

FAIRMOUNT NEIGHBORS HISTORY PROJECT

George and Diane McCully, Consultants
Katherine Lieberknecht and Sandra Austin, Interviewers
October 13, 2010

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Katherine Lieberknecht: This is Katherine Lieberknecht, and Sandra Austin is here as well, and we're interviewing George and Diane McCully. It's October 13, 2010, and it's about 7:45 in the evening. I'd just like to thank both of you for participating and sharing all this information that Diane just let us borrow for a little while, to make copies. So, as I was saying, this is a fairly unstructured interview. We have some questions, but we don't have to cover them all, and the more stories and anecdotes that you guys have, the better. So we can either by— sometimes it's easier if folks start just by talking about your property, because it's something you're so familiar with, or you can start by talking about when you first came to Eugene. In your case (George's), I think you were about one. So, when you first came to the Fairmount neighborhood, what it was like when you were first here. [The question] asks, "Why did you first move to the neighborhood," but as we were chatting about before the interview started, George in one of four generations who have lived here, in this home. So, it's [the family] has gone back a while here, until 1915.

Diane McCully: All 62 years of your life have been in the Fairmount neighborhood.

George McCully: Well, not quite. Of the 62 years that I've been alive, I've spent 61 of them in Oregon, and I've spent 57 of them in Eugene, and of those 57, all but probably five or six were in the Fairmount neighborhood. So, I grew up at 1630 Orchard, which is probably four blocks from where we are presently. That's the house that I was taken to when I was less than a year old. The original house that I was taken home to was on Sixth and Lincoln, which was an apartment house at that time. And that we very close to where my great-grandmother lived between Sixth and Fifth on Washington Street.

DM: Where the park is, right now.

GM: Which was condemned by the State for the Washington-Jefferson bridge. And then we moved from there to 1630 Orchard which is where I grew up and where my father lived until he went into a care facility. After his passing, we sold the house. So, the house we live in currently is the house that my dad grew up in, and it's the house that my grandmother lived in when I was a kid.

DM: And grandfather?

GM: Nope, my grandfather died when I was, I think, four.

DM: You were still a kid.

GM: Yeah. But at any rate, it was not uncommon for us to walk up to see my grandmother, on more than a weekly occasion. During the summer I had the job of mowing her lawn. I got paid a dollar for mowing her lawn. And I got paid a dollar to mow the orchard. And I hated mowing the orchard— it was too big. It was worth way more than a dollar (laughter), but that's all I ever got paid. But it was cool to mow her lawn because after I finished mowing the lawn, usually I'd come inside and she'd always have something, like a little snack, or actually a meal to eat. And her cooking was good. Not that my mother's wasn't, but hers was good.

KL: So did your grandparents plant that orchard that's still there?

GM: No, my great-grandfather did. And actually my father told stories about that. The orchard was planted, I'm going to guess between 1915 and 1920, and I'm guessing that because my father was young at the time, and he was born in 1912. So, he was three when they moved here, and he can remember his grandfather— that would be my great-grandfather—Americus Taylor—and he owned the house at the corner of Orchard and Fairmount. My dad told stories of AT drilling holes into the ground and putting dynamite down to break up the shale. There's a sandstone layer that's very, very close to the surface in some places, and he would put dynamite down in the hole, and set it off to break the shale up so that the roots of the trees that they planted would be able to find a way to go down. I don't know how that would go over today, but that's what they did.

KL: It seemed to work; they [the trees] look pretty healthy.

GM: Well, some of them are falling over. We're going to have to start planting new trees, I think. In fact, we've started. My grandmother also participating in planting a lot of the trees in the neighborhood. The women in the neighborhood planted trees all along Agate Street, and all along Orchard Street, and all along Walnut Street.

DM: And that information is in my research, because that was a George Miller kind of thing. They wanted the type of tree to be planted along the street with the name.

GM: So if you look at the trees that were along Agate, they were all birch trees. So I don't know why they were birch on Agate, but that's what they were. And if you look at Orchard Street, they're horse chestnuts. They were all horse chestnuts up and down Orchard Street. And the City [of Eugene] thinks an ugly old horse chestnut tree is beautiful, but I know what a beautiful horse chestnut tree looks like, having grown up with them, and collecting horse chestnuts.

DM: And the trees that are in Eugene are not healthy.

GM: Compared with what there was on Orchard. And a lot of those horse chestnut trees are gone now, on this street.

KL: They took down a pretty big one, recently, I noticed that. And so the women of the neighborhood helped do that planting— that's interesting.

GM: Yeah. My grandmother was involved in that.

KL: I remember hearing about the [tree] plan that you mentioned, and that it didn't get implemented right away, and then it did, and I was wondering what happened.

DM: And she was quite a gardener, too, because all the roses that I have along this area, the majority of them are original roses from her growing them, and I started tending them back in the 70s.

GM: This property used to have English walnut trees on it; there were at least five English walnut trees, maybe six English walnut trees. None of them remain today. Although one of the bases of the English walnut tree at the top of the orchard still exists and now it's a black walnut tree because all of the English walnuts were grafted onto black walnut root stock because of disease.

KL: How interesting.

DM: We have one of those at the top of the property.

GM: It's not a very good tree, but it's there.

KL: How big is your lot, then; is it half an acre?

GM: Half an acre.

DM: According to George Miller. (laughter) Although the original property purchased was...we have three lots.

GM: We actually have two lots, which could be divided. We have a front lot and a back lot. The back lot is not divided. It could be divided, the way the City is going, many, many times.

DM: So, they were two different transactions, and there's a story behind the second piece of property that has to do with the Depression, and all of that.

GM: I think what Diane's referring to is that the family acquired the back lot from a family that was stressed at sometime.

DM: His grandfather being in realty business, was able to...

GM: And Dad told me that they could have bought a lot more property at that time, but his father didn't feel very good about taking advantage of people who were having a tough time of it.

KL: Yeah, mmm-hmm.

GM: At any rate, that's what they did. During the Depression, my grandfather went bankrupt.

DM: Before doing that, he put everything into his wife's name.

KL: Ahh.

GM: Because in the old days, women didn't sign on loans.

Sandra Austin: Oh.

DM: They were very progressive.

KL: Mmm-hmm.

GM: So, she wasn't listed on any of the loans, so by transferring title to this property and also a piece of property across from Mt. Pisgah, and the little house on Harris Street. That property remained within the family, and wasn't attached to the bankruptcy.

KL: Can you describe a bit what the neighborhood was like when you were growing up here, as a young boy?

GM: Lots of kids. We'd play football in the street.

DM: Well, and Orchard was one-way.

GM: No, Orchard was two-ways. There were no one-way streets.

DM: Orchard was one-way when I...

GM: It wasn't one-way; none of them were one-way.

KL: Was Orchard one-way later on? In the 70s?

DM: It was one-way when we started dating.

GM: It got changed to one-way, but it wasn't when I was a kid. But there was very little traffic on Orchard Street. The neighborhood... the University didn't own any property, I would say, east of Columbia, at that time. All those were private homes. So, I went to school with kids who lived in all those homes. The University has now, I think purchased property all the way up to the west side of Villard.

KL: Yes, we're on the other side of Villard. And you can tell which ones they own because they all have the same mulch (laughter). So, lots of kids, because there weren't many student rental houses.

GM: No, there were no student rental houses. Any students that were living [in the area] were living in the housing projects, there on Agate Street.

DM: Oh, those Quonset hut kind of things.

KL: You [Sandra] knew about that and were sharing that information.

GM: So, there were lots of kids. But that was, you know, the age when...I had three brothers and sisters and it wasn't uncommon for there to be three or four kids in a family.

KL: Right, so larger families, too.

GM: Yeah, we needed that for the agriculture (laughter).

DM: The bean picking every summer.

KL: Well, I saw that on your list of jobs, that you spent some time...

GM: Oh, as a kid I picked beans in the field, but I didn't list that...

KL: Yeah, there are quite a few stories about people working in the fields and canneries.

GM: Well, we'd jump in the back of a truck, and there would be, I don't know, twenty or thirty of us in the back of this truck, and they'd haul us from Agate down by Condon School out to Beltline; that's where the bean fields were, or at least the ones that I worked at were out there.

DM: Well, in the grade school that you went to, Condon, was your dad's high school, wasn't it?

GM: No, my father went to Condon Grade School, as did I, but we didn't go to the same building. The building he went to was on 15th between Moss and Columbia, and that site, when I was a kid, we called old Condon. And it was two baseball diamonds. So, as a kid growing up, that's where we went to play baseball. We practiced there on those fields. I don't know how old I was, probably eight or ten, probably ten; I think I was in one of the first classes that the Eugene Boys Athletic Association, now called KidsSports, had. We were sponsored by Al Newman Shell. So businesses would sponsor a team. I was a member of the PB team, and there was a team above us, kids who were a year older or so, that played for Al Newman Shell. They had better uniforms (laughter).

KL: Still remember! Did you know that about the two Condons, the two locations? (note: asked to Sandra)

SA: I thought one of them was a junior high, too.

GM: Well, Condon Grade School was Roosevelt Junior High. And my dad went to Roosevelt Junior High, and so did I. But it was a different building.

SA: Right, yeah.

GM: And then Dad went to Eugene High School. I went to South.

DM: But Eugene High School was what building?

GM: Did I say Eugene High School? It's actually University High School. Uny High. But University High School was where Roosevelt Junior High was, which is where the Lighthouse Temple is on 18th and Lincoln, I think.

DM: But that was placed there, probably...

GM: It was the only high school in Eugene. But there was nothing out west of town. I can remember driving out west of town and we'd go out...18th didn't exist. We drove out 19th. Nineteenth was the main street going west. And, you'd get out the other side of Friendly Street, there was nothing. There were no houses out there; there was nothing. That was out in the country. As a kid going across Coburg Road, if you got to Harlow Road, you were out in the country. Same way going out to River Road; that was all country. Everyone out there had huge, big lots. There were very few homes, growing up. One of the kids that I grew up with was Ferman Kellog. Had a brother named Leroy, but he was too old, I didn't know him very much. They lived at the corner of 17th and Orchard. He was one of the kids that I ran around with, when I was young. But around the time, I think when I was in second grade or third grade, he moved out to River Road. That's was forever out there (laughter). That was like half way to Portland! It was like forever out there. But I used to go out and spend time with them out there.

KL: Did your parents drive you out there? How'd you get out there?

GM: Yeah, they'd drive me out, or they'd come in and pick me up, and we'd go out. Then we'd ride bikes all over.

KL: When you were a kid, to get around the neighborhood, did you ride bikes a lot here as well?

GM: Oh, some. Mostly walked. Grew up with the Carmicheal kids. Actually Dave Carmicheal and I are the same age. And Dave's mom, Ingrid, who just passed away, she and my dad were in the same class, only she went to Eugene High, and Dad went to University High. So, but they grew up together. Because Ingrid grew up in that house on Orchard Street.

SA: Which is for sale right now.

KL: So, the one...

SA: Next to Camilla.

KL: Oh, yes, yes, I did see that.

DM: Huge property. Her original farm was there, her parents.

KL: Was it?

DM: Yeah. That she grew up in; so she's always lived on that piece of property. Forever. She was 90 plus years.

KL: And she just recently passed away. Okay, that was the person Camilla wanted us to interview, but we didn't get the grant in time. (pause). Do you remember where you and your family shopped?

GM: Well, the corner of 17th and Orchard, there was the little Orchard Street Market. So, we'd go in there and buy candy.

DM: And who owned that?

GM: I have no idea. I don't remember.

DM: Because I thought it was the brothers; he owns Jiffy Mart now.

SA: That's correct.

GM: No, that's not true.

SA: That's what we have in our notes.

DM: They owned it at some point.

GM: You're talking about the Robertsons.

SA: The Robertsons, yes.

GM: It's not true. They did not own that. They lived on Walnut Street on the house that's way back from the street, almost right next to Fairmount Park. I mean, right over, behind their house is Fairmount Park. That was the Robertson house. That's where Joe, and I can't remember his brother's name, that's where they grew up. But they did not own that market.

SA: We've been given wrong information, then. We didn't research that; we just have that in our notes.

DM: So, who owned the market?

GM: I don't know. They were old people. They lived in the house behind it, so they'd walk out of their house, when somebody came into the store. There were bells on the door. Used to be a big horse chestnut tree out in the front. And there was a mailbox there, and also a box that mailman would have their letters deposit for the mail.

SA: And it was called the Orchard Street market?

GM: Orchard Street market. And then on 17th and Moss, I can't remember the name of the market, but there was another little market there, they sold meat. They had a really good butcher in there. But I don't think that Mom really shopped much at either of those. Those were places that we'd run out to when we needed something real quick. But mostly she went to Irish and Schwartz.

KL: Right, that's where Market of Choice is now?

GM: And behind Irish and Schwartz was Tiffany Davis Drugs.

SA: Yes, I remember Tiffany's.

GM: That's where I bought my first bike. It was a ten-speed bike, from Tiffany Davis. Nobody had ten-speeds back then. There were a few three-speeds, but no ten-speeds.

KL: Talk of the neighborhood...

GM: Oh, yeah. It was \$40 or \$50 bucks; I don't know, it was expensive.

KL: That sounds like quite a bike. So, I guess, behind that...

GM: That's where Hiron is. Only, it was at that time, they had both levels. I don't know what was up and down. Playboy was upstairs (laughter). Because we'd go up there and look at Playboy, and comic books.

SA: Every generation...

GM: I can remember, as a little kid, going down with Bruce Huntington; we didn't have a lot of money. And the Huntingtons were fairly well-to-do. They lived in the house across from Ingrid [on Orchard]. Huntington Shingle Mill was their business. And, anyways, I ran around with Bruce, and there was a group of us, and he went up to the checkout stand, and she gave him money. And I thought, well, that's cool. So, I went up to ask if I could get some money. Well, he had probably given her a dime to get ten pennies, or something, I don't know, but anyways, he ended up with pennies, and she wouldn't give me pennies (laughter).

SA: It's funny, the things you remember.

KL: So, growing up, let's see...there's a question here about any agriculture here in the neighborhood. Obviously, there was an orchard behind here. Do you remember other orchards, or big gardens?

GM: Big gardens. We had a garden, but the Beemers who lived next door to us; their whole backyard was a garden. The Beemers owned the house that I grew up in. So, they lived there, and then my parents bought my house when they bought the house next door. So, the driver between

1638 and whatever it is just south of there, there's a common driveway, for those two houses.

SA: That's the Beemer granddaughter that I talked to at the grocery store.

KL: Oh, wow!

SA: I'm sure that's the name.

GM: Okay, so they did own the stucco house years ago.

DM: Now there's the mystery solved.

SA: She used the address 1660.

DM: Well, maybe that's...that seems weird that it would go 1638 to 1660.

GM: I don't know.

DM: That's a lot of numbers.

GM: You could go down and look.

DM: Because that house became a rental house for students.

GM: Well, that's recent history.

DM: Well, yeah.

GM: The house that we moved into...it was heated with oil; that's what I remember it being heated with. There was an oil tank in the front that they would come out and fill on a monthly basis. At one time, that house was heated with wood. And the house at 1638 was heated with wood. And there was a woodshed behind the house, and that's where they stored the wood to feed the furnace that would heat the house. It was a forced air system, but it was a wood fire.

DM: Well, the Beemers were in the heating business, is that correct?

GM: Yeah.

DM: So, it was state-of-the art.

GM: I don't know. Yeah (laughter). At one time it was wood, and then oil, and then, at the end of my father's life, I finally convinced them to change it over to gas.

KL: So, as a kid, were there places in the neighborhood that you particularly enjoyed?

GM: We played football in the street, we played baseball down at old Condon; we'd go out to Fairmount Park. It seems odd to me today that kids don't have the same kinds of luxury of being able to run around. Maybe the luxury exists but they just don't take advantage of it. I don't know. Maybe there's too much TV. Who knows? We were never home.

KL: Right, always out.

GM: Yeah.

SA: It felt safer, probably, in those days.

GM: I don't know if it felt safer or not; I never even thought about it. That's not something that we thought about. When it was time to come home, there was a whistle that my parents had...and it was two longs and two shorts. That was the call. And when Mom whistled, we knew that we had 5 or ten minutes, and when Dad whistled, we knew we'd better come home. There was definitely a difference between how the two of them whistled. There was no question about who was whistling. But you could hear that— I mean, I ran around with the Jacobsons— Dr. Jacobson's kids— on top of Prospect here. That's the reason I know a lot about the Mahlon Sweet property up there, because some of my best friends was John and Jerry Jacobson, the twins that used to live up there. And we played kick-the-can and could here the whistle up there.

SA: Quite a whistle.

DM: Well, there's not as much building or trees around, so the sound could carry. You look at the pictures of Hendricks Park, and the trees are non-existent, basically.

GM: Hendricks Park, when I was growing up, had big trees in it. DM: But not like they do today.

GM: Yeah, they were the same. But the hill over here, over by Shirley's Temple...you know Shirley's Temple? You don't know Shirley's Temple! (laughter)

SA: She's too new.

DM: Dean and Shirley...

GM: The round house up here on the hill, with all the windows?

KL: Yes! Is that Shirley's Temple?

SA: Who named it?

GM: I have no idea.

SA: Because I knew that; somebody told me. (pause). So did you run around with the Starlin kids, too?

GM: I don't recognize that name.

SA: Because their parents used to whistle to call them in.

GM: Oh, really? (laughter)

KL: Competing whistles...

GM: I didn't know anyone else who had a whistle. When my dad was growing up here, one of his good was Saul Cutterback, of Cutterback Lumber. Saul lived up in the house on the top of 19th. It's kind of a Craftsman house that's right there, an older house right at the top of 19th.

DM: Which side of the street?

GM: On this side, the uphill side.

DM: The east side.

GM: Uh-huh.

DM: And, is it still there

GM: It's still there. I didn't know that until just, maybe, 10 years ago, when Dad talked about it.

SA: The stucco one?

GM: No, it's not stucco, it's wood. It has the same kind of siding as our house does.

DM: Is it the white house that's up there?

GM: It's a white one.

DM: I know who owns that. She owns a...

SA: Marilyn Robert?

DM: Right.

SA: And Michael Robert was the head gardener for many years at Hendricks Park.

DM: Both of them were in my Pilates class.

GM: Anyway, that was Saul Cutterback's house.

SA: Okay, I've never heard that before, that's interesting.

GM: And Saul and my dad, one cold winter evening, decided that they should run water down 19th. (laughter) It froze, and it was just a sheet of ice.

SA: And did they go sledding?

GM: I don't know what they did. They watched the cars have a heck of a time.

DM: Well, there couldn't have been a whole lot of cars back then. How old was he?

GM: I don't know when they did that. They also talked about, as a kid, Dad was really quick, but he ended up with appendicitis, and almost died. Doc Simons actually came over— Doc was an osteopath— and came over and saw how sick Dad was and he said, well, we need to operate, but I don't know if I can save him. And my grandparents just said, well, we trust you, do what you can. And, so he operated, and removed his appendix, and it had burst, and they put sulfa on it, packed it with sulfa, to try to get rid of the infection, because back then, you know, they didn't have antibiotics, other than sulfa. And, Dad survived, but after that, he was pretty sickly. But he still ran around with the same buddies that he had, and they had this deal on Thanksgiving, and I don't know where it was, but somebody had an outhouse, and they'd always get down and hide behind this hedge, and they'd watch, to see when the guy would leave the window, and then they'd go over and knock his outhouse over. So, they did this for, I don't know, two or three years in a row. This was great sport. And so one night, after Dad had been sick, he was not running so well. Anyway, they were down by the hedge, and the guy just wouldn't leave the dog-gone window, and finally, he walked away from the window, and they all started running like mad to get to the outhouse. Well, he moved the outhouse over, and they all ended up in the pit (laughter). He came out and hauled them out. That was the last time... that was all before there were sewers here. This house (the McCully house) actually was not connected to the sewer, initially. But, it had its own septic tank. When they connected it to the sewer, the Simons actually connected from their house over across the street to the septic system here, and then it went from the septic system here into the sewer system.

KL: Were there any places that you avoided in the neighborhood, as kids?

DM: Like scary houses, scary people?

GM: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. There was a haunted house. I forgot about that. Kaarhaaus was a cabinetmaker, and he made boats, and he made McKenzie River boats. That's probably what he was most famous for, making McKenzie River boats. And the Kaarhaaus place was down on Moss. See, there used to be an Irish and Schwartz, which is where Market of Choice is, and then there was a Safeway, and I think it was on the corner of 13th and Moss. And then Kaarhaaus was across the street from their parking lot, on Moss Street, but not all the way down on 13th, just part way up a little bit. The streets have all been eliminated there, so it's hard to remember. But I'm pretty sure that's where Kaarhaus was. And there was an old house, just to the south of

Kaarhaaus' shop, that we were sure was haunted. I mean, it scared the hell out of us, going into that place. We still went in it (laughter).

SA: Was it vacant?

GM: Oh, yeah, it was vacant. And it was kind of run down and dilapidated. There was also another house that was a little scary— actually, two houses that were a little scary in the neighborhood. One of the houses is off 17th street, next to the alley, between Orchard and Villard. And it was on the east side of the alley. There was a husband and a wife who lived there, and they were weird. They didn't even own a car. She was strange, the wife was strange. And her mother lived just north of Huntington's place, on Orchard Street. And they never went up and down the street, they always went up and down the alley. And it's the first time I had ever seen it, and it was probably the first bike trailer that ever existed. But this guy had a bike trailer...he did yard work, and he would take his bike trailer around with his stuff in it. He didn't use any power tools; everything was by hand. He'd go around the neighborhood and do yard work.

DM: Were there power tools then?

GM: I think so. Oh, yeah, because I used a power mower, to mow the lawn.

DM: And you're complaining?

GM; Yeah. It was hard work.

DM: So, now he uses a tractor.

GM: Still hard work. So, that house was a little scary, and her mother had books and all kinds of stuff piled in the house; it was a little scary, too, but we still went there. And she was a nice lady; the mom was a nice lady. Her daughter was just...I don't know if she was just mentally retarded or slow or what, but she didn't hassle any of us. She was just different.

KL: Besides mowing your grandmother's place, did you have any other chores or responsibilities that you remember?

DM: Paperboy.

GM: I don't know; I had to burn the trash.

DM: Had to?

GM: Yeah. We burned the trash.

DM: Was that fun?

GM: It was all right. It was one of those things that you did.

DM: He wanted to build a sailboat.

GM: Well...

KL: When you were younger, you built a sailboat?

GM: I did.

KL: All right.

DM: And now he owns a big one.

KL: So, what did you like the most about the neighborhood, growing up?

GM: It's just where I grew up. I don't know that...

DM: You don't have anything to compare it to.

GM: Yeah. I haven't lived very many other places.

KL: What do you like most about the neighborhood now?

GM: Um, the truth is, I don't. It's not even close to the same as it used to be. I think the parking district makes absolutely no sense. There are lots of people who want to intrude in my life, and I just want to be left the hell alone. From my perspective, what the neighborhood had before, it's lost much of that. And it's not because of the University buying up the properties. It's because of people wanting to control other people's lives.

DM: And it doesn't have the charm that it had.

GM: Oh, I don't know. One of the things that I still do like about it, is that Hendricks Park is here, and I can go for a walk around there. Although I don't do that a lot. As a kid, we used to run around Hendricks all the time. We knew where all the trails were. Some of the trails that existed back then don't even exist today. There was a trail that went right straight up Elk Lane, straight up, where Elk makes the left turn, it went straight ahead. It was a trail. My dad was kind of an amateur photographer, and he had a flash. You won't, but do you remember the old flash bulbs? [to Sandra]

SA: Yeah.

GM: Do you remember the old flash bulbs?

KL: My dad had one; he was kind of an amateur photographer.

GM: We'd go get Dad's flashgun, and a bunch of flashbulbs, and we'd go up to Hendricks Park, and we'd stick that sucker up in the windows of cars, and pop that sucker off (laughter). And then run like heck.

DM: Did you ever get caught?

GM: Never did get caught. But I thought I was going to get caught one night. Evidently, one of the kids that we popped it off on knew the trails as well as I did, and, you know, these were high school kids, and we were in grade school.

DM: I thought there was a police incident.

GM: No, never got caught. Never got caught by the police. That wasn't anything, anyway. I won't tell you who it is, but I have a friend who dropped a tree down on each side of the upper loop of Hendricks Park, which you can't drive on anymore. He fell a tree across it about midnight, and a lot of girls got home late that night. (laughter).

DM: Was that Carmicheal?

GM: I'm not going to tell you. (laughter)

KL: Well, I'll just go back to it a little bit, but if you don't want to talk about it more, that's fine. People controlling other people's lives...do you mean regulations?

GM: Um, yeah, regulations and rules that somebody thinks is good, so they get on the horn and convince the City to do something. I've done a fair amount of building, and dealt with the building department mostly on this piece of property. It's a little discouraging. A couple of years ago, we voted on being able to do \$50,000 worth of work on your house without getting a building permit, and everyone said, oh, this is going to be terrible. Well, the truth of the matter is, is that they don't know what the hell they're doing, either. And for them to say that they're protecting the citizens, I don't believe that. Not when I've had building inspectors come out and say, well, you've got to change this to make it this way, so you change it, and then another building inspector comes out and says, nope, you've got to change it back, you've got to do it this way. It's like: why don't they get their act together?

KL: mmm-hmm.

GM; So, we added a basement, and I went down to the building department, and I said, we need to know what I need to do to be able to get a new sewer connection. Oh, you can't do that. Well, that's not what I asked. I said what do I need to do to get a new sewer connection? Well, you can't get one. Well, I understand that you're trying to prevent the egress of water into the sanitary sewer system, because it's expensive to treat all that stuff, but what do I have to do? You can't get one. Well, what do I have to do? You have to pump it out into the sewer. Well, it will just drain into the sewer, if I just go to the other... Oh, if it just goes into that spot, then we can give you one. I mean, why don't they try to work with people, instead of just putting up roadblocks. If you want to take down a tree, it takes an act of God to get a tree cut down.

DM: So, ours just fall down. If you look out there, we have a horizontal apple tree out there. It split two years ago, and the second half is on the way.

GM: So, I just feel like there are a lot more restrictions. I'd be thrown in jail, for the things that I did when I was a kid. And you know what, when I was a kid, the police didn't take you to jail; they took you to your home. And you were in more trouble at home than you would have been in jail. And we were just being kids. I feel sorry for kids today. If they don't sit down in a classroom, and be quiet, and do what adults are supposed to do, they're labeled as hyperactive, and they put them on Ritalin. No, they're just being kids. I rather have a kid that way than having a kid sitting there, being sedated.

DM: There's no exploration anymore, there's no...

GM: But what do I know?

SA: It's a more complicated world, than when we were kids, I think. Way more complicated.

DM: It is, but I think, part of what's happened to us, is that...like our garden outside. I built a little waterway out there, and I put all these fun little sparkly rocks and little things out there. And all the little girls in the neighborhood like to come by and pick them up. And it used to make me angry. And then I started to think, wait a minute, that's a special treasure that they just found. Why am I feeling angry? Because I'm feeling territorial, that's why. When I was a kid, I used to steal pomegranates out of people's yards. So, how is that different? You know, we have this whole other mindset of protecting our own instead of sharing, and, you know, our yard, heck, I've got fruit all around the yard, that all the kids in the neighborhood know, they can come and eat. I cultivate those blackberries, so people can come and pick them, and they are huge.

KL: I've noticed those blackberries, and you're right, they are big blackberries.

DM: Yeah, and that's giving back to the community, because that's part of what being good neighbors is about. We have a barbeque each year that we've done for eight years now. He decided he wanted a fire pit. Fine, you build it, but then we've got to use it. So, we started with just inviting the neighborhood. And then it just grew. Two years ago, we had 185 people here.

KL: Oh, my goodness, how wonderful.

GM: But I didn't get a permit. It probably is against the law. And I know for sure that building the fire is against the law.

KL: Not if you're cooking over it.

GM: I don't cook over it.

DM: We do cook over it. We eventually cook over it. But initially, you have to get all the fire going, and the firebricks hot. I mean, it's all contained. We put the meat in at midnight, and take

it out the next day at noon. And then the potluck begins, but it's our way to get the neighborhood together so everyone can meet each other.

KL: That's wonderful.

GM: What seems to be typical of this community, today; and not just the Fairmount neighborhood, but Eugene, is that we get all upset about a poor farmer, who's trying to make a living, so he burns his grass field, and we shut him down, but we applaud it when some one who's trying maintain the native grasses in the Willamette Valley in a wetlands and says that it needs to be burned, in order to do that. What's the difference? It's still smoke. Well, one of them seems like it's the right thing to do, and the other one is somebody's trying to make a living. So, we're going to shut the guy down, who's trying to make a living. But it's okay for somebody else to do it. The city of Eugene today is way different than it was when I was growing up. The city of Eugene today is backward, it's regressive, it doesn't provide for the future citizens of Eugene. Our kids will never live in Eugene, not because of attitude, but because they can't afford to. There are no jobs for them here to come to. Okay? That wasn't the case here when I was a kid. And the city fathers today are different than the city fathers were when I was growing up. The city fathers were very progressive. They were like Springfield city fathers. They said, we're going to grow, but we're going to do it in an organized manner in which we try not to destroy things. Well, the city fathers today say, we're not going to grow, and if we're going to grow, we're going to grow up. We're not going to extend the growth boundary; we're not going to let any more development occur. And in fact, we're going to say that people need to live in high rises. Or condos, or something. How many of those city fathers live in condos? None of them. Alan Zelenka lives on a quarter of an acre. Would I want to live in a condo? No way. Diane might.

DM: Up in Portland.

GM: But I have no desire to live in a condo. I want to live where I have room around me. And that's what's attractive about having half an acre. For me.

DM: Which he doesn't take care of (laughter).

DM: The other thing I was going to say was, when you grew up, all the neighbors knew each other.

GM: Pretty much, and all the kids ran around together. And there was the PTA, and most of the moms were at home, and so...

DM: And when somebody got sick, the neighbors would gather together and make a meal, or whatever, and take it from house to house.

GM: I don't remember that happening, but when the Columbus Day storm hit, we didn't have power for a week. And Ann Carmel, who lived in the Zelenka house; actually, it wasn't the Carmel's house. They were renting it from my great-uncle. But at any rate, Ann Carmel lived there, and they had a wood stove, a wood cook stove. And so, she cooked up a big pot of soup or

something, and all the neighbors would come together, and we'd be in some house or another...that's how we got through Columbus Day, after that storm.

SA: That happened in our neighborhood...I'm at the end of Fairmount, I'm at 1588 Fairmount, and there's a very strong sense of community that has developed over the last ten, five years in that neighborhood. There was a strong sense when my kids were little, and then it became an older neighborhood, kids were gone, and then new people moved in, and there's a strong sense of neighborhood. Because we're on a grid, the two houses on that end, we're on a grid, after that big storm we had, we didn't get our electricity back forever, and our neighbors brought us food. So there is a sense of community that went away for while, that's coming back. That's why I don't want to move, because of that.

DM: And it's interesting nowadays, because you think, how many people know their neighbors? I can tell you every single neighbor within blocks, and I can tell you, what they're doing. It's really unusual. But that's because I get to be home, and I'm outside all the time. And the neighbors always stop and talk to me. And I love that. Because I know more, and then I'll talk to George about, oh, you know Cathy and Gary...We got a thing in the mail today, that somebody up the street, on Elk, is going to be doing a kitchen remodel. He says, do you who this is? Yeah, it's Cathy and Gary. So, you know, if anybody ever needs to know anything in the neighborhood, I'm the go-to person (laughter). Not that I'm nosy...

GM: When my dad was growing up, as we talked about, Mahlon Sweet was living up on the hill.

DM: Why don't you preface it by saying that George's grandfather owned the very first airplane in Eugene, which I have a whole thing on that plane, the original photos of that plane.

GM: He never flew. It was a business. They bought the plane, and it had a pilot, who flew it around. And took it to fairs, and took people on rides. It was a Curtis Jennings. And I think they bought it in 1918, and during the winter, they'd store it in the barn, and in about 1921, the barn caught on fire and burned up the plane.

DM: But it crashed, actually, over by the fairgrounds.

GM: I don't remember reading that. Anyway, Mahlon Sweet lived just up the hill. So, growing up, as a kid, whenever there was an airplane going over, we'd all go outside. If you heard an airplane, it was time to go outside and look at the airplane. Maybe that was true of all kids-- I don't know-- but it sure was true of our family. And part of that might have been that when ever there was a plane in Eugene, they'd fly over Mahlon Sweet's house. And Mahlon Sweet and his wife would come out and see whom it was. And then they'd call up the family and tell them that so-and-so was home, so they could go pick them up at the airport. The airport at that time was over on 18th and...

DM: Westmoreland Park.

GM: Yeah, where Bimart is.

SA: Yeah. Do you know who Mahlon Sweet is, Katherine?

KL: No.

GM: Mahlon Sweet— you know, that's what the airport is called, Mahlon Sweet Field. Well, Mahlon Sweet was a Studebaker dealer. He didn't own airplanes, but he was a hell of a mechanic. Okay, so everybody would bring their airplanes to Mahlon Sweet to have them have their engines gone through.

KL: How interesting.

GM: And, he was a big promoter of aviation in Eugene. Eugene probably had a bigger and more robust airport and flying community than any place else in Oregon, at that time. And, in fact, there was a group of six US Army airplanes that went around the world for the first time, together. And they started in Seattle, but actually they started in Eugene. And not all of them made it. I think only four of them made it, or finished the flight. Two of them were lost. I don't know if the crew was lost, but the planes were lost. But they started in Eugene because Mahlon Sweet was here, and he went through the engines in those planes, before they left. So, that's who Mahlon Sweet is.

KL: That's great. Well, since we're talking about community connections, do you remember any neighborhood holiday celebrations— Christmas carols, fireworks, parades?

GM: Well, fireworks always at the University. I think it was always done by the— who does it now?

DM: 20-20 [20-30] club.

GM: Or, 20-30 club, I guess it is. But it used to be done over the Howe Field, on the University campus. I don't remember any other...

DM: Were there parades, or Christmas pageants?

GM: Not in the neighborhood.

KL: So, you guys raised your kids here. What do you think their experience was like? Do you think it was a good place to raise kids?

GM: Well, you know, I think so, and I say that because my daughter, about a year ago, came back with her husband. They've been back [before], but we weren't here, which seemed real odd— why are they coming to Eugene if we're not here? But she said that she wanted to show Nick what it was like in her town. So they came down here without anything really to do, and just kind of— I don't know if they rode bikes, or just walked around the University, or what they did, or what she showed him. At the end of the weekend, he said, well, look, let's go home, and

she says, I am home. I live in Portland, but this is home. So, I think she still feels connected, I think to here.

DM: She actually hears her great-grandmother in the house.

KL: Yeah.

DM: And I get that when I'm outside.

KL: Mmm-hmm.

GM: And I think she would move, Sarah would move back, in a minute, if they were able to make a living here.

SA: Right.

GM: See, there was never any question that I was going to live in Eugene, in my mind. There was never any question. I could make a living here. That was not going to be a problem. It never even occurred to me that that would become a problem. But I think it is a significant problem, today. And the City is in for big, tough times, in my opinion, because the tax base is decreasing, and that's a direct result of policies that have been implemented within the city. I'm a little conservative. (laughter)

SA: That's okay.

KL: That's fine. It's allowed. (laughter) Thinking about when you grew up here, can you think of any conflicts that divided neighbors or people?

GM: We didn't have any Hatfields and McCoys— I can't think of anything like that. The Beemers lived on one side of us, and the McClarins lived on the other side of us. The McClarins owned Eugene Hardware. In fact, their granddaughter still owns Eugene Hardware, she and her husband. Eugene Hardware was downtown, I think, when I was growing up. Any way, Mrs. McClarin was really, really, really nice. Mr. McClarin was kind of...well, we didn't like him. He didn't understand kids at all. Right? So they lived on one side. And on the other side, there was Mr. and Mrs. Beemer, and Mr. Beemer was really nice, and Mrs. Beemer wasn't, (laughter), and I could never understand why Mr. Beemer and Mrs. McClarin weren't married. (laughter)

KL: Such a kid thing to wonder...

SA: Opposites attract.

GM: I guess.

KL: You mentioned that you didn't really feel that your dislike of the changes in the neighborhood were...you don't really attribute them to the University of Oregon. Is there

anything else you'd like to talk about, about the University of Oregon, proximity to it, how you think it's affected you.

GM: I do think that the reason this neighborhood is the way it is because of the University of Oregon. It's not because it's the University; it's because the University is like a wall that buffers us from the rest of Eugene, and so, we are actually almost like a separate town. We're a separate community from Eugene. I always felt separate from Eugene. I never really felt...I grew up in Eugene; Eugene was my hometown. There is something that separates us from the rest of Eugene. As a kid, I meant to mention, Mr. Connel and Mrs. Connel. Mr. Connel, Frank, was a Marine, and he was retired. I don't know if you retire from the Marines or not, but he never worked when I was a kid. And whenever we ever wanted to go downtown, all we had to do was go ask Mr. Connel if he'd take us. And he'd take us downtown in a second. Just like that (snaps). Well, he liked to go to Lucky's, and his wife didn't like him going to Lucky's. Lucky's at that time was not where Lucky's is now; Lucky's was next to the park blocks. Yeah, so he'd go into Lucky's, and my great-uncle owned Johnny's Toy House. You remember Johnny's Toy House? Were you here before urban renewal downtown, or not?

SA: Barely. I just remember some of the old buildings, just barely, and it seemed like it was urban renewed the first couple years we were here.

GM: Well, my great-uncle owned about a block downtown. He said that the best thing that ever happened to him was urban renewal, because he got out. So, anyway, we went down to Johnny's Toy House, because I got 20 percent off. (laughter)

SA: That's a good discount. (pause) That kind of rings a bell.

GM: It was down on Broadway between Willamette and Olive. The upstairs was the Moose Lodge, I think. And, he owned the building, but I think they rented the upstairs.

KL: So, would you like to try to describe what you think the future would be like for the Fairmount neighborhood?

GM: Oh, boy, I have no idea.

DM: I think it's going to become more and more rental housing, for the University.

GM: Certainly down on the flats, I believe that's true.

DM: Because, we're seeing it all the way up here now, and that didn't used to be the case.

SA: They were all family homes, like up 15th, where it dead-ends. They are all rentals, now. And up Walnut...

GM: Yeah, a lot of the stuff on Walnut is rentals.

DM: That just keeps eeking over. Which I think, you know, during the summer time, it seems so peaceful and calm around here. And then all of a sudden, it's September, and it's like, you have to just protect yourself from the drivers who don't stop for stop signs. The music is blaring out of the cars, at decibels that hurt my ears.

GM: The speed bumps drive me nuts.

DM: Allan got the biggest speed bumps in front of his house.

GM: You know, if the neighborhood really wants people to slow down, then the neighborhood residents need to slow down.

DM: Yeah.

GM: You know, you drive 20 mph up Orchard Street instead of driving 30 or 40, like we all do.

DM: Well, you actually stop for a stop sign. We've got a stop sign at the end of Elk and one right here [Summit Ave.], and now that this road is paved, over here, which it hadn't been until this year.

GM: Well, it had been, but it was all broken up.

DM: Now, the people are traveling like 30, 35 mph and they don't stop. And they've got kids in the car.

SA: Birch Lane is the same.

DM: And I said to this fellow who is a pediatrician, and so is his wife, I said, you know, it's interesting to me. You drive like an old man, very cautiously up and down the street. I love that. Your wife, on the other hand, drives like a bat out of hell; she's got the kids in the car, and she doesn't stop for the stop sign. One: what sort of lesson is she teaching her kids? You know...don't stop for stop signs. And he looked at me and he goes, you're perfectly right. He says, I don't know why she does it. I said, she could always leave a couple minutes earlier.

GM: Well, we often have a motorcycle cop who sits out here.

KL: Oh, really?

DM: Mmm-hmm.

SA: We need someone to do that at Birch.

DM: He'll park over here on Elk and just watch. Hasn't been there for a while; hasn't done that for a while.

KL: Here's another way of phrasing that question, I guess: what positive changes would you like to see, in our neighborhood?

GM: Well, if I had my druthers, they would have built Mac Court on the Romania site, and they would have closed Walnut.

SA: That's where I live.

GM: If they closed Walnut, it would knock out a lot of the traffic that comes up here. I drive up Walnut all the time. I'd have to find a different way home. But just close it, and make it a plaza, from Mac Court, all the way across to all of that state property that's to the east of that. Just block it from access. Would it make it harder for us in the neighborhood? Yeah, I think it would. But you know what, but if you want a neighborhood that's different, or that feels less congested or less commercial, then you have to give up something. You can't expect everyone else to just do it. You have to be able to give up something, yourself. And I think blocking off Walnut would be perfect. Actually, I think they ought to block off Orchard, too. And you're not going to like what I'm going to say, but they ought to use Villard, and take out the divider, and make that an artery, because it's a big, wide street. You could have parking on both sides of it, and still have bike lanes and lanes going up and down, I think.

DM: Well, my research paper will tell you what the length of that street is.

GM: And one side is the University, and the other side is our neighbors. But I don't know what other street we could use for an arterial, going north south.

SA: Agate is supposed to be.

KL: Right, it's supposed to be.

GM: Yeah, but Agate is going to be even worse, now. You can't even turn left off of westbound Franklin onto Agate, anymore. You have to go 13th.

KL: So, is there any other information that you'd like to share, that we've missed. Any other stories that you'd like to get out there?

GM: I don't know any more stories.

KL: You've given us a lot; it's been great. This has been really wonderful.

SA: It's been really fun.

KL: Yeah.

DM: You know, the old neighborhood, before everything became...you know, where Maude Kearns is, was that was originally a firehouse?

GM: No, it was a church, the Fairmount Presbyterian Church; that's where I went to church.

DM: But the bell...there's a tower on Maude Kearns that has the bell up there; and that was from the fire department, that used to be in that neighborhood.

GM: Well, the fire department has always been where it is now, on 17th and Agate. It's always been there, as long as I remember.

DM: I remember your dad telling us stories about how that whole area, where Market of Choice and all that is, that was like a little nanocity.

GM: Well, the cable car used to go down Moss, to Franklin.

DM: Down Columbia, too, and Fairmount.

GM: No, it went down Moss. It went down Moss to Franklin. And then it came up Moss all the way to Fairmount, and around Fairmount, and in fact, you can still see the old bed, that drops down onto Columbia. And I don't know where..

DM: It went up to the old Masonic Cemetery up there, is how it used to go up, and then it would circle back down around.

GM: I don't know where it went, back then. It didn't exist when I was here. But Dad told me that Springfield had sidewalks long before the City of Eugene did.

DM: That's because they made the people who owned the houses pay for the sidewalks.

GM: No, there were sidewalks in downtown Springfield. And the reason was, that Eugene was dry, and Springfield wasn't, and they ran cable cars or some type of transit back and forth, between Eugene and downtown Springfield, and Springfield was a thriving downtown with all the bars and everything. Everyone from Eugene went over there. Speaking of transit, when I was a little kid, we had busses in Eugene. And then, the busses went away. The company went broke. It wasn't owned by a transit district, like today. The busses stopped running. And the drivers of the busses all got together and they formed their own little company, and the busses became Volkswagen vans.

SA: I remember this.

GM: We rode Volkswagen vans; they took us downtown.

SA: I remember the little green busses. That's when my kids were little.

GM: So, Volkswagen vans were around for a while. And I think they probably went broke, too. I don't really remember busses existing when I was in high school, actually, in the city. So, I don't know when LTD started up. I miss the bus running around on Fairmount, actually.

DM: Yeah, it used to come up and pick students at the end of Fairmount, and Summit.

SA: The city bus?

DM: Mmm-hmm. But they rerouted it.

KL: It goes down 19th.

SA: It goes up 19th and it comes down Walnut.

GM: Is that what it does; all the way down 19th and then up Walnut? Does it come back around and go up Orchard?

SA: Yes. Or does it come back down Walnut? I can't remember.

KL: Well, great, thank the both of you so much.

GM: Sure.

KL: That was really enjoyable and terrific stories, for the project. Sandra, thank you for coming so much too; it was great to have you here.

SA: I'm glad that you let me come. I love listening to all of this.

End of October 13, 2010 interview with George and Diane McCully

Transcribed by Katherine Leiberknecht

Completed January 18, 2011