

Elsie Vick Zander (Mrs. Herbert)
9428 S. 55th Ave.
Oak Lawn, Ill. 60453

Taped by: Carol Adams for
Oak Lawn Public Library. 1976.

Int: How long have you lived in Oak Lawn?

Mrs. Zander: Since 1910.

Int: You were born and raised out here then?

Mrs. Zander: No, I was born in what was then known as Worth. It's Chicago Ridge today. On 111th Street right opposite Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. There was a farm there. It was about halfway between Ridgeland and Central.

Int: Were your parents farmers?

Mrs. Zander: Well my Dad was born and raised on a farm in Oak Lawn at 95th and Crawford (Pulaski). He was born in 1881. His parents were married out here in 1880. I don't think they owned this farm though because when we moved to 5412 W. 95th St. they farmed all the property around here (from 54th Ave. to Central north side of 95th St.). They had a house on the hill over there (gesturing towards 54th Ave.) with a little red barn in the back. My grandfather Vick farmed all this land here.

Int: Do you have any idea when that house was built (5412 W. 95th St.)

Mrs. Zander: No I don't. It was much smaller when they first bought it so and they added a big kitchen at the back. When my Dad married my Mother, Jessie Aulwurm, they lived ~~there~~ ^{on the Worth farm} for four years. My mother's mother owned the farm. Then my grandmother Aulwurm's son was very sick so she asked my Mom and Dad to leave so her son could live on the farm.

Mrs. Zander: So when he left the farm he got a job with the Wabash Railroad. My father's name was William and his father was Charles Vick, my grandfather. He worked for the railroad all his life and passed away in 1945. When we first moved to Oak Lawn we lived in what was Brueggeman's old house that was owned by Mrs. Neman. So we lived there until my Dad bought this property (9428 S. 55th ave.) and built this house.

Int: When was this house built?

Mrs. Zander: Let's see, I was seven years old when we moved here and I was born in 1907 so it would be 1914.

Int: Did you go to school out here?

Mrs. Zander: Yes. Anna Neman Brueggeman took me to the Cook Avenue School the first day. There were all grades in the one room at that time. One of my favorite teachers was Hazel Schussler and my eighth grade teacher was Miss Corey. They had two years of high school at the Cook Avenue School and I took a general course and then transferred to Englewood High School. We used to ride the train. Of course there was more train service then than there is now.

Int: Did you work at all before you were married?

Mrs. Zander: Yes, down in the Loop for Inland Steel. Then I met my husband and got married and I've been here ever since.

Int: Your father was a village trustee, wasn't he?

Mrs. Zander: Yes for six years from 1924 to 1930, He was also treasurer of Trinity Lutheran Church. We were all baptized, confirmed and married in Trinity Lutheran for the past couple of generations.

Int: Did your husband's family, the Zander's lived out here for a long time?

Mrs. Zander: Yes, Herb's mother was a Krueger, Louise Krueger. She lived in Oak Lawn and I heard that she was one of the first persons baptized at Trinity Lutheran Church which was dedicated in 1881. But they lived in Lyons after they got married, then she moved to 79th Street near Harlem at that time they called it Summit and today it is Bridgeview. My husband went to school at 79th and State Road (School District 111). He was a member of our church though and walked all the way, even got caught and almost lost in snowstorm.

Int: What did your husband do for a living?

Mrs. Zander: He was a truck driver for 42 years. He retired six years ago. Now he is a school crossing guard. He started part time and filled in at various corners but now he works regularly and is stationed at 54th Ave. and the railroad tracks.

Int: Is your family all grown?

Mrs. Zander: We have one daughter, Myra Van Pelt, she moved to Madison, Wisc. and she has four girls, Gail, Marla, Lorie and Beth. Gail is married, Marla is a nurse, Lorie is a secretary and Beth is still in high school. No boys.

Int: I understand that you did a lot of work on the Trinity Lutheran Centennial book.

Mrs. Zander: Yes that was last year (1975). I did the best I could. Herb's mother by the way (Louise Krueger Zander) is the oldest member of our church she is 96 years old. She is in Monticello Convalescent Center. A bit too much to handle for us.

Mrs. Zander: I took care of my Mother for 13 years, she passed away in 1966. My Grandmother Vick was a midwife and helped to bring a lot of babies into the world. She worked with Dr. Schussler and Dr. Hopkins. Dr. Hopkins was my doctor when I was born.

Int: What was it like out here when you were a girl. What did you do for amusement?

Mrs. Zander: There were church groups and after we were Confirmed at about 13 or 14 years of age, there were outings and once a month we would get together play games, serve refreshments. And years ago, Mr. Eichler would bring movies and show them at Community Club at about 96th and Minnick and they would raffle off things. I remember one night I ran home. I had won a ham. I don't think I've won anything since in my life. And later on I think they had the movies where the Catholic church used to be on the corner of 95th and 53rd Ct. where Ratajek's Medical building is now. And we'd have dances.

Int: Is there anyone that would know the date that the house your parents and grandparents lived in at 5412 W. 95th St. was built?

Mrs. Zander: No, I 'd heard that it was built someplace else and moved there and the house next to it that was once Giapetti's, the big tall one, that's a landmark, too. Covington's house at 94th and 54th Ave. that's an old one, too. It's the northeast corner. The house south of the church on 54th Ave. that used to belong to the Simpson's.

Mrs. Zander: It was their farmhouse.

Int: Do you know if the Homestead Bar, at 93rd St. and Central Ave., was ever a Simpson farmhouse?

Mrs. Zander: It was but a later one.

Int: What was the size of the town when you were young and going to school?

Mrs. Zander: (She laughed). We had gravel roads and I remember when they blacktopped 95th St. we used to roller skate on it because there weren't any cars. It was only two lanes and mostly there were horses and buggies. They had a wrought iron bridge across the creek and I remember when they went to widen 95th St. and put in the concrete bridge they had to use dynamite. They warned my grandparents when they were going to blast.

Int: Did you go skating on the lake?

Mrs. Zander: Yes and it used to be a swimming pond before the homes were built around it and people starting dumping their sewage in it. Really a shame. We used to have picnics in Schultz's Woods north of 93rd St. Our church had them. They'd put on plays and have grab bags and free pop and ice cream. It was a day we would always look forward to once a year. We had picnics over in Brandt's Woods where the church is located now (97th and Brandt).

Int: When was the new church built?

Mrs. Zander: In 1945, my husband was financial secretary and later he was on the council and I was a Sunday School teacher for 25 years.

Mrs. Zander: My mother was the first vice-president of the Ladies Aid at the church and I was secretary and vice-president for years. When we built the new church we had to go out and find equipment for our kitchen, a stove, end tables so it was busy time. I have really watched Oak Lawn grow.

Int: Did you like it better then?

Mrs. Zander: No, we were one big happy family for a while, everyone knew everyone and it was much quieter but there was only one butcher, Butch Krueger, at the corner of 95th and Cook, and Schultz's store was across the street and my Dad used to take us there to buy candy and the first Behrend's store was where Sweeney's News Agency is. And there was an ice cream store, Ayer's. That was something we always looked forward to on Sunday to get some ice cream. I rem^eber when Behrend's store burned down, there were pots and pans flying, they tried to salvage all they could. Then he built at 95th and Raymond which the village just bought for a parking lot. In the old store he had the post office and groceries plus hardware and general merchandise you go there and get anything you wanted just like a country general store. Where the Family Shoe store is now was Larsen's Hall, upstairs and a meat market downstairs. Carl Larsen was quite prominent out here he had an electric shop and I remember that we got our first refrigerator from him. He was very active, he built homes. He had a brother Henry he was in the butcher shop with George Hoffman. His father had a blacksmith shop right on the corner ^{at} ~~and~~ Minnick. I used to pass it going to school.

Mrs. Zander: He'd have the big doors open and wagonwheels outside and he'd be shoeing the horses inside. I'd sometimes stand and watch him for a while and he'd talk to the horses, "Whoa, whoa." I remember one Halloween they took all his wagon wheels and everything he had around the place and threw it across 95th St. in the creek. On my way to church the next day he was out hauling all that stuff back. He^{was} so excited, and angry. Years ago they played the tricks a lot more than they do today.

Over there on 95th st. where the tavern is, used to be Widener's Ice Cream parlor and every Sunday when I went to church Old Gus Widener would say, "Pray for me Elsie." When I got married in 1928 we had a reception here at the house and Gus sent over a beautiful ice cream wedding cake. But most of the area around here was vacant. The ⁱfirst house in the area that went up was Schmit house on the northwest corner of 94th and 55th. It was lost in the tornado. I remember Mr. Schmit built that house himself and I went to school with his children. There was Fred, Ida and Minnie, Chris. I saw Fred the other day he's living in the Saxon apartments on 95th St. Ida Schmit Prielle is living in the apartments across the street. She went to the Cook Avenue School, too. My grandmother used to talk about a school house at 95th and 55th and there big willow trees there. The next school was at 95th and Cicero before Cook Avenue School was built. My Dad went to a school at Trinity Lutheran, behind the old church on 95th St. I was going to German class there on Saturday and I asked what were all those books doing there.

Mrs. Zander: Our big shopping ^{area} ~~area~~ was at 63rd and Halsted. We used to take the bus. The first bus garage was at 95th and 54th and the phone company was there too. Then the phone company ^moved to upstairs of where the Chinese restaurant is today and then I think it moved across the street.

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