

Narrator's Name: Katherine Jacques Trimble
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Interviewer's Name: Carol Adams
For:

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born at 6508 South Albany Avenue in 1905. Now would you like me to tell you some more about 1905?

Q: Go ahead.

A: That was the year that Father Green established St. Rita's parish.

There were just a few houses between 63rd and 67th. There were more houses between 63rd and 64th on the west side of Troy than any other part. Then there was one house just north of 65th Street on Troy—one house on the southeast corner of 65th and Troy. There was one house on the west side of Troy north of 67th, and there were two houses on the west side of Troy south of 66th, closer to 66th than to 67th. On the east side there was nothing south of the house at 64th Street. Then Albany was the next street, and there were houses on both sides of the street between 63rd and 64th. Then on the west side of 64th, there was one house in the 6400 block and one house—no, two houses, three houses, on the east side of the street. One was on the southeast corner of 64th

and Albany, and the other was a few doors south. There was some vacant inbetween. And then there was a house north of 65th Street, and that was on the east side. We were on the west side and the only house in the block. Then there was . . .

Q: It sounds kind of sparsely populated.

A: Yes. There was one house on the east side of Troy just north of 67th. So we could look out our windows and see all of our neighbors—no houses on Whipple and one house on the east side of Sacramento just south of 63rd Street. So I really grew up on the prairies of Chicago Lawn.

Q: Tell us a little bit about your early life and education.

A: Well, I don't remember how old I was when I started to school, but I'm presuming I was five because living in Chicago they were very strict about children going to school. My mother started me in first grade, and every morning . . .

Q: Do you remember the name of the school?

A: At that time, it was the Chicago Lawn School. In 1918, which is the year I graduated, it was changed to the John F. Eberhart because it was

John F. Eberhart that started Chicago Lawn. Every morning the first grade teacher, who was Mrs. Schrader, would inspect our feet to see that we didn't have wet feet. Well, I never had wet feet because I was always very careful, but the boy in front of me had wet feet. He got his feet wet, and the teacher scolded him. Well, I was frightened; I was just scared to death, and I didn't want to go back to school. Well, not being six, I could stay home. But then I was six in March, so the following September I had to go back to school. Laughter. And I was scared to death. But there was one little girl who was very good to me, and she said, "Don't cry." And so in a few days, I was over it. So I finished grade school in seven years because there was a population explosion there, too. And if you learned quickly, they pushed you ahead. When I was in third grade, I only went to school a half a day because there just wasn't room enough. And they finished an addition. By that time, I was in fifth grade. So I only stayed in fifth grade for six months, and then I was passed into sixth grade. And so I had, oh, the essentials of what I should have had in fifth and sixth and seventh with the same teacher. So I should have graduated in 1919. I graduated in 1918. Then I went to Englewood

High School because that was the closest high school. I had to take the 63rd Street car there because that was located at 62nd and Stewart. And it was practically all white in those days. In my division room, if I remember correctly, there must have been about 48 because there was always 48 seats in every room. There was one Negro girl who lived around 63rd and Loomis, and then there were, I think, three Negro girls who lived in the State Street area. The girl who lived in the Loomis area was very liked, and she had the highest marks in the class. And she never associated with the other girl. And, of course, the white girls didn't associate with her, and we all liked her so well. We all felt sorry for her, you know. Well, then Lindblom opened. But she went to Englewood because she was not in the Lindblom district. And I don't remember any Negroes being in Lindblom because they only admitted freshmen and sophmores. It was built for two thousand, and there were eight hundred of us, and we were the Lindblom pioneers. The first day we sat on the floor of the assembly hall. There wasn't any seats. We just had a ball, you know, eight hundred in the school. And I think

the faculty had been hand picked because everybody who came to Chicago to study education usually came to Lindblom High School. When my husband's brother went to the University of Illinois—he was in the school of education, and he said they studied Lindblom. But now I doubt if there are very many whites because I think the neighborhood has changed. So then I graduated from Lindblom. Let's see, I graduated from grade school in 1918 and Lindblom in 1922.

Q: And when did you marry?

A: I got married September 1—this day is September 1, 1925, and we moved out here in August 21, 1929.

Q: And you had this house built, didn't you?

A: Yes we did. We bought the lot. We wanted to build north of 98th Street because that wasn't so low as it is in this block. But we were told the titles weren't clear. We didn't want a corner house, lot, because too much work and too much expense. We didn't feel we could afford it. So we would have like to have the fifty feet north of the corner which would have been in the 9700 block. There were no houses

on the east side of the street at that time. But, as I say, they said the title wasn't clear and if we wanted to build . . . We took these two lots. I think we made a mistake. I think we should have moved to Evergreen Park instead of Oak Lawn.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, because they had better transportation—see, Kedzie Avenue. There was no transportation for my husband except to drive his car.

Q: When was your son born?

A: Let's see, we moved out here in August, and he was born in January, the following January.

Q: You were expecting when you moved here?

A: Yes.

Q: It kind of precipitated your move?

A: Yes. Well, the reason we came was that Dave was a railroad man; he worked on the railroad, and he had just been set up, you know, running an engine, and he didn't have very much seniority. When we came out here, he had enough seniority to work from four to twelve, which wasn't bad. It gave him regular hours. But you see, we had only been out

here a short time when the crash came. So then he was back firing the job he had been running. But we were fortunate that he had a job. See, 37 percent of the people were unemployed. So the people that were employed were helping everybody they could help.

Q: Was it difficult raising your son out here during the Depression?

A: Well, there was nothing in Oak Lawn to give any child the incentive to make something of himself. There wasn't even a high school. And we were told the schools were just as good as they were in Chicago. I'm one of these people who feel when a child gets out of school, the one who taught the child were the parents more so than the teacher. A lot of people feel that it's the teacher, but after all, we can't push our responsibilities on to somebody else.

Q: Where did he go to high school?

A: He went to Blue Island. And I had to get us up earlier to get him off to school than I had to get my husband off to work. He was working days. He had to get the bus at 95th and Cook Avenue. At that time, there was a drug store. And they would wait in the drug store until

the school bus came if the weather was bad, you know. The, of course, he had to come home on the school bus. I think children who take a bus to school feel very much out of it.

Q: Yes, I suppose. I know you were active in the Congregational Church and its Sunday School program. Would you tell us about that?

A: Well, we would have preferred a Methodist church, but at that time there was no Methodist church out here. They had tried to start a Methodist church, but there was not enough. So they just disbanded.

So the closest to the Methodist was the Congregational church. At that time Beckleys(?) lived across the street from us, and Mrs. Beckley said that they went to the Congregational Church, and she thought it was a very good church. Then I had another neighbor that went to St. Gerald's, and she said she thought the Congregational Church was a very good church.

Q: Everybody's espousing the Congregational Church.

A: Right. So she thought it would be a very good idea if I took my boy there to Sunday School. So that's how I happened to get into the Congregational Church.

Q: You wound up teaching Sunday School, didn't you?

A: Yes, because among the protestants, you work in your church if you want your children to have a religious education, you'd better do something. So I had, I think—David's first teacher was Jenny Mandhow(?).

Of course, I had to take him to Sunday School because it was too far for him to go alone. So she decided she didn't want to teach the pre-school. Mr. Duley(?) was the minister at the time, and he asked me if I would take it. Of course, I had had quite a lot of experience in Sunday School work by that time. It's not advisable to teach your own children, but they needed a teacher. So I started in by teaching the pre-school. The first year, I was a substitute teacher. I'd fill in if at the last minute, somebody couldn't come. So I started right off working, and that's the best way to become acquainted in a new community—a new organization; be willing to accept some responsibility.

Q: You always said that you'd come from a long line of boy scouts.

Would you please tell us about your husband's and son's activity with the scouts?

A: To begin with, my brother was a boy scout. So I always say I grew up on being prepared. And I rather imagine that was why my husband was interested in coming to Oak Lawn because his group would hike out here. It isn't too far to hike. They would pitch their camp on, oh—just about what is the east side of Warren Avenue, just south of the railroad. At that time, you could swim in the lake. So they had to climb over the railroad track, and they could go swimming. Or maybe they swam under the railroad track. So we always called it "the little lake that looked so big." My husband had a car when I met him, and we would go out for a ride. And we'd go along 95th Street, and that was my first acquaintance with Oak Lawn. We'd just drive through Oak Lawn. But my brother moved to Evergreen Park, and they were our closest relatives. So then when we came here to Oak Lawn, the only thing for boys was Troop 682 which was sponsored by First Congregational. We always thought that we were very fortunate in that when Dave was three, the Shearer(?) family moved across the street. They had two boys; Jack was four, and John was two. And they took their boys to the Congregational Church. Wade was always interested in scouting, and he talked everybody he met into being a

leader in the boy scouts. He took a great deal of interest in it. He was a sales manager, I think. Before they came to Oak Lawn, I think, they lived in the South Shore district, and he had his own business. But like a lot of young people starting out, when the Depression came along, everything was lost, you know. They were looking for a place, you know, for their children. When it came to training children, we seemed to see eye to eye. And Laurie Shearer(?) and I still keep in touch through all these years. And so, to be a boy scout—well, there wasn't anything else.

Q: You mentioned Reverend ^{DEWEY} Duley before. Wasn't he quite active in trying to get the library started?

A: Well, he was the man who asked me to help with the library. He came here, and if he came to our house, it was either about boy scouts or the Sunday School. And just before he left, he asked me if I enjoyed living in Oak Lawn. And I said that Oak Lawn didn't bother me. I grew up on the prairies of Chicago Lawn, and I said that I'm surprised that there isn't a little library out here. Well, that was 1934 because I

started David to Sunday School in 1933 when he was three years old. (thunder in background) That's going to be recorded, this bad weather. So he asked me that question just before he left, and I never gave it another thought. And then one day he called me, and he said, "You know, Mrs. Trimble, we could get a library if you'd be willing to help." And I said, "Well, Mr. Duley, I don't have any time to help." Because I never knew what hours my husband was going to work, when he was going to eat, when he was going to sleep—I was pretty well confined at home. You can't schedule it. So he said, "Could you go to Mrs. Exter's house, and we'll talk it over?" Well, I didn't know Mrs. Exter at the time, and he told me where she lived. And I said, "Yes, I could do that much." So I went up there one afternoon because Mrs. Salisbury, who lived on the corner, would always take David if I wanted to go out. And if she wanted to go out, I would always take care of her little girl, Alice. So we talked it over. There were three things that had to be done. The W.P.A. was going to help. They would give some money. We had to take care of getting the books. Somebody had to take care of getting somebody who

would work in the library. And somebody had to get a place for the

library to be. Well, Mr. ^{DEWEY}~~Duley~~ said he'd take care of the books,

getting the books. And Mrs. Exter said she would take care of

finding someone to work in the library if I would find the location.

So we said, "Well, where would it be?" Well, there was only one place

where it could be, and that was the little red barn that wasn't being

used. The property belonged to the ^{BEHREND'S}Barren's at that time, and it was

the only vacant place in Oak Lawn. So it was that little red barn or

no place. And so they said, "Well, you go and ask Mrs. ^{BEHREND}Barren." I

often wondered why they didn't say Mr. ^{BEHREND}Barren, but they said Mrs. ^{BEHREND}Barren.

So I went into the store because she worked in the store and told her

what we wanted. That was the easiest assignment I ever had because she

said, "Oh, yes." She was sure they could use the little red barn because

she thought it would be nice to have a library in Oak Lawn, too. So then

we had set the date on which we would return to Mrs. Exter's house with

what we had accomplished. So I went back for the second time, and the

library was launched. But apparently Mrs. Exter had trouble getting

someone to work in the library because she did it herself, and I don't think she wanted to do it. It was difficult to find someone who wanted to give the time.

Q: This Mrs. ^{BEHREND} ~~Barren~~, would that be August ^{BEHREN} ~~Barren~~'s wife?

A: His wife, yes.

Q: And didn't he also put in a floor and . . .

A: Well, everybody helped. It was all donated labor, and the first thing they had to do was clean out the pigeons. Because there had been a pigeon farm at one time on the north side of, north of 93rd which is about 54th Avenue. And so, apparently, the pigeons came to roost in that barn. So that was the first thing that the men did was to clean the—it had to be cleaned out, and then it had to be, you know, painted. A lot of work had to be done so it could be used for a library and . . .

Q: Who were some of the people that helped you?

A: Well, I don't know cause I didn't help. All I did was find the location. But at that time, I think, Jim Radke(?) was working for

^{BEHREND}
Mr. ~~Barren~~, and he did the electrical work in it. And I knew him

because he was interested in scouting. I don't think he was one of the charter members of 682, but I think he joined shortly thereafter. Then I think Mr. Brawn(?) was interested and Mr. Schaller(?). I think they were two of the men who helped to clean it up. Mr. Duley didn't remember the names of all the people that helped when we started working on Oak Lawn history. So anybody could say, "Well, I helped." That's the way the library was started. Well, then when Mrs. Exter left Oak Lawn, she asked Mrs. Schaller if she would take it over and try to find someone. So she did, and she found Mrs.—I think she pronounced her name Simons, S-I-M-O-N-S, and she was willing to take it over as the librarian. I wished I could have done it because Mrs. Exter had taught school, and she would have taught me how to be a librarian. But as I say, I didn't have the time. So then Oak Lawn continued to grow, and so did the library, and they needed someone else. So Mrs. Kopp(?) was asked to help. And they were still in the little red barn, so she could tell you more about the little red barn than anybody living in Oak Lawn at this time. Then they needed more help, and at that time, Ted Thomas was on the board. And so he asked Pauline if she would be

interested in working in the library. So she was the third one to be hired, and I think Edith Masson(?) was the fourth. And they are all still living in Oak Lawn. I think Carol Ness was the fifth—no, Lucille Rogan(?) was probably the fifth, and then Carol Ness was the sixth. And then I was the seventh when I—but you see seven people, and that was about 1966. So you see it grew slowly, and then in 1950 we went into the rapid growth period, you see. And that was because the veterans were coming back from World War II, and they were able to get their G.I. loans and were looking for places to build, places to live, and that's right when we went into the rapid growth which does nothing for any community.

Q: But you served on an initial committee with the Reverent ^{DEWEY}~~Daley~~ and Mrs. Exter?

A: Yes, to get it started. That's how I happened to know how it was started, you see, because we moved here in 1929, and that was—we had been out here about five years by that time. But you see, our friends and our relatives other than my brother all lived in Chicago Lawn. So every time we went out, we always went back to Chicago Lawn. Because

grandparents always like to see their grandchildren. So I never had any trouble, you know, getting babysitters. They were always glad to take David.

Q: Then just to bring you up to date, you started in what, 1966?

A: Yes, at the library . . .

Q: And you were retired in 1976?

A: Yes.

Q: After ten years . . .

A: Yes, after ten years.

Q: . . . as Oak Lawn Library's historian.

A: Yes.

Q: And archivist.

A: it was very interesting but very time consuming.

Q: What were the years of World War II like here in Oak Lawn?

A: Wel, of course, we were all busy because everybody helped with the war effort and all organizations—and, of course, we worked through the boy scouts. And they had their scrap drives. I think

there's a picture of the library where we piled all the scarp which was north of Cook's house. That was the first house south of Franklin— Franklin is the street south of the railroad, isn't it?

Q: Yes.

A: When you live in a small town, you don't pay any attention to . . .

Q: The names of the streets. (laughter)

A: Only when people ask where a street is.

Q: How did you get interested in Oak Lawn history?

A: Oh, I was always interested in history. My husband and I are very different in disposition and temperament, but we usually would see eye to eye, and we both liked geography and history. Travel is geography and history, and travel is in. Everybody's interested in travel, aren't they?

Q: Oh, sure.

A: Just naturally, see history is a big business.

Q: You were involved then in that first organization, the Oak Lawn Historical Society?

A: Just as a member because at that time, my husband was traveling, and we would come and go. See, he changed his work in—I think it was about 1948. And he was out of town a lot, and I was out of town a lot, too. We'd just lock the house and go.

Q: So actually, it's a total of ten years that you worked on the library's history collection?

A: Yes, in fact, I wondered if anybody in Oak Lawn would be interested in Oak Lawn history, and I threw out a lot of things. Because, after all, one little house can only hold so much.

Q: That's true.

A: I think other old timers did the same.

Q: What are your hopes for the future of our local history room at the library?

A: Oh, I think it will expand because it's just like I say, history is big business. Just think of the amount of money that comes into the State of Illinois because we claim Abraham Lincoln. You see, it's a tourist attraction. And people who move to new locations

are interested in the history of their new locations. They want the history, and they want a map. And that comes with education. And just think how much money the American taxpayer has spent on education since 1900. You see, there were just a few of us who went to high school. Because if you went to high school for two years in those days, you were really educated.

Q: Well, I don't have any more questions. Can you think of anything that I've missed that should be included?

A: Well, I think one of the most interesting things that we saw during World War II was that when we did have a few minutes to sit down and relax, we would watch the airplanes over the part of Oak Lawn that we called the slough from 99th to 103rd. There were an awful lot of airplanes there, and we were wondering if they weren't learning to be pilots. And there may be people living in Oak Lawn now who came out there, flew out here, to practice.

Q: Did they fly over it or land in it?

A: No, they just flew over it, you know, sort of back and forth and back and forth. We'd just sit on the grass and watch the planes.

Q: Was this the only house on the block when you first . . .

A: Oh, yes, we were here for almost ten years before they built.

I think they might have built in about 1937. I don't remember exactly.

But it was across the alley and about half way between 98th and 99th.

So I didn't have any close neighbors for almost twenty years. But

my parents had the same experience in Chicago Lawn because they moved

out around 1895, and they didn't build in their block until about 1918.

Q: After the war.

A: You see, that was when the World War I veterans were looking for

places to live. When my parents moved to Chicago Lawn, you could

get a house rent free just to take care of it because boys were

destructive in those days, too, breaking windows. There has always

been that problem in this area, child delinquency. Parents just turn

their children out. They get into mischief, I guess.

Q: Well, I hope we've only hit the highlights, but we've got a lot of

things written down in your file about, you know, your family's name

and your maidenname. We have all that included. So if you can't think

of anything else to include, we'll call it a day.

A: Well, that's, I think, the important part. I felt that I moved to the end of nowhere. (laughter) And now, of course, there's a lot of people out here.

END OF TAPE