eileen: Yes, St. Gertrude's parish near Granville, 1400 on Granville. We used to take the kids to the Hild Library when it was the Hild Library and they had story hour.

**Jim: Which is now where the Old Town School of Music is.**

Eileen: Yes, and when McFetridge sports facility was going to be built, of course there are always people saying oh this is going to bring all sorts of horrible people to the neighborhood. There are going to be sleeping in the park and all kinds of terrible things are going to happen and we went to the rallies for that, in favor of . . .

**Jim: In favor of building McFetridge.**

Eileen: Yes, our kids took skating lessons there and tennis lessons.

**Jim: This is amazing. So there were people fighting parks.**

Eileen: Oh, yes.

Don: Oh yes, a very organized group fighting and Dick Valentin from the Neighborhood Boys Club, he was instrumental and brought large groups from the Boys Club, now the Boys and Girls Club to the meetings in favor of the sports and I think he had a lot to do with it being allowed to open.

**Jim: Uh huh . . .**

Eileen: And Welles Park, when they put in the beautiful swimming pool for the Pan American Games. I don't remember what year that was, but . . .

**Jim: That was in the 60s . . .**

Eileen: . . . but that was quite an addition, a nice facility.

**Jim: Do you think this had a lot to do because Kelly was from the neighborhood?**

Eileen: Oh yes.

**Jim: And Kelly who was the Park Superintendent.**

Don: Very instrumental in the ice-skating rink in California Park, for sure. He was a very active person helping the Boys Club. He was the administrator of the entire Chicago Park District at that time.

**Jim: All right, I understand there was a character who called herself Anastasia. Could you talk about her and how she got the neighborhood kids involved in things?**

Eileen: Well, she lived in a basement apartment in the building at Eastwood and Manor and whenever she saw some kids playing in the park she would go out and get them to help her clean up the park. She convinced them that she was Anastasia of the Romanoff family in Russian and that she was a princess and that she had a crown, but she couldn't bring the crown outside. So the kids would do anything for her to listen to her stories about her crown and Russia.

**Jim: So, that was mainly it, because they wanted to hear her stories. Did she have a Russian accent?**

Eileen: No. I talked with her a couple times and I didn't detect any accent, but she was just a sweet, nice woman and she really took good care of the park.

**Jim: Oh, that's good. And there was also a woman, Mrs. Peters, who lived near the park? What was her role?**

Eileen: Well, Mrs. Peters lived on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the same building and Mrs. Peters was a widow that again just sort of looked out for the kids in the neighborhood, what was going on. Well when our daughter, Susie, was going to the Disney School, Mrs. Peters would be in her 3<sup>rd</sup> floor window and if the bus had come early or if we missed the bus . . .

**Jim: The school bus?**

Eileen: . . . she would open the window and let me know the school bus had left already. And it was a big help to me because I wasn't standing there waiting for a bus that was not going to come.

**Jim: Now, did she leave the Manor feet first also, Don?**

Don: It was sort of sad, Mrs. Peters left in a way she wouldn't have wanted to, probably, because one day our son Carl was home, he was probably 15 or 16, and being on a dead-end street you don't expect to see a car coming past your house going 50 miles an hour. It was Mrs. Peters in the car and she hit a tree right by the river. Unfortunately she was dead as soon as Carl got to the car.

**Jim: And perhaps had a heart attack?**

Don: Eileen thinks she was probably dead before she ever hit the tree and that's probably why she accelerated.

**Jim: And was that common that people driving down the dead end that dead end's at the river not know it?**

Eileen: Yes. People just weren't aware there was no bridge there and they would zoom down and slam on the brakes and turn around and go back. There were a few people that weren't able to quite do that. We don't know of anyone that actually went into the water, but there was a woman that hit our car that was parked on Eastwood early on a Christmas morning. Unfortunately the car didn't survive, but she was fine. Another time during the night somebody had been in some kind of accident and apparently they had knocked on a couple of doors.



Don: Well they had hit the barricade by the river.

Eileen: We didn't hear anyone, we didn't hear anything, but Dr. Alman, he was an optometrist, and his wife across the street from us heard this person seeking some kind of help and they took care of him.

Don: But there was a trail of blood between three other houses. The man survived.

Eileen: Yeah, he was okay.

**Jim: So as a nurse you saw a lot of life and death things on a dead end street.**

Eileen: . . . on a dead end street. It is amazing how much happens on a dead end street.

**Jim: So I also understand your kids have been in textbooks. Could you explain that? They were illustrated in various textbooks?**

Eileen: Phil Renault was an illustrator for the Scotts-Foreman textbook company.

Don: He lived on Leland right across from us.

Eileen: When Marybeth was about 12 he asked if Marybeth and some other kids in the neighborhood could pose for him just running in the park and he snapped some pictures and then he did some pencil sketches in textbooks.

**Jim: He's a very well known artist and displayed at Palette and Chisel and other places.**

Eileen: Yes and when he died Palette and Chisel had a gallery opening for him and his pictures were all hung in there and it was very nice.

**Jim: So what's your favorite thing about living in Ravenswood Manor?**

Eileen: I think the opportunities the children have to interact with each other, to take advantage of the many, many programs the parks and libraries and also the advantage of being able to pick a school that matches the child's needs. Our daughter Susie needed some special education for a while and she was able to go to Disney. Carl was a smarty-pants, and he went to Whitney Young for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade program. At one point in time some of the kids went to St. Benedicts but they started out at Queen of Angels.

**Jim: So they went to all different schools.**

Eileen: And I hate to think of it as the only school that would take them, but they all were different people,

Don: At one point there were 5 kids in 5 different schools.

**Jim: Wow.**

Eileen: But, I think that's one of the huge opportunities around here. Lane Tech and North Side College Prep and Lakeview is kind of a hidden jewel of a high school. And now that Waters is the school for Ravenswood Manor and we're able to put, input into that school and do some things for it like funding a play or a musical.

**Jim: So you made a good decision 50 years ago?**

Eileen: Yes.

**Jim: To move into this neighborhood.**

Eileen: Yes.

**Jim: When everyone else was fleeing to the suburbs . . .**

Eileen: Yes, to the cookie cutter, everything the same. But that's what they felt they wanted to do and we did what we wanted to do and we've been very happy with it.

**Jim: Thank you.**

*[--End--]*