

Judy Waxman Well, good morning. This is Judy Waxman. Hi. I'm here with Elizabeth. We are in Washington, D.C., and it's January 6th. A momentous day. Elizabeth, can you tell us when and where you were born?

Elizabeth I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in May 1942.

Judy Waxman Right. And, you know, while we are going to focus on the village, the Cleveland Park and Woodley Park Village, I do want to ask you some questions about your activities prior to that. So can you tell me a little about sort of your childhood, your siblings - maybe influences that led you to become the person you are?

Elizabeth Well, I think one of the most significant happened when I was 15. I lived in Cleveland, Ohio. My older brother had gone to college and my parents died in a plane crash. And so from then on, I didn't have what you'd call a steady home. I was very fortunate that my best friend and her family welcome welcomed me until we...I finished high school there. And actually, from then on, I mean, it was my Cleveland base and they became my my family ~~there~~.

Judy Waxman Wow.

Elizabeth So let's see. So then I went off to college. I went to Wellesley. I went to Africa for five years with I got married and went to Africa for five years with my husband, with the Peace Corps. Yeah. And I mean, he was a Peace Corps country director. I was a tagalong, but, you know, I was free without any other family to do what I wanted. And it was a marvelous experience for me. A big, big experience for me, of course.

Judy Waxman Yeah.

Elizabeth We came came back to Washington and have lived here ever since. Well, it was almost a year in Schenectady, New York, for another job that he had. But I have a degree in social work from Catholic University. Had two children along the way of getting that degree. And I think it was a little bit just circumstance my first job had to do with older people, and that's what I stuck with ever since. So I had served several jobs and the most, the longest lasting and most significant, which you would know, I think, because of where you live, is that I was the director of Iona Senior Services.

Judy Waxman In DC?

Elizabeth Yeah. Did I say...Did I tell you that I lived in Africa for five years with Tom.

Judy Waxman Yeah. Wow. Where were you In Africa?

Elizabeth In Burkina Faso.

Judy Waxman Really? Wow.

Elizabeth In the western side of. Of a coastal province. We were actually. Burkina Faso was never a coastal. But first we were in Togo. Togo, which is. And then we were in two different countries and had two different experiences, which was pretty wonderful.

Judy Waxman Wow. So then. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Elizabeth Just that that that led to a job for Tom in Washington with Peace Corps. And we've been here almost ever since.

Judy Waxman And you, you did not live in Cleveland Park when you first moved here. Is that right?

Elizabeth No. We lived near 16th Street. We moved here then after our children were, I don't know, like five and eight or something like that. We've been here ever since.

Judy Waxman Wow. So tell me about your job at Iona, and how did you get that or what made you interested in working with seniors?

Elizabeth Well, I've I felt when we came back and even before we came back from Africa, that I needed a more practical kind of education to move forward in my life. And I assumed I would be working in some way. And so I went to social work school and I, for a masters, and I had two placements with them. I think the first one was just I don't know if it was based on anything, but anyway, it was with an old program in Prince George's County for seniors. And then I had another placement here with inner city D.C. senior services. And then when I got the degree, I became the director of Iona and did that for many years. I don't know if that fully answered your question, but.

Judy Waxman Well, it sounds like you it sounds like it was your calling. But once you got into it, this was the place for you. Was that right?

Elizabeth Yes, I would say so. And it I just because of the nature of your sort of broad take on who I am, I have often thought that maybe it wasn't just that's where I got my first placement. Maybe it had to do with not having any parents after being 15.

Judy Waxman Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah. In that thing. So. Well, what year did you move to Cleveland Park? Do you remember?

Elizabeth I'd have to start writing things down to get a better...

Judy Waxman I know this is.

Elizabeth I guess we first we lived near 16th Street on and Crestwood. If you know that neighborhood for a long time. And then we moved to Cleveland Park. And hiw long ago? Maybe that was... Well, I can think about the children being in school. Yeah, I think we. We moved here 20 years ago or so.

Judy Waxman Okay. Okay.

Elizabeth More or more.

Judy Waxman Or more. And. And what made you come to Cleveland Park?

Elizabeth I knew a lot of people here. We went to the Unitarian Church on 16th Street. From. And not right away, but from early on. And I met more people, not just from Cleveland Park, but from Northwest Washington and I. Well, we had we had various reasons. We met several people who lived in Cleveland Park both Tom's job not so much

my job, but his job. I think there were people here and there were people we knew from other, I think maybe college or something like that. So.

Judy Waxman So it seemed like a logical place. And did it meet your expectations at the time? The neighborhood? Yes.

~~**Elizabeth** Yes, in me. In all ways, except that we had moved to,~~ we bought a house near 16th Street on purpose because it was a very racially mixed neighborhood. And I knew by the time we moved to Cleveland Park that it wasn't so mixed. And that was a hard thing to cope with. But there was the metro, there were the schools, there were, you know, and things that suited our family.

Judy Waxman Right.

Elizabeth So we went ahead and did that. But. My jobs to have because I wanted very much to continue to have a wider group of social opportunities and people that I would know, my work has always included a wide part of a lot of diverse people and neighborhoods in DC.

Judy Waxman Indonesia.

Elizabeth Particularly, and particularly in Northeast D.C. I started a housing program there.

Judy Waxman Let me hear about that. What was the housing program?

Elizabeth I was. I think right now I can't recall who. Somebody on the city council whom I had gotten to know because of my advocacy work when I was, you know, a student at getting my degree master's in social work. Somebody told me that I might like to talk to a certain professor at Catholic University who, you know, was connected with a lot of community and church groups. Aside from the good. So I just talked to some of those people and they said they thought that the hard program for seniors was and because Northeast has a more mixed. Yeah. Older people there have more mixed backgrounds than they do here and north northwest. And so I interviewed people. I learned about the neighborhoods. I talked to some of the churches there. And I ended up working under a grant funded program that Catholic Charities had won. But, you know, after I was already kind of doing my research, I found out that they were working on that. So I tried to help with getting them the funding. Not that I knew much, but I worked on it. And then they did get the funding and then that gave me the opportunity to shape it. And it was a housing program for people who couldn't afford to live where they did. So that's what I worked on. And as well as all and some of those Catholic churches were extremely enthusiastic about it, had tremendous help from them. And it just went on from there. And I've been I was the only staff person in the beginning, and then I was the director for maybe 10, 15 years. I could have prepared better for this interview if I tried to do a little history, write it down, but so that I actually, you know, hired other people. And the program we got, Marion Barry, was whom I had met when I was in school because I interviewed him and did some things with him afterwards. He introduced me to some of the priests at the Catholic churches there because I was hired by Catholic Charities. And so I don't know if that really answered your question.

Judy Waxman But anyway, it sounds fabulous.

Elizabeth I did that for many for many years. But then I felt that was probably not going to grow more. It was pretty steady and I didn't necessarily need to be the, you know, the first person didn't need to continue forever and be the Director so there's only a very few staff with this program. So somebody else took that over and I was hired by Iona to be their director.

Judy Waxman I see. That was before Iona. Great. Yeah, we probably have a lot in common stuff. My son does affordable housing in Boston, in the Northeast. So let's talk about the village and what gave you the idea for that? How did that start?

Elizabeth I knew you were going to ask that question. I cannot remember. I read about it because I tried to keep up somewhat. By that time, I had clearly stamped myself, as had others, as somebody focused on the older population of Washington. Right. So it wasn't a new idea, but I might have been one of the first ones in Washington to learn much about it. And it just seemed ready made for Cleveland Park, because by that time, I sort of had a pretty good sense of the demography of Washington, where the more services were needed and so on and so forth. And I somewhat surprised because I thought of this part of Washington as having people being able to take care of what whatever services they needed. And I realized that was naive of me and and I and there was publicity coming up about, at least in the population or the new news and stuff of the kind of sort of publications that older people would read that in different cities that different things were happening in that kind of thing. So and I knew that the city, of those who were focused on older people in the city, also by the fact that I had needed to try to improve things when I had other jobs. And so I, you know, the very beginnings are really not clear to me because people that I knew to some extent, I'm talking about a handful of people and maybe a few that I was then introduced to said, oh let's do that. We can do that. I know so-and-so and this person will be really good and we can get this church to help us and we can, you know. So it was sort of like a beginning of what I had already done in Northeast. But that program was actual physical housing. And the village was your lifestyle and your quality of life and so on. So and it would be my neighbors in a broad sense. So I guess I just made it my business to meet more people who maybe could be, you know, interested in developing this. So I forget how old the village is, but I could find obviously I could get some answers to you if you don't have them.

Judy Waxman Right? Well, when I talk to your daughter setting this up, she said that your friend Barbara Stevens was involved. And it was a great story about how you reconnected with her.

Elizabeth From college days. Yes.

Judy Waxman Yeah. So let's hear about that.

Elizabeth Barbara and I were good friends, both leaders of, you know, the college government and that kind of thing at Wellesley. And then I went away, went to Africa, and she went several places, and we both got married and had children and so on. And one day I walked down the street to a neighbor that I knew a little bit who was having an open house for her neighbor, and the neighbor was Barbara. So we had been quite good, very close, because we both had, you know, leadership positions and had to work together at Wellesley. And we looked at each other like we just couldn't believe this had happened. We hadn't stayed in touch or anything, but we were very, you know, compatico. And so that was that was a huge joke. On the other hand, she didn't know much about Washington. She was just moving here because of a new husband. So she was very

happy to learn more about Washington. And I was very happy to have someone who had so many skills, which I knew already from college.

Judy Waxman So great. So what did you do to get it started?

Elizabeth Talk to our neighbors. Held some introduction to what is a village at the library and some churches and those Adas Israel was very supportive. And of course, at that time I was working at Iona and they, they were very helpful. They, I mean, they didn't necessarily know I was going to go leave them and go start something on my own, but, but they still were very helpful. And so I. We held, I collected 2 or 3 other people who agreed to introduce it to people who could be helpful and that kind of thing. So that went on for a year or so that we had coffees and so on, and then we just started making lists of people who were really interested. And I went to a conference. By that time, this concept of villages was starting to be written up in the paper. I already knew about it. This funny somebody in from I think it was probably somebody from my class at college sent me an article from the Boston paper about two women who had started something exactly like a village in Boston. And it became very well-known because it was picked up by a lot of papers, including, I guess, well, anyway, somebody sent that to me and I said, good, we'll talk to them. They've already done this. And I did. And it seemed like everything fell into place. So Barbara, I said, Barbara, you are really a good leader. Why don't you be the president? So she did because she didn't know anybody much. She was new in town.

Judy Waxman Yeah.

Elizabeth She had, you know, had done similar things in her past. So. So she had a lot of the energy, the ideas that sticktoitness, this and and so on. She didn't have children as young as mine. You know, we're not in elementary and maybe beginning in sort of junior high level. And so as I met people, I went to like people who lived in apartments. I went to their tenant meetings and or co-ops and those kinds of things. And Barbara and I and then a few other people, we didn't have a formal board, but we had people that were interested in doing some manage or, you know, planning growth type opportunities, activities. So we did that for, I don't know, six months or something like that. Excuse me. Let me just...my phone says that Barbara Stevens is calling me. She doesn't live here. She has no idea I'm talking to you or even where I am. She called my phone. That's very funny.

Judy Waxman What kind of what did you do? Like, what activities Once you got going and you had members, what activities did you do?

Elizabeth Well, the most pressing was transportation. I mean, you can you can get to a lot of places on the bus and and the metro here. But if you can't, if you're not very mobile, you know, you're going to have to pay for a taxi. So to go, you know, downtown to a doctor or off to this or something. So. So that was the first thing. That was clearly what people want. We went to some of the like tenant meetings and and we also went to some citizen association meetings and so on to try to see who was interested. Did they think this was needed in that neighborhood. We did that for, I don't know, maybe up to six months, I would say, as a way to both publicize it, look for leaders, and try to shape what was, you know, what we really wanted to have volunteers do.

Judy Waxman Right. And so what what kind of transportation plan did you come up with?

[00:21:29] **Elizabeth** Well, we we knew we needed a coordinator, so I can't even remember where at the first place it was at somebody's house. But pretty quickly we said,

we're going to have a place where people can come to learn more and to, you know, develop the program and so on. And not just different living rooms of the people who are on the small board. And it wasn't much of a board. And so we we basically laid out a proposal for some foundations and raised enough money to hire a part-time director.

Judy Waxman And.

Elizabeth And then from over the next five years, we were able to rent a office space at an apartment building on Connecticut. And we've been in that same space ever since, fortunately. Yeah, it's sort of right at Porter and Connecticut.

Judy Waxman Right, Right. Yeah.

Elizabeth Have you been there?

Judy Waxman yeah. Yeah. Right. So. So, but no, I wondered if so the transportation plan was coordinating volunteers to.

Elizabeth Yes. That's what the person, the person who was hired and then we were able to get funds so that we had a director who also worked on growing the program and dealing with the property problems or people who I mean we, we were tied to Iona because then we didn't go as volunteers. We were not promising a whole lot. We were saying sort of simple. Volunteer. You know, hour two hours type of service?

Judy Waxman I'd say.

Elizabeth So. So they would come to a training program, which at the beginning I did. And then the director became skilled and knowledgeable and that we've had three directors, I think, in those years. And I could get some more specific information, not from my brain, but from the office.

Judy Waxman Yeah. So like, I lost my own train of thought. But so what other kinds of programs did you do then?

Elizabeth I don't know that I can put this out in order, but people were interested in meeting more people, not just the people next door to them or in their apartment building. So we, you know, we gave a lot of we had information sheets with deep in detail about the programs that Iona ran because IONA had funding through the DC Office on Aging and the federal funding for seniors so that, you know, it's somebody who can't manage with just a volunteer to drive them to the doctor or something like that. And they didn't do. IONA had social programs, but most of them were tied to a noontime meal. And that's how we started. So and activities where there were people who were leading exercise classes and things like that. So, so and we didn't, the villages don't in general. And it's a pretty, pretty big program nationwide now. But I don't think most of them hire people to provide services to their members or they provide the information to what we do to the members they call our office. If what they need is arrived at that doctor's appointment, we call the volunteers to get somebody who will take them to the doctor.

Judy Waxman Right, right, right. So I do want to follow up on one thing, when you you said a couple times, so we got the money and easy to say, but felt like it wasn't through the federal program. So where did you get the money? Well.

Elizabeth Well, personally, I had been raising money for the benefit of older people in my previous two jobs. Because they were already established nonprofit, you know, services.

Judy Waxman Right.

Elizabeth Iona and the other the housing program that I started was under Catholic Charities. So I had to raise money to do those jobs. They they were not going to go out for a lot of volunteers. So they did sometimes have volunteers for programs. But overall, they were promising certain services that needed somebody who was going to answer the phone every day and and know what to do once they answered the phone. So. So, so the money came. No, I don't think there was any government money. It was foundations – a few foundations, even though this is not generally thought to be a needy part of the city, some older people in northwest Washington definitely, you know, are hurting. So and I learned, I mean I didn't know that very well, but I know a little because through Iona, people often called and didn't have, you know, any enough money to pay for services. So that was part of the reason that Iona grew and Iona got Federal money. So. Anyway. So. Yeah, so but that but it wasn't government money. It was foundation. And mostly those foundations, I had at least some kind of contact with some I had raised money before for those other two jobs, but not, not enough to hire a full time coordinator, which is what we really desperately wanted. But eventually we got that and then we got one and a half coordinators and that's and and a place not just somebodies unused bedroom of their kids who were left home. So it was a sort of a gradual process, I would say, of finding people who wanted to do this but really would probably not sign up to do it, you know, for with no pay because we we needed someone who was at least half time or who people wouldn't know when they could call and things like that. So that we did that and and I don't know at which point we rented an office space, but that made a big difference because you could invite people there to come meet, learn with you. You could ask them to come help, send out letters. You could, you know. And that really was what set us on a on our trip draft, but not a trap trail to grow the program.

Judy Waxman Right now. Also, you mentioned trainings and I'm curious as to what the training was like?

Elizabeth For the sort of general volunteers certainly in the beginning, which is to drive somebody to something and pick them up at something or to come to their home and help with some task, they had to move to a different apartment or something like that. So, we recorded what people wanted. If it was really not at all feasible, in our opinion, we could not get volunteers to do that because the volunteer job was considered to be extremely part time. You know, maybe once a week, but not necessarily, you know, like the hospital volunteer who goes the same time, same floor of this hour, and you'd get your call and you'd be told what's needed. But it was usually something that wouldn't take more than half a day at the most. So we set that framework for it. We wrote all that up. We then went out to people that we had met over. This was like a year and a half or so after we started going to a place to meet for the staff, and it took quite a while to sort of shape up who could be a leader without being paid and and where we could have rent that we could afford and so on. So it probably was two years maybe before we had much of a program, but we did.

Judy Waxman But what I was specifically asking you about, I thought you did trainings for volunteers.

Elizabeth Yes. Well, once we had, you know, 10 or 15 people, we said, well, we don't have to just train everybody the minute that they say they're interested, we'll tell them what's going on. They can come to a group activity so we can get to know them a little bit. And, you know, we would get to know them and go ahead and give them a volunteer job. But to have the program grow, we needed a lot more people who were trained. So we set set times for the training and they knew that they came for an interview. Everybody, we had a personal interview and then they would be told when the next training would take place.

Judy Waxman Yeah, but what is the training? What? I can't. I'm trying to think of what you. What you. What I know during the training.

Elizabeth Well, it's a long time since I've done the training myself, but in general, it was the scope of the job, the tasks that we were offering to volunteer to members, potential members. So the members that already been told what we would do and what we couldn't do. For example, we could drive people to medical appointments. We could come and straighten up your kitchen for you. We could sit and make a list of things that you wanted to have altogether, but you didn't type or something like that. So we had a page long of things that people would do, and then we would know that when the person called said, I would like to be part of the village. And then we'd say, these are the things we do. And that was partly dependent on what the volunteers said they would do. But we always had transportation.

Judy Waxman I see.

Elizabeth Because that was the most, you know, most important service.

Judy Waxman Right. The most wouldn't like paint somebody's house. I'm making that up. But something big like that.

Elizabeth No, no. The volunteering and recruiting the volunteers. We. I don't know exactly what the time limit was, but I think it was half a day at the most. That any individual task and most of the volunteering was is and I think still is a one-time event.

Judy Waxman Oh really.

Elizabeth It's not that you'll come every week to do something or other, but I might not be up on that because I am not on the board anymore. I am a volunteer occasionally, but that would be easy for me to check if you want to know that.

Judy Waxman Sure. That'd be great. So what kind of problems did you run into? We have. We've talked about all this great success, and I want to know if there were any bumps in the road.

Elizabeth It was a little hard. And sort of we learned by doing, I would say, how to present the program to someone who wants to join as a member. Because we wanted to be open to people's needs and be flexible, but we had to put some limits. So we sort of learned that I'd say we had over the years of the village again, I could get information for you, but I can't remember even what years it was that the learning year. I would say it took a year to really learn. I don't know exactly when that was. But so we we did learn and particularly the person who was selected as the director, I think we had four directors, something like that. And to say, you know, this is what you will be asked to do. Something like these five tasks

are the most popular and none of those will take more than half a day or something like that. And generally the people who came had already seen that, however they were recruited, they came to that from somebody they know or a flier or something like that.

Judy Waxman Did you ever have call the person a client. Lack of a better word, complaints or one demanding or anything that you remember that you want to add to this discussion.

Elizabeth I was never the person on the other end of the first call. I was seldom you know, I was the one recruiting, raising money, helping right out, right up, right up, up, you know, a guideline for the volunteers and so on. So I don't. How did you come to call me? Actually. Did you already talk with someone at the village?

Judy Waxman Well, I've been in touch with Frank and Claire, and I am an oral historian. After I retired, I took that job up, and I helped train some other people to do these interviews, and they. They asked me to specifically interview you.

Elizabeth Well, I. I'm happy to try to answer anything you ask. But as you know, my brain is not what it used to be.

Judy Waxman At this great, I do not apologize. This is simply fabulous. So obviously, it's grown over the years and continues to be a vital part of our community, I would say. How long did you stay involved?

Elizabeth Well, I've been involved all along. It just now I'm involved in a more minimal way. I mean, Frank calls me and says, what should I do about this?

Judy Waxman I say, Well, that's great. And so you have the experience he's leaning on.

Elizabeth Well, all that time I was at Iona, I was on, I was the director. That's the only job I had at Iona. So, you know, I heard about all the difficult things, so I didn't necessarily solve them, but the other thing is that I just I just think Frank is he I, I think the world of him and anything he calls about, you know, if I think I can add to it, I do. I just, you know, he might ask about one thing and then I'll that'll lead me to ask something else just because I still so interested in the program. But I see how how very lucky we've been to have Frank come to us.

Elizabeth We had two other directors, I think two other directors in that time.

Elizabeth And they were good too. I mean, it's not like there was a problem, but, you know.

Judy Waxman Yeah, but for people.

Elizabeth Who are retired already, then they say, Wait a minute, this is too much like a job.

Judy Waxman Something.

Elizabeth Maybe you'll want to be it. Maybe you'll want the job.

Judy Waxman I can see that this is a full-time job. More than a full-time job. And it's great. Well, I wonder if you have any closing thoughts about how you got it going and how it's going now?

Elizabeth I mean, it certainly helps that I, I mean, I have a degree and some training and this kind of work matching not necessarily volunteers, but most of my programs I've started have included volunteers and the needs in the community. And I'm very interested in that because I'm very happy that the federal government has had a long time, you know, funding program for programs for seniors, which you probably have come across and looking into this, right? I mean, we don't get that at the but Iona has significant funding, both grants for special projects and also ongoing services to people. So that was established decades ago. So that's a base and it's particularly appropriate for people who really have very little money to take care of their needs. So that's great. The village does has no priority, I mean, they don't turn anybody down because they don't have money or because they do have money. So I think that that's a, you know, it's quite a plus. So what else to say? You know, neighborhoods, I think Cleveland Park is unusual in the neighborliness probably, if you just look at New York City or someplace else like that, I don't think it's quite as neighborly as this. So that was a real plus. But have you been beyond, you know, your block but for the same kind of needs you might help your neighbor. Is that very hard to to describe what to do but also the rewards of it. No, I mean, I tell you, when that since I was more involved, they have more social activities and we have connections with churches and synagogues here. And, you know, they'll be a dinner every month or every couple months or something. And I don't know, actually, I'm not even sure where the funding comes for those dinners, but I've gone to most of them and people are talk about how happy they are and then they say, could I bring my neighbor who plays the violin and do we want music? And then the neighbor comes and as you know, used to be in the National Symphony or something like that. So it's I guess the barrier here is that people who live in more middle to upper level income neighborhoods, they're not used to having a volunteer show up to help them. They might ask a neighbor that usually they don't even want to ask their neighbor is the truth of the matter. But this is what the program is all about. You get to know your neighbors. And I think it's that kind of unexpected plus to some people, both the volunteers and the people who are getting help. Right. Sometimes people are both a volunteer and they get help.

Judy Waxman Right? Oh, definitely. Yeah. According to what the situation now, you know, it's most fabulous organization and I'll say thank you from all of us that you got it started in the first place and we appreciate it.

Elizabeth But now are you interested in joining?

Judy Waxman Oh, I am a member. You are good.

Elizabeth Have you gotten any direct services?

Judy Waxman No, I haven't. But the direct service I'm providing is interviewing people and training people to be interviewed for the archives. Yeah, Yeah.

Elizabeth That's fantastic. You're going to have people who are doing certain kind of volunteering to.

Judy Waxman Let me clear. And Frank had me do a session with volunteers who wanted to do more interviews, and so I did the training for them.

Elizabeth: Fantastic.

Judy Waxman: Yeah, well, we shouldn't have this more about me. But anyway, that's perfectly.

Elizabeth Fine. That's the kind of.

Judy Waxman Yeah.

Elizabeth And I wouldn't ask if I weren't interested.

Judy Waxman That's great. Well, I'm going to turn off the recording, and I thank you so much, but I want you to stay on. Okay? I'll do it again. Thank you so much.

Elizabeth Okay.