

Oral History Interview with Jinny

Conducted by Jody Beck

for the DC Oral History Collaborative
as part of the Cleveland & Woodley Park Villagers' Stories Project

August 15, 2023
One hour, eight minutes, and fifty-six seconds

Home of Jinny
Washington, DC

Summary

Jinny, a longtime resident of Cleveland Park, Washington, D.C., shares her rich life experiences in an interview covering various aspects of her life. She recounts her involvement with The Hospitality and Information Service (THIS), the founding of Cleveland & Woodley Park Village, aimed at providing services and social opportunities for seniors in the community. As one of the founding members, Jinny discusses the Village's evolution over the years, its activities, and the joy it brings to her life. She also provides insights into her family, highlighting the diverse and successful paths her children have taken in fields such as science, music, catering, and renewable energy. Throughout the interview, Jinny reflects on the changing landscape of Cleveland Park and Woodley Park and her pride in the achievements of her family members.

Cleveland & Woodley Park Village is a nonprofit membership organization serving residents in Washington, DC's Cleveland Park and Woodley Park neighborhoods. It is part of a national movement to assist older adults as they age at home, with the mission to create opportunities for older adults to be actively engaged, support those who need it with volunteer assistance to help them live independently, and build a welcoming intergenerational community. This oral history interview was conducted under a grant from the Humanities Council of Washington, DC to the Cleveland & Woodley Park Village.

Narrator Bio

Jinny, originally from St. Louis, Missouri, is a current resident of Washington, DC, in the Cleveland Park neighborhood. She spent her career raising the expectations of persons with disabilities, their families, educators and employers, especially employers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). She was a guiding force of the Project on Science, Technology and Disability of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). In 1996, Jinny and her colleagues developed the flagship program, Entry Point!, to provide paid internships and develop career skills in the private and public sectors for students with disabilities in STEM. She is one of the original founders of Cleveland & Woodley Park Village, and has been a member since the organization opened its doors in 2013.

Topics Covered: Cleveland Park. Woodley Park. Older Adults. Aging in DC. The Village Movement. Community. Senior Services. DC History. Disabilities. Disability Rights. Cleveland & Woodley Park Village Membership. DC Villages.

DC Neighborhoods and Streets: Cleveland Park, Woodley Park, Highland Place, Wesley Heights, Spring Valley, Northwest DC, Capitol Hill, National Mall, Dupont Circle, MacArthur Boulevard NW, 34th Place NW, Connecticut Avenue NW, 35th Place NW, Newark Street NW

Jody Beck: Okay, we're going to do this again. So I'm Jody Beck, and I'm here with Jinny. It's Tuesday, August 15th, and we're in Jinny's home in Washington, DC. I'm honored to speak with Jinny about the history, her history in Washington and the neighborhood and community recollections and how the Cleveland & Woodley Park Village has affected the process of aging in her neighborhood. So Jinny, introduce yourself, please.

Jinny: I'm Jinny, and I've been with the Village since we founded it, in the community, and of course, I'm still a member.

JB: Great. So we're going to go back to the start. So tell me a little bit about your childhood. I know one question I wanted to ask you. You're the first Jinny I've ever met who spells her name with a J.

JS: Oh, yes, I've not --

JB: What's the origin of your name?

JS: That is what my -- I mean, my name is Virginia, but my parents, when I was a child, started calling me Jinny with a J. And I have one other friend in Washington who has that spelling. But generally in the world, Jinny is with a G.

JB: That's true. Well, that's a good explanation. So tell me about where were you born, what was your childhood like?

JS: Oh, I was born in St. Louis, Missouri. My parents who, at the turn of the century, were immigrants. However, my father was with the Shell Oil Company, expert on asphalt roads, and I grew up in St. Louis in a very warm family and very warm neighborhood.

JB: So what -- so are you comfortable with sharing your birthday or your birth year?

JS: Oh, sure. June 27th, 1934.

JB: Okay. You're just a little bit younger than my aunt Janet, who's born in '32. And how many children in your family and where did you fit in in that?

JS: Oh, I had a sister four years older.

JB: Okay. And is she still alive?

JS: No, she died --

JB: Oh, that's too bad.

JS: – when she was 90, I guess. A few years ago.

JB: Oh, golly. Okay. All right. Long life, but I'm sure you still miss her. Yes. So what was your childhood like? You said, a warm family.

JS: A warm family in St. Louis and then slightly out of the city to Clayton, which is a close-in suburb. And my parents had a really wonderful circle of friends whom they kept all their lives, even though they moved away. And some of them had been several years, a number of years, in St. Louis. I mean, maybe they had grandfathers who were peddlers and now they own the department stores.

JB: Did your father stay in the paving business his whole life, asphalt business his whole life?

JS: He worked for Shell Oil.

JB: Oh, you said Shell Oil. I'm sorry. Right. Shell Oil.

JS: Shell Oil.

JB: Okay.

JS: But then Shell moved its headquarters from St. Louis to Manhattan, and we moved to Scarsdale, New York, which has very well-known public schools. And my father David had cancer and died before he was fifty. And we were --my sister and mother and I were --we didn't move though because my mother was very big on that community in the public schools. So we got social security. I remember the envelopes that came every month. And we also had friends and connections and good friends in Manhattan. My parents -- my father David died of cancer.

JB: You were young when he died?

JS: Ten.

JB: Oh, that is young.

JS: And we had social security and I think the line is the "kindness of strangers."

JB: Did your mother try to get a job?

JS: Well, she had a part-time job, but since my sister and I were young, she didn't get a full-time job. And it was during World War II. And at a certain point she had -- they had good friends. He was a chemist and had retired from Shell Chemical and lived in Manhattan. But we knew them and his wife Clara died and he started taking out my

mother in New York City. And eventually, they married. And we moved to San Francisco because by then, World War II was over. And my stepfather's son, who is a doctor and his other son-in-law were in the San Francisco area. So we just left the New York area and moved to San Francisco where I went to Lowell High School, a wonderful public high school for high achieving students. And then I went to Stanford University. And then I met Bob, who was my husband for almost sixty-five years. So we married in San Francisco. These days, that would be quite young -- I was not quite twenty-two. And we traveled in Europe, and after that had our first child. So we had four children.

JB: So was that -- were you living in San Francisco? Or at what point did you move to Washington? Or what's your transition from San Francisco to Washington?

JS: No, we didn't move to Washington. We moved -- Bob was a graduate of MIT and had those connections and was asked to join a firm where the principals were all from MIT. And at that time, I don't know if that was true, but if you were married and your husband got a job somewhere else, you just went along. I mean, you didn't -- maybe some people argued against it, but I certainly did not.

JB: Well, my aunt's a Navy wife, so I know how it goes. So did you move around a lot before you went down to Washington?

JS: No, we lived -- after a year, we actually bought a house in Lexington, Mass. And then John Kennedy was elected. And in that -- in Massachusetts, everybody was going to Washington. That was the thing. So we went to Washington. I didn't know anything about Washington. I mean, I'd been here once as a tourist, but I knew nothing. And I don't know why Bob was appointed to the U.S. Department of Commerce, which we really were not that connected to, but that's where he was appointed. So he worked there. And soon, well, we had some friends from San Francisco who lived here already, so we lived with them for a while. And then eventually, we bought our house on Highland Place. At that time, Cleveland Park was just rejuvenating, you might say, because some of the houses were in bad shape and had become boarding houses.

JB: Probably boarding houses during the War, right?

JS: Correct. And then after the War. But the Secretary of State and his wife, who was terrific about going to all the National Days, they settled in Wesley Heights or Spring Valley. But Wesley Heights and Spring Valley, which had very nice homes, had restrictions against African-Americans and Muslims and possibly even Jews. But anyway, we didn't want to live in that area. So after we rented a place for a part of a year in Northwest, we bought the house on Highland Place, which was probably -- pretty cheap and pretty much a mess with mice and everything else.

JB: So just for reminiscence sake, do you remember how much a house cost back then? Probably not much by today's standards, right?

JS: Twenty-two or twenty-three thousand dollars.

JB: But you had to do a lot of work to it, I assume?

JS: Well, we really were not -- we had two children and eventually four, and we weren't -- we did improve the kitchen. We had an architect and improved the kitchen a lot, but we didn't do anything too big a deal. We just sort of painted. And we lived there nine years on Highland Place, and we had four children there. And a lot of our neighbors who we were close to had four children or three children or seven children or something like that. So that block was one way, so it didn't get a lot of traffic. And the children were all on the street and in and out everybody's houses.

JB: Pretty typical 1950s we're talking about now, right? Late '50s, early '60s?

JS: Correct.

JB: Okay. So when did you move here? What was the path to this house in Cleveland Park?

JS: Bob had an appointment to the -- wait a second, hon.

JB: Sure. You said Commerce Department at first.

JS: Correct. You're correct. We didn't know the government very well. He had that appointment, at that point -- I don't know if that still exists -- but they had in the government, GS, which was sort of senior, GS-15 was the top. And I think he was GS-14. And we didn't know very much, but we accepted that. And he had a Porsche, which he loved, and he drove it downtown and was able to go on the courtyard there and had a parking space. And we didn't really realize what that was in Washington, DC.

JB: Quite a perk.

JS: Yes.

JB: So did he stay with the Commerce Department for his career?

JS: No, not with his career, but --

JB: Okay, we're recording again. So the last we knew your husband was at the Commerce Department and drove his Porsche downtown and parked it in the courtyard, which is an amazing story.

JS: In the courtyard. That is right. And then he was still in Commerce and the Bureau of Standards, which is not too far from here, up this way, was opening in Gaithersburg. So he was two years at the Bureau. He was in charge of the opening. And he finally, I think, didn't really want to be going to Gaithersburg every day. So he was back in Washington and was with the National Academy of Science and Engineering, which now is on Capitol Hill, but at that time was sort of by the Mall. And so he was there. And other positions, I'm not quite sure we were in the discussion.

JB: Well, I was asking about his career and he --

JS: He was six years with the Xerox Corporation.

JB: Okay. So he did all kinds of jobs suitable to an MIT grad.

JS: Yes. And we went for four years. And we lived in Westport, Connecticut, the four of the six years, which had very excellent public schools and a marvelous beach, which you could be on if you lived there. You could go to the beach with your children in the summer. And also a lot of summer theater. And at that time, Westport was a little bit arty. And I think now it's probably just expensive.

JB: So when did -- so we were trying to get your path here to Cleveland Park. So did you come to Cleveland Park from Westport?

JS: So we -- no, when we came to Washington, we stayed with friends and then we rented something and we bought our house on Highland Place, which was --

JB: You told me about Highland Place.

JS: Yes. And we lived there nine years. And then he was recruited by Xerox, and I was also in graduate school at Gallaudet. So I didn't want to move until I finished graduate school, which was a two-year program. And then we did go and we lived in Westport, Connecticut, which is a beautiful town at that time with a rather charming main street and a beach. You could be with your kids in the summer. And it was fine, but we wanted to go back to Washington. So we came back to Washington. Our youngest child, Rachel, was just in kindergarten. And we came back, and all our kids went to schools where we wanted them to go.

JB: And that was to this house that you're living in now? So you were in Highland Place --

JS: No, the house was on Highlands. And then we lived, we rented a year on Highland, and then we bought this house.

JB: Okay. All right. So what year? Do you remember what year you came here?

JS: Rachel was in first grade.

JB: Okay.

JS: So she's fifty-something now.

JB: We'll do the math later.

JS: Yes. Okay.

JB: So I'm going to backtrack a little bit to ask when you were a child and you moved around a fair amount.

JS: A little bit.

JB: Did you have contact with grandparents or aunts and uncles in various places you lived?

JS: Well, not so great. My parents came from Philadelphia. I mean, they were immigrants but became U.S. citizens. My father graduated from Penn, and my mother graduated from Temple. And they spoke perfect English and no accents. And if my maternal grandmother spoke Yiddish, my mother could speak that with her, but that was no part of our lives. My parents were absolutely determined to have correct English. There was no remarks about Yiddish or anything else.

JB: Pretty common among the immigrant community I think, yes.

JS: It was all completely correct English with no errors. I'll tell you that. No errors.

JB: When your mom remarried and you moved to San Francisco, you inherited a half-brother, or step-brother and stepfather. Was that also a loving, warm relationship for you?

JS: Well, my mother was terrific about joining us all together, so it was fine. So I went to Lowell High School, which was the academic public high school in San Francisco, which was wonderful. And I also --

JB: Let me stop you right there before college. So when you were in high school and a child, what were your aspirations for life? What did you think about as a child that you would do? And you went to college there in San Francisco.

JS: Well, to Stanford.

JB: Stanford.

JS: Yes.

JB: Pretty good. Right across the Bay.

JS: It's not across the Bay. It's down in the peninsula.

JB: It's down in the peninsula. Right. I've been past the campus, but yes. So you were close to home. And then you married right out of college as so many women did then.

JS: Well, I -- I was extremely interested in the Italian Renaissance in Florence, Italy in the 14th and 15th century. So one summer, I went on a trip to Europe and was quite a few, when I was in college at Stanford, a few weeks, a number of weeks in Florence, Italy. And when I graduated from Stanford, I went -- even though I already was dating Bob, he was smart to encourage me to go. And so I lived not quite a year in Florence, Italy.

JB: Did you work at a museum or you were studying?

JS: Well, I knew what -- I had studied Italian already. And I don't know if you've heard of Bernard Berenson?

JB: I have.

JS: A famous art historian. And through some connections, I got an introduction to him, and he -- I Tatti, where his home and library was -- was outside of Florence. Later he gave it to Harvard University, but not at that time. So he invited me to come there every day and I came there every day on the streetcar. And I sort of was new enough to think I should be writing this up for The New Yorker, but I didn't.

JB: I studied art history as an undergrad. It wasn't my profession, but I'm interested. You're the first connection I've ever had to Berenson.

JS: Oh, really? Okay.

JB: (inaudible) That's pretty amazing.

JS: So anyway, through-- well, I'll tell you the whole story. I mean, my family was in San Francisco, and I was going to Florence with a friend from college, a girl, on the Italian Line, which doesn't exist now, the *Andrea Doria* and the *Cristoforo Colombo*. Those were the two ships. And I -- so I went there in Florence -- through some professor, I got a place for us to live. And in Florence, there was *corsi per stranieri*, courses for foreigners. And so I signed up for that. Even though I knew Italian, I knew I couldn't really manage in the whole university. So I went every place in -- it was a course for foreigners. So we went to everything in art in Florence, everywhere. And it wasn't as crowded as it later became, especially after the summer was over. So we went to every church, every chapel, every -- every everything.

JB: What a wonderful experience.

JS: Yes. And then my mother in San Francisco somehow had a friend who was an ambassador from a company that had become communist. And so he and his wife moved to Florence in what was called "grace in favor." Different people who had different large homes would travel and all and let him stay there for a month or two months or three months. And he -- because he wasn't communist, he moved all around Florence at these homes. And somehow, Berenson, he was in San Gimignano, and somehow Berenson invited them for lunch and invited me. So then I was pretty -- I mean, I was a graduate of Stanford, but I was pretty naive in some ways. And he said to me that I was welcome to use the library every day. And he told me, or a woman who worked along, told me where to get off the streetcar and get to the gate and walk up the back way and through the kitchen to the whole villa. And I just -- they told me to do that and I just did that.

JB: Oh, wonderful.

JS: Yes. See, you can appreciate that.

JB: I can. I've been to Florence, but --

JS: You can appreciate that.

JB: -- I was only there for a few days. So talk to me about how you ended up coming back to the United States. So you were there for a year, and then you came back to the United States.

JS: And then I -- see, I was already dating Bob and two other guys and -- because in those days, first of all, I was twenty-one. And secondly, not like today, I mean, in my circles, you didn't live together until you were married. So I mean, some people may did, but not my circle.

JB: Not respectable middle-class people like you and my mother. That just wasn't done. You're right.

JS: Just wasn't done. So Bob worked for Arthur D. Little consulting firm, and he came with a colleague to Paris, and I left Florence and took the train to Paris. And I had a friend in school, the university there, and she got me a place to stay. And then Bob took vacation, and we traveled a little to Switzerland and down to Italy. And he proposed to me.

JB: Where did he propose?

JS: In the Simplon Tunnel.

JB: Which is, I don't know that --

JS: The tunnel between Switzerland and Italy.

JB: Like a car tunnel that you would drive through?

JS: No.

JB: Train tunnel.

JS: Just a train tunnel.

JB: He proposed on the train. Huh?

JS: You think that's romantic?

JB: I do think it's romantic. I think that's great.

JS: We went to Florence and we did not sleep together. That was an earlier time. And I gradually said goodbye to all my people, including the people at Berenson's place. And they called Bob "The Piccolo Engineer", a little engineer. That was okay with me. And I left Italy.

JB: So now we're back to you're married.

JS: So then we were married in San Francisco. And we --

JB: You eventually landed here in Cleveland Park?

JS: Well, we -- no, we went to Europe. And people do now all the time, but it was kind of new then. He took three months from work, and we traveled in Europe and then back to San Francisco. And I had Adam, our first child.

JB: Oh, good.

JS: And eventually four children.

JB: So you've studied art history and very interested in it.

JS: Yes. And history of Renaissance times.

JB: Exactly. So did you work after your first child was born?

JS: No.

JB: Okay. Most women didn't back then.

JS: No. And also, at that time in San Francisco, there wasn't a way to work about art history or things. It wasn't -- okay.

JB: Eventually, you got a graduate degree at Gallaudet. So what did you study at Gallaudet?

JS: Well, sign language, which I am not really skilled. And of course, I mean, I'm just saying, I'm an excellent student. So of course, I got the highest prize of anything.

JB: Did you work as an interpreter after that?

JS: No. So the then Secretary of -- was HEW¹ and it sort of split.

JB: Exactly. I remember that.

JS: There was education and it sort of split. But the Secretary of HEW came to Gallaudet to give the degrees. But by then, my dear husband Bob came with our four children, and Rachel was nine months in his arms. And I'm really sorry now. There was a photo in The Post and I should have put that photo up on the wall, and I don't know where it is now.

JB: You could probably get it from The Post.

¹ Jinny is referring to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, now known as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

JS: Maybe.

JB: You could.

JS: I'll think about that.

JB: If you have an approximate date, they might be able to look it up for you.

JS: Okay. So there I was in my cap and gown, and there was Bob with Rachel in his arms and the other three children.

JB: How old was Adam by then? So he was born right after you got -- shortly after you got married in San Francisco.

JS: Yes.

JB: What year was he born?

JS: Oh, we were married in '56, and he was born in December of '59. So the children were there and the picture was in The Washington Post. And I think -- but you say I could go to The Post and get it.

JB: Well, you might be able to call them or email them and see if they have pictures. I know that a lot of pictures from The Star at the library, but The Post might have a copy of it.

JS: Might have a copy. Well anyway. Rachel was quite a bit younger, so I was home for quite a while, and I was very active with THIS, The Hospitality and Information Service.

JB: That was a volunteer or a paid job?

JS: A volunteer organization that had excellent people getting to know, not just the ambassadors from different countries, and there were new countries that were evolving, but the staff. And a friend, who has recently passed away, and I ran the cooking program. And we got generally congressmen wives from different areas of the U.S. to talk about the cuisine of wherever that was. So we ran these very -- as a volunteer, we ran, not at this house, but at a friend's house, very good lectures and lunches.

JB: So you used those for yourself, or you made them for other people, or that was just how you expanded your ability to cook?

JS: Yes. And I had a helper at home at that time. So that was -- and then --

JB: What other civic groups or volunteer groups did you belong to while your kids were growing up?

JS: Well, THIS, The Hospitality and Information Service was a big thing for me. And then at that time, actually, it sounds sort of uppity, I knew all the Cabinet wives because they were very interested in this. And Mrs. Rusk was terrific at going to every National Day. And all the Cabinet wives entertained or celebrated the National Day or something. And at that time, I knew them all. But I mean, there weren't quite as many countries as there are now.

JB: That's true. Or countries that had embassies here, but that's the Washington that I -- the Washington in the '60s that I kind of heard about but missed out on. Yes.

JS: And some of these countries, like African countries, they had the same ambassador in DC and at the UN. And that was an issue because I'll tell you, at that time, the Howard Johnson's or whatever on the road between Washington and New York, there was prejudice against people of color.

JB: Even ambassadors.

JS: They didn't know they were ambassadors.

JB: Of course not.

JS: They only knew they were people of color. And so somebody I came to know, a guy, went methodically from eating place to eating place to make them accepting people of color or ambassadors of color perhaps. I mean, that was kind of a different time.

JB: It was in the beginning of the kind of what I would call the middle modern era of getting rights for people and desegregating places. And I've heard stories about that.

JS: And as we know, nothing has solved perfectly.

JB: That's true. So you were involved in THIS and meeting ambassadors and Cabinet wives.

JS: And Cabinet wives. I knew all the Cabinet wives at that point.

JB: So was there a transition between that point in your life and when you got involved in the Village?

JS: Oh, that's a whole --

JB: That's a few years in between, right?

JS: Generation, generation. No, no.

JB: Grad school was in there somewhere.

JS: Nothing. Yes, because I know you're representing the Village.

JB: Well, we can go back to these other topics, but I'm going to try to get in there.

JS: But I mean, I had four children, and THIS was -- have we spent too much time?

JB: No, that's good. That's good. That's -- we'll come back to it if I have more questions. So let's transition.

JS: All right. THIS, that was a very active part and I taught American cooking with my partner who has recently passed away and not in my house, but in --

JB: So you taught it to whom?

JS: To members of the diplomatic corps who were not the ambassador's wives. Every other --

JB: So somebody who was a counselor or officer, you teach them the (inaudible).

JS: Yes. They were in the embassy. So I knew many embassy people. And when they went back to their countries, I should have kept up with all of them, but I didn't.

JB: It's hard. It's hard to keep up with that many people.

JS: I worked. I had four children.

JB: So you were working at -- what was your job in DC again?

JS: Oh, I was with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. We published Science Magazine fifty-one weeks a year. And I had a special position to work with science and engineering majors who happened to have disabilities. See, I knew about disabilities because Bob and I had four children and our son Mark, who is now in his fifties and a graduate of Stanford and Brown, just to tell you that you might have a different idea of somebody who is deaf. Well, you might. And anyway, Mark, at age one, had meningitis and we did not have the vaccine for four years.

JB: Oh my gosh.

JS: And he became profoundly deaf. However, not intellectually.

JB: Of course not. It doesn't affect that.

JS: In any way. In any other way. And then my daughter, that's my second child, also when she was eight or ten, became disabled. Well, I can't -- you don't really want all of this, but she and her --

JB: No, that's fine. But I can see why having a child who was deaf would lead you to Gallaudet and sign language certainly. And this was a burden. This was not a burden. This was more --

JS: No, you have to know --

JB: Caring that some families who had -- one of my brothers had heart surgery when he was a kid. And so he had issues, and he's fine now. But it took a lot of my parents' time and emotional strength to get through that.

JS: Yes. And at that time, and also now in a different way because of technology, there was a kind of a division between what we call the oralists who spoke, who learned the English language and spoke, although sometimes with difficulty, but did that, and those who use sign language. So there was this split at that time. And I was very influenced by the John Tracy Clinic in Los Angeles. Spencer Tracy and his wife Louise had a son, John, who was deaf. And they founded -- he then went for other things, but loyal to his wife. And they founded the John Tracy Clinic in Los Angeles. You don't really need to know this.

JB: I don't need to know that. So that -- but so your child-rearing years had complications, we can say that. And things that other parents didn't have to deal with necessarily.

JS: That is correct.

JB: So when your children were grown and out of the house --

JS: And one summer, I went to Los Angeles because they had programs at The Tracy Clinic for people in other parts of the United States. So I was -- there was a very, very -- well, they had a correspondence course. So every month they wrote me. But I was very attached to them and they actually wanted to hire me.

JB: Wow.

JS: But Bob and I did not want to live in Los Angeles.

JB: I can understand that.

JS: Yes.

JB: It's a wonderful place just to visit. So once your children were grown, were you still working for AAAS?

JS: Oh, yes. Into my seventies.

JB: Okay. All right. You worked longer than I did.

JS: Yes.

JB: So was it after you retired that you became interested or heard about the Village? Excuse me, I'm going to cough.

JS: Oh, there's Kleenex. If you want it. The Village, you want to know?

JB: Yes, a little bit about how you got connected with that.

JS: The Village. So you can look over there and see that I still, every day, seven days a week, get The New York Times and The Washington Post. Andy just moved it over there, so you could sit here.

JB: Get The Post paper and The Times online.

JS: Okay. Well, I know many people do now, but I do in print.

JB: And that is fine. I still like print.

JS: And I have this -- my vision has many limitations and this is in larger.

JB: That's a reader. How cool. Okay.

JS: So what was I about to --?

JB: You were doing -- we were talking about how you got involved with the Village, and you mentioned the newspapers.

JS: So on Saturdays in The New York Times, I forget what page, but they had something about seniors. And so they did write about this Village or whatever we called it, on Beacon Hill in Boston and how the people wanted to stay in Beacon Hill because that was very important to them, those Boston people. But they sort of formed a group

that gave them transportation to places where they had other friends like Brookline or Newton or something. And they had maybe exercise classes or other things. And that was the first -- it was written up in The Times, and it was the first I knew about the Villages.

JB: That may be the first Village ever, I think. Anyway, not important here.

JS: I don't know if I'll say that.

JB: Frank will know.

JS: So after I got interested in that, we discovered there was a Village on Capitol Hill and there was one on --

JB: Was it DuPont?

JS: No, no. Not yet. I mean, I got friendly with him, but MacArthur Boulevard.

JB: Oh, okay.

JS: So Bob and I -- Bob knew the Capitol, but we didn't know residential. But we drove to Capitol Hill, and they were -- we got a little lost but found them and they were having a sale of geraniums and brownies. And so we got -- .

JB: It's a funny combination. That sounds right.

JS: We got them. And they were very organized. They had a whole book. I never heard of it. They had a whole booklet, many activities.

JB: I lived on Capitol Hill when that was being founded. So I actually know some people who worked with them.

JS: And then there was the Capitol, I mean there was the Village --

JB: On MacArthur, right?

JS: Yes. Or below MacArthur, a little. And so we had the first meeting at my house. And dozens of people signed up and nothing came of it.

JB: How did you get the word out to all those people? Pre-listserv, you must have called them.

JS: No. I don't think we were that sophisticated. We had junior high kids who ran and gave invitations.

JB: Okay, little brochures. Okay, how about that?

JS: So anyway, the first meeting was at my house and a lot of people came. And some people brought refreshments. And everybody signed up. And Bill Newlin, who was retired from the Foreign Service and very good. He lived -- well, they're away now, but lives on Newark Street. He sort of led it, and everybody signed up, and nothing came of it. And then it was decided that it'd be -- I don't know if you know the Cleveland Park Club. I can show you later.

JB: I don't. Is it --?

JS: A small club in the neighborhood.

JB: Up the street a little bit, right?

JS: Well.

JB: Around the corner.

JS: Yes.

JB: I've heard of it.

JS: All right, I can walk you there. So we decided to have the next meeting at the Cleveland Park Club because it didn't connect with anybody's home. And right now, I can't tell you the name. The problem is I lose names.

JB: I do too.

JS: Well, you're much, much younger.

JB: Not that much younger.

JS: Rufus King and --

JB: Oh, that name is familiar. Was he a judge?

JS: Correct. Absolutely.

JB: So I have been in his court before. Not because I was a defendant, because I was a reporter.

JS: He was retired, but he would --

JB: And Barbara was his wife?

JS: Barbara was his wife. She'd been married before. And I'm embarrassed, I can't think of Barbara's last name this second. But anyway, Andy wrote this out for me so I wouldn't be --

JB: Okay. I wrote it down.

JS: Wouldn't be so stupid. And they lived -- she was still working in, I forget the name of the organization, but it's to seek out potential presidents or vice presidents of organizations. And they live just on -- it's 34th Place. It's just a little bit that way. And she was still working, and he was retired but would sometimes go back. And we started having meetings at their house in their dining room, and interviewed -- oh, somebody at the Capitol Hill Village said we had to get \$1,000 or \$1,200 to start. So Bill [N.?], see, I remember, I know a few names. A neighbor on Highland and I went from door to door for people we knew and we raised \$1,200. I mean, we raised \$12,000. So we started the Village, and we started interviewing potential executive directors and got one. And also, the space down on Connecticut Avenue. I can't remember quite how we got it.

JB: Not in The Broadmoor or somewhere else?

JS: Yes. No, there.

JB: In The Broadmoor. Okay.

JS: Yes. So we started. So there was a board.

JB: What year was that? Do you remember? (inaudible) in the record somewhere.

JS: We had the tenth anniversary last year or two years ago. So it might've been twelve years ago. And the board meeting took place right here in my dining room. And it was easy for people. Some walked up from Connecticut and others who drove could easily park on the street without a problem. And we had our meetings there, and we had our paid executive director. And she left, something in the family. And then we had another, now I'll be poor on names. And he was good for a number of years. And now you know our present director.

JB: So only three directors so far. That's pretty amazing.

JS: Who is fabulous. Fabulous. And we have --

JB: Mark, was the director for a number of years? He was the director when I joined. Yes.

JS: Oh, you knew that?

JB: I did.

JS: And because he had been a choir director at a church with an -- but he gave that up to do this. And what else? We have just 200 members, which is a combination of volunteers and members.

JB: And you and your friends started it all.

JS: Yes. And then there were other people. See, I'll be poor on names, but other people, very good friends on Highland. They've moved away now, but very good friends on the 35th Place. We were a board and we interviewed people and we hired the first and then she left. And then we hired Mark for, I forget how many years. And then he left. And then we now have our current director.

JB: So you had a purpose when you founded it. And what were you hoping to have happen at the beginning? And how has that -- I mean, has that stayed the same or has your vision of it changed a little bit?

JS: Services for seniors who were living in their houses or apartments, many lived in their apartments on Connecticut Ave. That's what we were after. And in the beginning for two, three years, we had sort of like an annual event and we got down on Connecticut Avenue at the apartment building and we got all the restaurants to contribute food. And we had well-known people as prime speakers and things like that. So that went on. I mean, we were ten, eleven, twelve years old. But that went on for about three or four years. And we had this annual event.

JB: That was the big fundraiser?

JS: Yes, it was.

JB: Or not as big as you wanted it to be?

JS: You just gave me the answer. It was a fundraiser, but not as big as we wanted it to be.

JB: They never are.

JS: They never are. So now.

JB: At the beginning, did you charge a membership fee?

JS: Yes. If you were the senior person -- and I pay today, I pay.

JB: You pay more than I do because you get services and I don't get services. I don't receive services yet. So the fee is --

JS: Seventy-five, eighty-five dollars [\$575]. But we do have a few members who absolutely cannot afford it.

JB: Of course.

JS: And are still members.

JB: So tell me what you think is working best about the Village today and maybe what you would like to see happen in the future. Or problems today that you would like to see solved.

JS: Well, I know from -- wait a second now. Our director, paid director.

JB: Frank.

JS: Frank. I know from Frank, whom I know quite well, but here I sit, can't think of Frank's name. I have something of his right on my table. Frank would like to have twenty-five more members. He would say that to you. Not just the volunteers, but twenty-five -- I mean --

JB: Paying members.

JS: Real members. He is very good. He raises money other places too. So I mean, there are some people in this community who have money and give it. I don't necessarily know it, but I -- I mean, who they are -- but I know that is happening. But anyway, I can't remember when we started having the lunches and the visits to different places in Washington, DC.

JB: So more social than just services?

JS: Yes. Well it's a service to get a ride to the botanical garden or something like that, wherever you're getting the ride to. So soon, things got pretty active because although the people were seniors, they were pretty smart and knew what was possible in Washington and all. And maybe they had moved to an apartment here because their adult married children and grandchildren lived in Washington, so they moved from New York. But they didn't see those children during the week because they were in school. So we started having things, classes, walks, like we have two

major, see I can't do that. I would love to do it. Two major walks that take place every week. We have about eight things going all the time and special things to special places in Washington, DC. And now Frank is so good that I didn't go because I had a friend who worked at the Swiss Embassy, but they just had a thing. Or maybe you know.

JB: I went.

JS: Pretty first class, wouldn't you say?

JB: Pretty posh. Yes. It was a --

JS: Music, dinner, refreshments, what else can you want?

JB: And a view. The view out the back at the window is -- I mean, that was amazing.

JS: What else can you get at a local embassy?

JB: I sent a picture to my brothers and sisters. I said, "This is living in Washington."

JS: This is living in Washington.

JB: So you aren't able to go to as many events now. So has it felt from the beginning to now?

JS: So he is my neighbor, but I mean I have been there over the years. I don't think -- and I've been to concerts, but when my friend was the medical attaché. But I don't think I ever went to -- and the refreshments. But I don't think I ever had anything quite as generous as what happened here. So I know all about it, even though I didn't go.

JB: Well, it was funny when they were playing music and I was standing next to John (inaudible) I said, "They're playing a Michael Jackson tune." In the middle of all this Swiss, French Italian music, they're playing Michael Jackson. And it was just, they were charming.

JS: Very classy, I thought.

JB: So you've gone from organizing to now asking for services occasionally. Has -- your life has changed. We all get older. How does it feel to be able to have that service available for you now when you founded the group as -- with that as part of the deal?

JS: I mean, the main thing I can do is go to the lunches once a month and get a ride from a volunteer. So I've sat some very -- with people I knew already. I've sat with people who were very interesting. And once, I sat across from somebody who let's say wasn't my favorite, and you have to be flexible. And generally, I mean, we've been at the Shoreham quite a few times and I know now the accessible way you get in, not from the front. And I guess I can get to anything I want to, but mainly I go to the lunches. And sometimes I've had very interesting people next to me or across from me. I can't handle the whole table. And sometimes it's not as great. So isn't that always true when you go out to lunch?

JB: That's life. Not just lunch. It's life.

JS: Yes.

JB: So are your children living near here?

JS: None.

JB: My family too. None of us. We all grew in Nebraska. None of us --

JS: So I have four wonderful children. Three are married. What odd thing do I want to tell you?

JB: So I'm kind of done with questions. So what haven't I asked you that you want to tell about the Village or the community that you live in or something else that I missed? I mean, Cleveland Park and Woodley Park have changed over the years. I assume your kids went to the local public schools. Is that (inaudible)?

JS: Why do you say that?

JB: I'm just -- I don't know. That is not an assumption. Your kids went to school in the neighborhood somewhere, or did they?

JS: For some years, and they went to private schools later. It was not because I was dissatisfied with John Eaton and everything. I guess I sort of had a circle of friends who somehow, I did not come from a private school background, but I had a circle of friends who started sending their kids to --

JB: That's true of a lot of my friends.

JS: When they were in fifth grade or something like that.

JB: Yes, that's true of a lot of my friends too.

JS: So that's what I did. However, I mean, I happen to know now some other friends whose grandchildren go to Wilson. They've changed the name to Wilson. But I --

JB: Jackson-Reed.

JS: Thank you very much.

JB: I had to learn that.

JS: What did Jackson Reed do?

JB: So Jackson is, I believe, is the first African-American school principal in the District of Columbia. And Vincent Reed was the first Black superintendent.

JS: Vincent Reed I knew.

JB: And I was covering the schools when he was superintendent. So that part was easier for me to remember than the Jackson part.

JS: So that's what they've done to Wilson High School.

JB: Yes, they have.

JS: All right. But I had neighbors whose kids went to Wilson, went to college and et cetera.

JB: So your children don't live around here. Are they close?

JS: No. My children, one set lives outside of Boston. And the next set, John, my son-in-law there has just retired and is going to go into a new subject. And my daughter there was famous caterer, not for big parties but for families, especially families with teenagers. And she did that until everybody's sort of grown up. And now I'll just tell you a funny thing.

JB: Good.

JS: You know pickleball.

JB: Pickleball?

JS: Pickleball.

JB: I certainly do. I don't play it, but I know people do.

JS: So in that area, Newton, Mass, it has become so popular, and other places in the States, that they are changing existing tennis courts to play that sport. And my daughter, who is -- whatever she is, sixty-two or something -- has become an instructor. I mean, fell into becoming an instructor. And she's on vacation now hiking in southern France with her husband. However, she has become an instructor, and people do pay for her to instruct. So that's sort of one thing. So they live there. And moving down, my daughter Rachel, who is the youngest, is the stage manager of Carnegie Hall.

JB: Oh my gosh.

JS: And Carnegie Hall has three auditoria. And generally, and she's in charge of all of them. And generally, I mean, they do not sponsor every concert. They sponsor some concerts, which might be a soloist or a cast of a hundred on bleachers. But other people pay high school choruses and things like church choruses, pay to sing at Carnegie Hall. So anyway, she is in charge of the backstage. And one backstage serves all three auditoria. And that's what she does. And right now, they're not having concerts. They're going through two months of doing repairs and things like that. And the next, I have a child who lives in New Jersey with his wife and two children. Those are the youngest in the school who go to public school there. But they seem to get trips to New York City all the time from the school to go to concerts, museums, whatever. They live a very cultured life. So my oldest son lives in Menlo Park, California and is a director of a program that will bring power from the Pacific Ocean at the end of this decade, we trust.

JB: How cool.

JS: And he has about seventy companies who support this effort. And also, they have started in the Pacific and also at the top of the Pacific, but it's still California, there are two sites that will eventually bring power to northern California.

JB: That's very impressive.

JS: So that's another. So did I tell you about all four, probably?

JB: I think there's one left.

JS: Huh?

JB: I think there's one left.

JS: Let's see. He's the oldest. Amy comes next.

JB: And then Rachel's the youngest. I think you skipped the --

JS: Mark?

JB: Yes.

JS: Oh, Mark. Okay. So Mark and his wife Carolyn. Mark is profoundly deaf. Did I mention that?

JB: You did. You talked about that. Yes.

JS: And Carolyn is not as deaf that they have cochlear implants. And their children have normal hearing. And one's in junior high, one's in high school in New Jersey.

JB: So they're in New Jersey as well?

JS: And they're in New Jersey.

JB: I hope you get to see your grandchildren often. Never often enough. Right?

JS: They have lots of activities.

JB: Of course.

JS: I mean, they come, but --

JB: I see pictures on the wall.

JS: Yes. I mean, everybody calls me every week.

JB: Good.

JS: But it's not always so easy to come.

JB: Kids are busy.

JS: Because, you know, they're --

JB: You're also busy.

JS: School things and not school things. And one granddaughter is in plays and there's rehearsals, community plays, rehearsals, rehearsals and performances and everything like that. So they're all in different things.

JB: They sound wonderful.

JS: Yes. Two are seniors in college, and two more I think are seniors, but I'm not quite sure. One isn't going to school right now. You don't know all their decisions.

JB: It's hard to keep track of a lot of grandkids too, and what they're thinking about.

JS: That's right.

JB: That was my mom's issue.

JS: So you wanted to ask me something?

JB: I think I'm done. If there's something else you want to add. But we're almost at ninety minutes, and that's a long time to talk.

JS: Is that good?

JB: So we can stop the recording if we're done. I'm good. We have a good story here.

END OF AUDIO FILE