

FAIRMOUNT NEIGHBORS HISTORY PROJECT

Anita Johnson, Consultant

Nancy Reckord, Interviewer

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N: My name is Nancy Reckord. I live at 1575 Fairmount and it is Oct. 22, 2010, and I'm interviewing Anita Johnson who lives on Birch. So Anita, why don't you say your address?

A: My address is 2288 Birch Lane, 97403 zip, and as Nancy said, I'm Anita Johnson.

N: And how long have you lived in this house?

A: We moved in August 1965.

N: And did you live in this neighborhood before you moved here?

A: No, we lived over on the other side of town on McMillan St.

N: Who were some of your neighbors when you first moved in?

A: Well, actually, Hannah and Dan Goldrich lived not directly below us but two houses below us in the house that is now occupied by students. And Gail and Lou Breger and their three children lived in the house the Goldriches now live in. Lou was a psychology professor at the University, and Gail was really a community activist. And when they left, I don't remember what year; Hannah and Dan bought their house and moved in next door.

N: So were they the neighbors that you knew the best? The Bregers and the Goldriches?

A: Yes, and then there was another...the Bregers and the Goldriches and then across Birch Lane was a family, the Penny family and I'm not sure if they were there when we came but they were there subsequently. That was Herb and Lee Penny and their three children and I had been in University with her so I'd know her.

N: As a student?

A: Uh hmmm. As a student.

N: Is that what brought you to Eugene?

A: Yes. I came to Eugene to go to the University of Oregon.

N: In what year was that?

A: 1947. To study journalism. Lee Penny also majored in journalism. And Art was a student, a year ahead of me. And that's where we met.

N: Did the Harrises live in what is now our house [1575], down on Fairmount then?

A: Yes, Leo Harris, the Athletic Director, they lived there. And a fine piano teacher lived in the house next to yours.

N: Well, I've heard that a piano teacher lived there but I don't know if I know his name.

A: I can't remember either and our children didn't take lessons from him but a lot of the neighborhood kids did. Above us was the McDonald House, still called the McDonald House, the white house.

N: Is that the big one?

A: Right. The two houses that are there in between now were not there in 1965. Now there is our house and then two houses and then the McDonald house but those two houses are relatively new. And I was trying to think, and the Thomases, Bob and Ryu Thomas, lived down across from the Goldriches.

N: So would that be the house next to us, the first one up? [Birch Lane]

A: No, that one...

N: Who lived there?

A: That one was Herman Kerlee, who was very prominent in the state. He was at the University in the League of Oregon Cities and he knew more about how this state functioned, down to the city level, than anybody. But that house had been owned by the Dean of the Journalism School, Eric Allen. It was famous for wonderful parties.

N: That's the first I've heard of that.

A: Oh yes. I came after Eric Allen. The journalism building is named after him; he was probably the most famous journalism dean. He probably established this school as a very good school. And the first thing I heard was that, "Oh, the parties at Eric Allen's house were wonderful." (laughter) Isn't that nice! The Kerlees lived there for a long time and were very interested in the neighborhood and what happened.

N: I've heard stories about the man who must be a later Dean of Journalism and that would be Mr. Hulting, Betty Jean Hulting's husband?

A: Yes.

N: And they lived where your son lives? [On Fairmount]

A: That's right.

N: I've heard many stories...and we'll get to The Grasshopper, I'm sure.

A: Well, yes. She was famous in the neighborhood. When she moved away it took three women to do what BJ had done all by herself. (Laughter) She was amazing. When we lived on the other side of town and she heard from the woman who owned this house that we had bought the house and were moving in she got in touch with me right away. We were acquainted because her husband had been the Dean of the Journalism School and I'd been in the school and I liked him very much. She welcomed us to the neighborhood. Told me about the neighborhood, and told me about The Grasshopper, and about the school and anything I wanted...I hadn't even moved to the neighborhood yet!

N: She was your Welcoming Wagon!

A: Yes, she was. She was very good that way.

N: Did you hear any stories about any other women who were...I heard a story about one woman who was a kind of the Grande Dame of faculty wives, someone who lived along Fairmount who used to, maybe it was before your time, apparently used to invite all of the faculty women and maybe husbands too, in the neighborhood to their house every fall for some kind of tea.

A: No. Of course, I wasn't a faculty wife, so I don't know who that was. Of course, you've talked to Mir [Starlin] who knows all those things.

N: Well, when you first moved up here, what was the view like? Was it very different? Because it's quite grown up now.

A: Well, it's quite grown up, yes. I think about that. Our house was owned by Glen and Virginia Burns. I think the house was built in the '20s and was just kind of a cottage in the woods, owned by an architecture professor and the fireplace in the living room is the only remaining part of the original house. Glen and Virginia Burns owned Automatic Heat. They also owned a heavy construction company so they totally remodeled this house. They added a whole wing, they did a lot of the work on the downstairs, and then when we moved in we did nothing. We moved in with four children, the youngest one two, and oldest one eight, and we did no remodeling, nothing to the house until our kids all left (Laughter)...That's a common story isn't it! That wall over [pointing], we didn't add, we had a little bit of space but not much but from that wall to that door we remodeled. And did a little bit of redesign in the living room, actually a new fireplace.

N: So, is this the front door? [pointing]

A: Uh huh.

N: So the entrance, the main entrance, was kind of up the driveway?

A: Yes.

N: Well, I wonder how many things have been built around here since you came.

A: Well, lots of things, of course. But...and the trees have all...the growth is so much more that we don't see much out there. When we moved in there were one hundred rhododendrons. He loved rhododendron and we still have a good many of those plants that he...

N: So those are at least 50 years old.

A: Yeah. There's one out there in the courtyard that, a big one, that, I'll bet that rhodie is 75 years old.

N: So you were sort of part of the business community a little more than the University community.

A: Right. My husband, you know, is a lawyer, and he practiced with his father and his brother and his friend Jim Harrang. It was Johnson, Johnson, and Harrang. But we both had gone to the University and had a lot of friends in the University like Stan and Joan Pierson who live down on Fairmount, were students with us in the University and he was back here as a history professor and she was teaching in the English department. The Rameys lived down there around the corner [on 15th] and they worked at the University so we sort of crossed. We were with both groups of people.

N: What was so comfortable about moving to this neighborhood? What drew you here?

A: Well, the house we were in was really too small. A lot too small. (Laughter). We had stretched it every way possible, and when this house...Friends of the Burns told us that Glen and Virginia were going to move to Bend, which they did, and we should look at this house, which we did. Art just walked around the outside. We have nearly an acre here and he loved the outside, where it was, and the grounds...

N: Is he a gardener?

A: No, but he just liked it and you know, we always had swings and places for the kids to play outside. He hardly looked inside the house but to me the house was wonderful and we bought it for \$45,000 dollars. Think of that. So even at that time it was a good buy. The next day we said we'd like it.

N: Was that a price that was pretty average at the time for what it was? It didn't feel inflated; you said it was a good buy?

A: No. It was a good price. I remember one friend of mine, whose husband was a dentist, she said, “Oh, I think you guys shouldn’t take on that kind of debt.” (Laughter)

N: If she’d only known! (Laughter)

A: So but we said, “Oh well, we’re going to,” so we did. Another thing Virginia Burns had told us was that living here, (Virginia Burns was quite well known in town and she’s now deceased) but she said, “Living here you’re by the park. Fairmount Park.” She said, “Fairmount Park is like a full time baby sitter. When the kids are impossible and other kids come to play you just say, ‘Go to the park.’” (Laughter) And she was right in that there was always something going on. In the summer there were leaders, park leaders in the morning and in the evening, and there were overnights done by the park...

N: Oh, I didn’t know about those. Every summer? All ages?

A: Oh yeah. The leaders were marvelous. And they had, you know, an arts and crafts wagon that went around to the different parks and the wading pool worked. It was amazing what this little park offered to the neighborhood. It was neutral ground.

N: My sense from the park and people’s conversations is that that park, and then Condon School, and somebody else mentioned The Grasshopper, were the real binding forces of the neighborhood that pulled everybody together.

A: Right. That was a time when there was an active PTA and that’s right, the school was very important.

N: Did all of your children go to Condon?

A: All four did, right. And then to Roosevelt and then to South. And you probably heard this story about BJ. At one point, the school district said there were not enough children in the neighborhood; the child population had declined so they were going to close Condon. Have you heard this story?

N: I’ve heard it once. But go ahead though. And I didn’t hear about BJ’s connection to it.

A: She then organized a survey of the neighborhood, door-to-door, of the attendance area and said, "Your numbers are wrong." And they said, "Maybe they are." So the door didn’t close.

N: Oh! I did hear from Marge Ramey the other day that there was a year when Condon held double sessions, and it was because of they didn’t have enough kids somehow to support the number of teachers, or vice versa, I don’t know what exactly the problem was but she said there was one year when kids went from early in the morning until noon or so, and then a second round of classes...that’s the only time I had ever heard about that.

A: No, I wasn't aware of that. But of course, Marge was in the neighborhood quite awhile before I was. Her youngest one is the age of my oldest.

N: And I noticed she told me she came to school here in 1943 so you came 4 years later. So maybe it was just in that period before you were here.

A: Well, there was no question, you know, as it continues to do, enrollment was declining in the inner city and I think the University was a willing buyer whenever the school district wanted to sell that building...

N: You're talking about Condon School?

A: Yes, the Condon building. All of our kids went all the way through Condon and the last year, you think of that now, I don't know what grade you taught, but our youngest...

N: I had all of them, at one point or another. (Laughter)

A: But our youngest was in a class with 17 kids. Seventeen first graders.

N: Mmm. How nice.

A: How nice. Yeah.

N: As it should be. A good number. Except a teacher always likes to have an even number if possible so you can pair them up. (Laughter)

A: I remember thinking telling that to my daughter-in-law and she won't believe it. But, no, Condon and The Grasshopper was a real community effort.

N: While we're on Condon, do you remember teachers or administrators or events there, that were particularly important to your kids or your family, does anybody stand out?

A: Well, Tom Hochstadter was the administrator, the principal at that time. And the first grade teacher was a woman, Eleanor Martin, who was a widow. She had one grown daughter I think, and her life was teaching the first grade. And she was really good. And then there was a 6th grade teacher, (then they were in the school through the 6th grade), named Gale Taylor, a man who had a Master's Degree in History and taught 6th graders, just moved them along, you know, I mean he really challenged 6th graders. And we really disliked that the change from five/six/seven/eight [the school district changed to middle schools from junior highs] because the 6th grade with Gale Taylor was so great. There were the usual school functions. But you know the kids could all walk.

N: I've heard that from everybody, that safety was simply not an issue.

A: No. It was close, our kids would walk to kindergarten, you know. I think there's a certain amount of community in that.

N: I suppose people would watch out for each other's kids on a rainy day, things like that.

A: Yeah.

N: Was it essentially a young neighborhood? Young family neighborhood?

A: A lot more than it is now, certainly. Derek and Lynette [son and daughter-in-law] talk about, Derek especially, remembers the families that lived in this neighborhood that had a lot of kids. Like the Larson family. Have you heard about the Larson family?

N: No.

A: Well, Deborah and Chuck Larson lived up where Phil Barnhart lives now. Do you know where that is?

N: I think that's just up from Marge's?

A: They had five children and the Rameys had 3 children and the Hultings had 3 children. There were a lot more children in the neighborhood. Now it's been sort of coming back to that.

N: Now it's got to be harder because the prices are so much higher for real estate in this area.

A: Right. And then there used to be, I don't know if there still are, graduate student families living in those University houses down there which I always like that. And I thought they were a good addition to the neighborhood.

N: Where are you referring to?

A: Well, between here and the University.

N: Like over on Villard and Orchard.

A: Yes, modest little houses that graduate families would live in. And I always liked those families. They added to the mixture. Which was good. I think the cost probably now keeps younger families out.

N: When you say mixture, talk little bit about the mixture...

A: Well, there were professional people, you know, like us. Chuck Larson was an accountant, and Art a lawyer; there were academic people, faculty people, and then there was the graduate student group that was pretty low income. There were a fair number of working class people who could live in this neighborhood, which was really nice.

N: Why was that?

A: Well, as you said, property then was not so high and then there were modest houses, certainly a lot of them between here and the University and not all owned by the University. I was

thinking about that the other day, like I knew families where the husband was the plumber, another husband was a carpenter, and had kids in the school and you were friends with those families. Through the school.

N: What about a mix of race, religion, culture?

A: Not much. There was a black family, the Reynolds family. You know about the Reynolds family.

N: No, I don't.

A: Well the Reynolds family is a famous early black family in Eugene that has been a great strength.

N: Are they the family of the woman who just died recently?

A: Yes. They lived right down here on 16th or 17th. They had a big family. One contemporary was a good friend of one of our sons. You know, I think that was the only minority family. I can't think of any Asian children.

N: Were your kids active in Scouting? Or sports?

A: No. Our kids didn't do Scouting. They did a lot of sports. But we did a lot of backpacking and skiing and river rafting and stuff as a family. So they never did Scouting, actually. Art's brothers, Art grew up in Eugene, and his brothers did Scouting, but he said I don't think our kids need to; we'll do our stuff. But they did do basketball and football and soccer and skiing and they did music. There was a music teacher in the neighborhood, Mrs. Klemm, down just off 19th, whose husband was a chemistry professor. She taught a lot of the kids in the neighborhood.

N: Now tell me about The Grasshopper. I've heard about it from a number of people but it would be wonderful to have your version too.

A: I think there have been several dissertations written about it, as a matter of fact.

N: Somebody actually wrote a dissertation about it? Who would have done that? Someone at the U of O?

A: In the education department. It was interesting. She moved in the neighborhood and was very interested in it as a teaching tool. Well, when I moved here, as I said, BJ Hulting had already started The Grasshopper. She said one of the reasons she was so thrilled to have me move in was because I had been a journalist and had 4 kids and she thought, "Here's help with The Grasshopper!"

N: Someone who knows how to type! [Laughter]

A: For many years, it was in her basement, which was a wonderful place. You could come in off the street and well, I'm sure you've heard. It was...

N: I've just heard that there was a mimeograph machine there. But you know, people remember different things. So...

A: Well, the mimeograph machine was at Condon!

N: Oh! So it wasn't in her basement.

A: No, it was at the school.

N: Oh, I've been told that it was in her basement.

A: She had...I mean the basement was a rough basement...at one time one of my sons turned off the power in the whole house [Laughter]...they would be down in the basement and she would sit upstairs. She had a table right by the kitchen door and she would work with the kids and then her 3 kids supervised. And you know, they had a delivery system, they would take it all over the neighborhood, 10 cents a copy, and she had a job for everybody. If you didn't want to do anything else you could deliver the paper. And I remember Mrs. Harris saying, "Your son came to my door for the paper and I didn't have a dime so he said, 'You can't have it then'" and he walked away. (Laughter) Which she thought was so funny! She couldn't have The Grasshopper!

N: So you didn't pay ahead, like a real subscription.

A: Oh no, you paid for each paper. That's right. And BJ had set it up...it was really brilliant...she had set it up...parents would take kids to the President of the University, the Mayor of the town, the Governor, everywhere. And interview them and write the interview and plan the questions in advance. When Tommy Williams [local florist] was doing something, anything in the neighborhood that was going on, the kids would go down there. She would take a group of kids or some other parents would take a group of kids and interview them and then they got to a certain age that you could spell, maybe 2nd grade, I'm not sure of the age maybe 7, and you could misspell and miss grammar and everything but beyond that it had to be...

N: Oh, that's an interesting way to do it.

A: And it would be fun because it was full of the kid's things, the kids wrote them. Her oldest son, well, all three of her kids were wonderful and marvelous kids, the oldest son did a lot of journalism in school and he was a pretty...a taskmaster, you know...and then the kids would sometimes do their own illustrations. Well always, the parents didn't do any of the illustrations. And I remember Steve Prefontaine, one picture, they said, "He runs." And the kid just did this spiral and under it, it said, "He runs." I thought, yeah, that's just what he does!

N: I heard from Maggie [Gontrum] that when they went, I think to Germany one year, that her daughter got to be the so-called foreign correspondent! (Laughter) And there was a "Tot Jots."

A: Tot Jots, yes. And then when her kids got older, BJ had shares in it. So they learned how it works to buy shares and to buy stock. Every year there was a big Grasshopper picnic up in the park.

N: Oh, I wondered if they ever got the kids together.

A: The Grasshopper picnic was something you didn't want to miss.

N: Up in the park, meaning...

A: Up in the shelter in the park, Hendricks Park. And people would bring things and we would buy a certain amount of things but...

N: Like 20 kids, 30 kids?

A: More than that. And their parents and their brothers and their sisters.

N: How many years do you think the Grasshopper...

A: Thirteen years. It went a long time.

N: Do you still have any copies? I've heard that people were scrambling for them at an earlier date for somebody's Roosevelt project. I think Maggie...

A: No, I had a whole box full of them. I had years and years of them. And I'll look. I'm often asked that question. The last few years it was at my house. The Hulting kids were too old, you know, so I had it here and then Don Robinson, who for years was the, do you know Don?

N: I've met him, yeah; he was the Editor of the Guard.

A: He lived here in the neighborhood and had two kids and he and I then would put it together. We often laughed about that. The kids would come here, do the work, and he and I would put it together.

N: How many pages was it?

A: It would vary, depending on how much material...

N: From minimum...

A: Oh, two legal [page] sizes. Sometimes just two and sometimes more.

N: When you say, "put it together", does that mean once a week the kids came up here and you had maybe 10 or 12 kids at a go? And they would contribute their things and you would type them up? And then somebody would go over to Condon to run them off?

A: Yeah.

A: And did they do it on a Friday afternoon or something?

A: No, I can't remember the days.

N: I wonder, just thinking of how it would work from the school's point of view, they would know these parents were coming on X day...

A: I think it mostly was only 2 pages, mostly the front and the back of a legal size, different colors, occasionally there would be more than that, but our kids felt they really learned a lot doing The Grasshopper.

N: I bet they did.

A: You know, when you interviewed the President of the University...BJ had access to all this or when the kids went and interviewed the Mayor...or talked to the store owner and you learned all of that and then you wrote it up afterward. And then you, you know, Corrie [daughter] said that was one of the best learning tools she had growing up. I remember Steve Prefontaine coming to the basement of the Hulting house and the kids interviewing him. He was such a neighborhood hero.

N: Oh the kids really loved him?

A: Oh, the kids really loved him. He ran in the neighborhood and when he ran up the hill [Birch] he always spoke to the kids and the kids would yell at him, "Are you gonna win, Pre?" I remember they asked him at that hour and a half interview, "What do you eat for breakfast, Pre?" (Laughter) and he said, "Oh, oatmeal and toast," and then about a half hour later this little tiny kid said, "Pre, how do you spell oatmeal?" (Laughter) So he told him how to spell oatmeal.

N: We had just moved here in '71. And we went to that Twilight Meet. The night before he died...Talk a little bit about the businesses that were around here. I've heard about a store that used to be on 17th and Orchard and that Market of Choice was something else before...

A: Yes, Irish and Schwartz. Right. And Tommy Williams, the floral shop, and the store, a little neighborhood store. The kids were really sad when that closed because you could get penny candy on the way home.

N: Why did that close, do you know?

A: Well, it was one of those little stores that all died when supermarkets came in.

N: You know, the sons still run Jiffy Mart. That's the Robertson boys who run Jiffy Mart on 33rd and Hilyard, kind of across from Mazzi's.

A: That's interesting. And the state police were right down here where the campus security is. [15th and Walnut] Which was also very nice for the park because if you needed anything or if

something was wrong you could just run across the street and tell the state police. I don't even know of serious instances where that was done. Another family that lived in the neighborhood was the Aiken family. And they lived on Fairmount in one of those houses where 19th comes up to Fairmount, high up on the hill. They had five daughters.

N: Now were they related to Harry Newburn?

A: Yes.

N: That's where I heard the name. Do you remember Franklin Boulevard before it became such a busy street with so many commercial establishments along there or was it always pretty busy?

A: It's always been pretty busy, you know, that's always been a grocery store on that corner and the drugstore was Tiffany's.

N: Oh, before it was Hiron's?

A: Yeah, it was Tiffs.

N: Oh, you know, I think we were here then now that you say that.

A: And the kids loved to go down to Tiffany's, you know, and there was a McDonalds, and a Taco Time.

N: And do you remember a Safeway and a movie theatre? Mir told me about those.

A: I remember the movie theatre but I can't remember quite where it was either. That was a long time ago. We should have a movie theatre now, shouldn't we?

N: That would be nice. (Laughter) And one more thing to walk to. Do you remember Romanias before it was Romania Chevrolet?

A: Yeah, I don't know what it was. I don't really remember. Seems to me it was some auto dealer.

N: Yeah, Marge Ramey told me that it was Silva Auto, I guess maybe Chevrolet. Beth and Julius. And then it was another auto dealership and then Romanias.

N: Are there other stories or things that make this neighborhood special?

A: Well, the tree house that you still see when you walk up Birch Lane. Have you seen that tree house? {N: No.} You see, there were a lot more families with young children. The English family, he was a doctor; I think they had 4 children, and Jack was a contemporary with one of ours. Very creative, wonderfully creative kid. He would just do wonderful things. And you can still see the remnants. You walk up Birch Lane up toward the park and off, down here, there is a very high tree house which Jack built and fell off and broke at least one bone (Laughter). We

always thought the English family was a wonderful addition to the neighborhood. He would come to our house and Derek, our son, would say, "Mom, we need aluminum foil." And pretty soon the whole downstairs would be aluminum foil that Jack had wound around. It was different because there were a lot more stay-at-home mothers and kids, for better or for worse, you know, kids would go from one house to another house in the neighborhood down here where Fairmount extends.

N: Where the Rameys used to live?

A: Yes. There was a Keys family. And they had 3 kids. And Mary Keys would just start out, she was younger than ours, and she would go to our house. I remember she'd come to the door and say, "I'm here!" (Laughter) And, if something was going on here or something she wanted she would stay. And if there wasn't, she would go on to the next house of kids. The kids, the Penny kids, there were 3 Penny kids, they would be over here or we'd be over there, I mean there was a lot of that.

N: How nice.

A: It was nice.

N: Did most people walk places or did everybody have one car or more than one car?

A: Everybody had one car, I think, at least I don't think people had cars like they do now. But I think there was a fair bit of walking in the neighborhood. There's not the same sensitivity to the need for people to walk, both for their own health and the planet that there is now, but it seems to me that there was quite a bit of... Deb Larson is another good person to interview. She lived here for a long time in the neighborhood. The 5 Larson kids in the Barnhart house.

N: And she's still around?

A: She lives in the Tate. That's Deborah Larson.

N: Well, can you think of any other stories before we finish up?

A: Another family that has lived in this neighborhood for a long time is the Hoeflichs.

N: Oh yeah, I know that name.

A: He's retired. A pediatrician. Wonderful family. Five kids, just off Fairmount. He and Muriel, it's Bert and Muriel Hoeflich. They still live in their big house. Down Fairmount, up above on the east side on down past 19th and 20th. I think they were here before we were.

N: So they've lived here for 50+ years. And Deb Larson had how many kids? Five also? Well, I know I won't be doing any more [interviews] at this point but if we can do more in December...

A: And Nancy, that's why Derek talks about that, there were always pick-up games at the park. You know, there'd be, even in the mud in the rain there'd be flag football, kids playing flag football, I remember our boys just loved that. And you could just go down and [there were] all ages. Andrea, our youngest, talks about how the older kids would always have names. They'd make up these names for the younger kids. That whole, I love that cross-age thing with the kids at the park. And our boys also, both of our boys played varsity basketball in high school. Our boys would sneak into Mac Court. After school, you could sneak in and play rat ball with the University kids. It was really good because it often was with a lot of black kids. It would be off-season for the football players and there would be black football players in there. And our kids and I remember Derek came home one day and said, "There's a kid in there and he's black and why isn't he a better player?" I thought, "Oh, how interesting." And the athletes were all really nice to the little kids. Now you can't sneak in there anymore.

N: Did you know anything about something called The Knothole Club? That was apparently a place at Hayward Field where you could, as an adult, you could watch but the kids were kind of at the edge and they could all hang out together. The parents could see them. Mir told me about that.

A: How long did Mir live up there?

N: Well, Mir moved up to Sunset in the late '70's. But before that she lived at 1676 [Fairmount] and before that she lived at 1636, which is Maggie's house.

A: She did!

N: So she lived here from about the early '50's so her kids are a little older. And I interviewed Clay and Scott Starlin and they had lots of stories about the park. As you mentioned, the pick-up flag football, they loved that. It was very important.

A: Yes, it was very important.

N: And they talked about neighbors who did and didn't like kids running across their lawns. Do you remember hearing anything about that?

A: Our kids just sort of went up the hill and down the hill. No, I became convinced of the value of these small parks in neighborhoods. It was really marvelous. And Andrea, our youngest one, still talks about that. She became a leader down there. They hired her, for a while the city was trying to hire young people to sort of lifeguard those little wading pools when they were trying to keep the wading pools. I think 2 summers...and our dog...we always had big Labradors...our dog would go down there and the kids would all decorate the dog. (Laughter) It was a very good place for kids.

N: That's one of the things that made this neighborhood so special. Do you have thoughts or feelings about the University's coming further this way, the encroachment coming further east? Or it's just kind of a fact of life?

A: Well, you know, of course, I don't like the increase...what the Arena's going to bring...I don't think it's going to be much fun. You know, the increased traffic and then the things we've all been talking about, the garbage, the traffic, the noise, the parking 200 nights a year. But I mean we are fairly sheltered here. But I guess it's just change. When I went to the University it was just 6000 students. Now it's 22 [thousand]. So when you have that kind of change, that's what's going to happen.

N: Was this street mostly personally owned houses, not rentals?

A: Yes.

N: Because I imagine that's made a difference.

A: That's made a big difference. The student population along this street. Some years there'd be no problems and some years there would be lots of problems with noise. When we first moved here Birch Lane did not go through.

N: It was a dead end? When did that change?

A: I don't know what year but that was a big change because then traffic could go all the way through. But I mean part of it is just change that's going to happen. Can't stop it. (Laughter)

A: How do you feel? [Time to stop the interview]

N: Let's turn off the tape. Let me just thank you on this for your time.

A: Oh, thank you!

End of October 22, 2010 Interview with Anita Johnson

Transcribed by Nancy Reckord

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