



Beverly Copeland



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Interviewer: Chad Comello
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Transcriber: Eric Skoglund and Charles Menicocci

INTRODUCTION

Beverly Copeland has lived in Morton Grove for 54 years. She grew up in an Orthodox Jewish household on Chicago's West Side with her extended family. She vividly remembers her family's move to Berwyn in the early 1950s into a small bungalow home. An aspiring fashion designer, she briefly studied at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign before she met her husband on a blind date. She moved to Morton Grove in April 1964 with her husband, a two and a half year old, and a six-month-old baby.

In this interview, Beverly talks about their young family's move to Morton Grove, living at home with young kids during extensive renovations, going back to school in her 40s, and working at the Morton Grove Public Library when the first computers were installed. She also discusses her political activism, her involvement with the community group Morton Grove Women Who Drink Tea, and the benefits of Morton Grove's increasing diversity.

This transcript has been edited for content and clarity.

BC: Beverly Copeland

Q: Question asked by interviewer Chad Comello

Q: Let's start at the beginning; tell me about where you were born.

BC: I was born in Chicago, Illinois, on December 29, 1941, 22 days after Pearl Harbor. Kind of an interesting time to be born. I lived on the West Side of Chicago until I was 10, when we moved to Berwyn, Illinois. We were able to buy a little house and we lived there until I graduated eighth grade. By then my mother thought there weren't enough Jewish families in Berwyn, so we moved to Oak Park. I lived there and attended high school at Oak Park and River Forest High School and graduated in 1959. Then went to University of Illinois at Champaign, majored in art. I'd always been very artsy and artistic. However, I got sick at the end of my first semester, and one of my art projects got lost, so my art grades were not that good at the end of the semester. I had met my future husband at that point. He had decided to transfer to Roosevelt University. I just decided to go home too.

Q: Let's jump back. Tell me about some of your early memories of living in Chicago.

BC: I really loved it. I had a wonderful childhood, with loving parents and a warm and exuberant extended family. There were always a lot of family get-togethers, Cousins' Clubs, picnics, and the beach and even outings to the cemetery. My grandmother lived with us in a big old apartment on the West Side of Chicago on Douglas Blvd, right next door to a synagogue. A lot of my early memories involve my family, neighborhood and that synagogue. We went to "shul" a lot. It was very conveniently located. It was Orthodox, which most of the synagogues were at that time. The Conservative movement of Judaism was just getting started I think. I had a lot of aunts and uncles, and we would all get together for the holidays, and it was a very happy childhood. My uncle, my mother's youngest brother also lived with until he got married. It was pretty typical, I think in those days, for a lot of multi-generational families to live together to save money.

Q: Was it a pretty strongly religious household then?

BC: Yes, we were Orthodox, we kept Kosher, and observed all of the holidays. My uncle who lived with us always spoiled me. One Christmas I was like, 'Oh, look at all of those great decorations they have next door!' And so he surprised me and brought home this little table-size Christmas tree with all kinds of decorations on it. And my grandmother, who was very religious but was also very open-minded, didn't get upset about it or anything. We had it out for all to see on a table in our living room. I was thrilled! Then one Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, the doorbell rang and it was one of my

grandmother's brothers-in-law, and he was *very, very* religious. They spoke in Yiddish and he said was coming up. Luckily we lived on the third floor, so we had a little time to tear around the place trying to hide this Christmas tree! That was one of my favorite memories.

Q: Did you have any siblings?

BC: Yes, I was the eldest and I had a brother that was born when we lived on the West Side—Barry. He's five years younger than me. When we moved to Berwyn my sister was born there. We were all five years apart. I don't know if that was intentional, but that's just the way it worked out.

Q: As the oldest, did you feel like this sort of motherly figure towards them?

BC: More so to my sister because there was 10 years difference. My brother, not so much, because we were very close. I just adored him. It was my job to take him to kindergarten on his first day. My mother said, 'Watch your brother. Make sure you walk home with him.' I took my responsibility very seriously. When school let out I waited for him to come out, but he didn't come out. I couldn't find my brother any place. I was panicking and I was crying, and finally I decided I have to go home and tell my mother I lost my brother. He was already at home, safe and sound. He just decided to walk home by himself!

Q: Did you like school at that age?

BC: I did. I always liked school.

Q: You said you were interested in art as well?

BC: Right, I was always interested in art and always did a lot of coloring. I had a cousin I was really close to and she was very artistic also. We would get together and just spend days drawing and coloring.

Q: Were there a lot of other Jewish families around where you were?

BC: Oh yeah, that neighborhood was all Jewish at that time. I mean there were synagogues up and down the block. During the high holidays we would walk down Douglas Blvd during breaks in the all-day services and meet a lot of our other relatives coming out of different synagogues. It was a very cool environment and a very special place to grow up.

Q: Compared to now, what was different about living in Chicago back then?

BC: I think it was just that families lived together. Also, neighborhoods were rather segregated by religion and ethnicity then. Like I said we had an uncle and a grandmother living with us, but also family members were down the block or around the corner. People didn't move away to different states or different countries. Families just kind of stuck together. That was really nice. My grandmother had eight children, so our holidays were always very big and boisterous with a lot of fun and laughter. My aunts would all come over several days before the holidays and help my mother and grandmother cook. So there were huge pots bubbling on the stove and stories were being shared, and the smells of brisket roasting and apple pies being baked. It was heavenly! I had a lot of cousins and it was always fun. I had a lot of cousins and it was always fun.

Q: What did your parents do?

BC: My father worked in a factory. He only had an eighth grade education. He was the oldest child and the only son, so he had to go to work at an early age to help his parents out, because this was during the Depression. He never went back to school after that. He worked in a factory, a paper box factory. He was something called a slitter, which meant he cut the cardboard boxes apart. He would sometimes come home with cuts on his hands, and I remember his fingers were always very rough because he would have cuts from all of the paper and cardboard he would handle.

My mother didn't work at that time. We had a very nice apartment. When I look at the old pictures I'm amazed because everybody looks beautiful. They're dressed to the nines with these hats and these gloves and the shoes. I had a couple of uncles who were more well-to-do. They were the oldest of my grandmother's children and they would send money, I think, for my grandmother. I'm sure that sprinkled down to my parents, because she was living with them. I never really felt like, you know, like we were poor, that we wanted for anything. So that was nice.

Q: And you said that you lived there until eighth grade?

BC: No, we lived on the West Side until fifth grade and then we moved to Berwyn. The neighborhood was changing, and it was at a time when people were more afraid of black people coming in. It was fear of the unknown. I think about it now and our ignorance was disturbing. But that's what happened. Also, lot of the Jewish families started doing better financially so they wanted to buy houses. My family came from Russia in 1921 because of the Pogroms. There was a lot of hatred of Jews and the purpose of the pogroms was to kill Jews. Some of them came over after the Second World War, after the Holocaust, and started doing better, so they moved out of the West Side. Which really was a beautiful area, if you've ever been there. Architecturally there are some beautiful, beautiful houses, and the boulevards and lots of wonderful parks—everything. But we fled to the suburbs.

Q: This would've been the early '50s?

BC: This would've been about '51. I was about 10 years old. We moved to Berwyn because my grandmother was still with us and one of my uncles lived in Riverside, which was adjacent to Berwyn. He was the youngest son and wanted his mother to live close to him, and he helped my parents buy the house so that my grandmother could live near him.

Q: What are your memories of Berwyn at that time?

BC: I remember I was so excited. The thought of moving to our own house, with its own trees and backyard was thrilling! I worried that something would happen and we wouldn't be able to move. We moved on May 1, 1951. That memory is indelible because it was just so thrilling. I remember the trees were blooming. I remember the trees were popping, the leaves were coming out. We moved to this little house in Berwyn, and it was just so sweet. My uncle had taken care of all the decorating, and there was like all new furniture. Chinese Modern was the thing at the time. I had my own bedroom. It was decorated in chartreuse and red, very Chinese colors. His business dealt with upholstery and draperies, so every room had custom draperies. My brother's bedroom had cowboy draperies, and I had these chartreuse and red drapes and a dressing table. My uncle even had the basement finished as a rec room. It was all knotty pine and even had a bar for my father and its own washer and dryer. And I will never forget the new

blanket that was on my bed. I had never seen or felt anything like it before. The day was warm and I felt a little feverish, with all the excitement. When my mother helped me to bed I felt like I was enveloped in a white silk cloud. This blanket was the softest thing I had ever felt. It was summer weight, but cool. I'll never forget the day that we moved, but I don't know whatever happened to that blanket.

Before we moved my mother took me aside—it kind of got me nervous—and she said that in Berwyn, there weren't a lot of Jewish families. She said somebody might say something about the fact that I was Jewish, or something bad about Jews. I never experienced or thought about this before, so I was very worried. Anytime something would come up in a class and they would start mentioning something about Judaism or Jews, I would get very tense, thinking that something bad was going to be said. But nothing ever was.

I loved my house and yard and the trees and corner store. I made a lot of friends and learned to ride a bike. In Chicago we lived on the third floor and I didn't have a bike. So I didn't learn to ride a bike until I was 10, but I loved it. My friends and I would go on picnics and ride all over town, and sometimes I rode to my uncle's house in Riverside. So yeah, it was lovely. We would have the whole family for the holidays down in our new basement, a great place for the family to gather, sometimes 40 people. We had a yard and a brick barbecue. My father loved mowing the grass. [laughter] It was wonderful. I was very fortunate that I had such a wonderful childhood.

Q: You may have been too little at the time, but did you sense any sort of overarching atmosphere of anti-Semitism? Is that why your mom prepared you for it?

BC: No, I did not. I learned all the Christmas carols, which I had never heard before and enjoyed singing them, but I was afraid to say the words “Jesus Christ” or “My Lord Jesus” out loud! I just mouthed the words when they came up. I assume that coming from an all-Jewish enclave she was worried about this possibility and trying to protect me. I guess she thought she was trying to prepare me because we had lived in an all-Jewish area where we were surrounded by other Jewish people. And we’re moving to this area where our neighbors were not going to be Jewish. In fact I don’t think I had one Jewish friend when I lived in Berwyn. I went to Sunday school with some other kids that lived in Riverside, but we went to a synagogue in Chicago, because there was nothing Jewish in that area. But at home and at school, I played with non-Jewish kids. And it was fine. My parents made friends with our neighbors and we would all sit outside in the evenings during the summer. The kids would play while the adults look on.

Q: And then in eighth grade you moved again?

BC: After I graduated eighth grade, I started going to a youth group when I was 11 or 12 in Oak Park, which really isn’t that far from Berwyn. It’s only maybe six miles or something—not very far. My mother wanted me to be with more Jewish kids. I met a lot of kids there, a lot of Jewish kids, and started mingling with them, and my mother was

really happy about that. We sold that Berwyn house and moved to Oak Park. My uncle must not have been too thrilled, but at least Oak Park wasn't too much further than Berwyn.

Then I went to Oak Park High School and got very involved in the synagogues there. There were two synagogues just a couple of blocks from each other. One was Reformed and one was Conservative. And that was kind of the end of... well, my grandmother probably still kept Kosher, because she was still living at that time, but we started not being so religious at that point. I loved being with other Jewish kids. Then in high school I think I was mostly friendly with Jewish kids. It was kind of weird now that I think about it. [laughter] I wasn't able to keep in touch with my friends from grade school, I don't know why. I'm not sure. But yeah, I made a lot of new friends and it was a great school. A really good school.

Q: What did you like doing in school?

BC: I liked English. I've always loved reading, and art of course. I hated gym and math most of the time. I got involved with the youth group and held various offices doing different things through the youth group. My friends were very social, we did a lot of cool things. I had a lot of pajama parties. My friends and I were very social. So that was fun.

Q: Did you aspire to go to college?

BC: I did, yeah. My friends were college-bound, as Oak Park was college-oriented. I always thought I would study art. I loved fashion and fashion design. In fact, from the time I was 10 I was going to the Art Institute for their Saturday classes. I was taking fashion design, and I was led to believe that I was good. And I certainly enjoyed it, so I thought I would maybe do that. I wasn't really that serious about a career, because back in those days you'd get married and have kids. I would see these fashion magazines and I'd dream I'd go to Paris someday. I don't think I had any really huge dreams. Mostly just getting married and having a family.

Q: But you did go to college?

BC: Yes, I went to University of Illinois at Champaign, but I was only actually there a semester. I wasn't happy with my grades in my art classes. I was disillusioned, then I had met this guy. So I went back to Chicago. I continued my education in Chicago, and then we wound up getting married. I had a daughter very early on so I didn't finish college at that time. I went back 20 years later when I was in my forties and got my degree in English Literature.

Q: You said you met your future husband in college?

BC: In Champaign, yeah.

Q: How did you meet?

BC: It was a blind date. [laughter] Somebody I was friendly with across the hall of my dorm was dating this guy and he was friendly with my husband. So you know the way those things go. I thought he was really nice and funny and everything, and he seemed very enamored of me right away. I wasn't that sure. But I guess I must have liked him enough to decide to leave school with him. Now that I think about it, it was so crazy because it was such an interesting life being on your own like that. But it worked out fine, so I guess that's all that matters.

Q: And was he from Chicago as well?

BC: Yeah, he was from Chicago. It was convenient that he was from Chicago as well. But actually, at the time when I met him, he lived in Albany Park and I still lived in Oak Park at that time. But then my parents realized it was too expensive to live there, so they decided to move back into the city. My husband always said, 'If you still lived in Oak Park I don't know if I would have seen you because I didn't really have a car that often.' So I moved to West Rogers Park, not that far from Albany Park, so all these pieces seemed to fall in to place.

Q: You got married pretty quickly after that then?

BC: We got married in 1961 and our daughter was born in 1961. She was born on my 20th birthday, so I was still a baby myself. He was just nine months older than me. He was still in school. We lived with his parents for a short time, about a year. Then he went to work after he graduated and we were able to rent an apartment on the North Side. Then I got pregnant with my second child. We both grew up in houses. We didn't live in apartments and we just didn't like living in an apartment. I never would have thought of buying anything at that point, because my parents didn't get their house until I think in their thirties. It just seemed like such a big responsibility. But he had always saved money and worked a lot, so we were able to afford—I think the down payment was about \$5,000 at the time. The house in Morton Grove was \$21,500.

Q: Imagine that!

BC: In Morton Grove! [laughter] I know. So I was a little leery about that. But the people before us, he had been a veteran, so he had a 4% mortgage. We were able to take over his mortgage. That was a good deal. We weren't paying that much more than we were paying in the apartment, for a big backyard and a much nicer place to live. It was very thrilling to move into our house again. We were both very excited about that.

Q: That was early '60s?

BC: 1964. Actually it will be 54 years that we've lived in Morton Grove next week.

Q: That's amazing. In the same house?

BC: Yep. Although, it is and it isn't. It's in the same location, but we did a lot of remodeling and stuff. The people you've been interviewing, what's the longest they've been living here?

Q: Some of them were in the 50-year range. Several have been around for a long time, which says a lot about Morton Grove.

BC: Right. And we had two more kids there after we moved there, so we outgrew the house in about five years. We thought about moving, but we really liked our neighbors a lot, we were conveniently located by the expressway and my husband's office, and I had an anxiety about moving. I just liked being there. So we decided to remodel and add on to our house. We had a very big lot. We lived in a cul-de-sac, so there was room on the sides. So we decided to look into adding on. In those days, it wasn't done. It was impossible to find anybody that was willing to take on such a big job. It was crazy. It took a couple of years. They'd come out and we'd tell them what we wanted to do, and they'd say, 'OK, we'll get back to you,' and we would never hear back from them again.

[laughter]

So we finally got—actually we got two architects. The first one was gonna do like a mansard roof kind of thing, because we had a little three-bedroom ranch. We liked

that plan, but we couldn't find anybody to build it. Then we found an architect that belonged to our synagogue that we belonged to out here, that's no longer here. He did very modern houses, but he had his own builder! So we hired him and he did a plan for us and it was so different. We thought, 'Oh my God, this is so cool.' We never even thought of doing anything that modern. Since he had his builder, we were able to get going. This was in the '70s. It took a whole year. We started in 1976 and we didn't finish until '77. We were like pioneers because now these kinds of big remodeling jobs are done all the time. At the time I guess it was a very big deal.

We lived in our original house the whole time we were remodeling. We didn't move out. They just built around us. The plan was for a two-story addition onto this ranch house on the north side. We were going to have four bedrooms and two bathrooms in that addition. We had added on a family room before that, about five years earlier. When they finished doing the new part, they broke through the walls and we moved out of the existing house and into the family room and the bedrooms in the new part. Then they completely took apart the inside of the old house and made all of the rooms bigger. Our old bedroom is now the dining room, and the two bedrooms for the kids were doubled up and became our living room. You'll have to come and see it, it's very cool.

Q: How was managing that transition with kids?

BC: It was hard. It was very hard. The kids were very excited. Every time they would come home from school there would be something else going on. I was very excited too!

Q: It was an adventure for them.

BC: Right. I guess the stairway was the last thing that they built. There was a ladder up to the second floor and they just loved going up there and walking around and seeing everything. My youngest two are a boy and a girl, so they had been living in the same room. They were just a year apart. They were getting to be about 10 and 11. So it was like, it's time these kids get separated. So they were getting their own rooms. At the end I was kind of at my wit's end. [laughter] They told us it was going to take three months, and it took a year. My husband was always proud: 'We didn't have to go out to dinner once the whole time.' And I was like, 'Easy for you to say.' [laughter]

Q: You probably should have, right?

BC: Right. But when they took the kitchen apart, it was in the summertime, so we could grill outside. He had 'very kindly' moved the refrigerator, and we had a hot plate in the family room, *and* a microwave! So, isn't that nice? And I could wash dishes in the bathroom sink. But we managed. It was a big adventure and it really turned out great. The process was mostly very exciting.

Q: So were you at home this whole time?

BC: Yeah, we were at home the whole time. Everybody was there, four kids and a big dog, a 100-pound giant schnauzer. One day I had to call my husband home from work. I was really having a nervous breakdown because they laid the carpeting, and the dog, he would get really excited and then lose control of his bladder. Actually, there were two stories: the first one was they came and brought the carpeting and it was not the right color, so that was going to delay a bunch of other things. I was freaking out, 'You have to come home! I can't deal with this anymore!' So he came home and we wound up keeping the carpeting because they basically gave it to us. My husband said, 'Let's just leave that on there. In a year we'll just re-carpet it.' Of course we didn't do that, but at least it kind of solved the problem.

After that carpeting had been laid, the dog was on the second floor and something happened. He got scared and started peeing from the bedroom that was in the back all the way down the hallway, all the way downstairs, on all that *new* carpeting! That was my second breakdown. [laughter]

People come by and say, 'Oh what a cool house'. And the people that used to live there who moved away and were back in town and going down the street. They knocked on one of the neighbor's doors and asked, 'What happened to our house? It's not there anymore!' So it's been fun.

My kids had a lot of friends on the block. There were a lot of little kids when we moved in. There were just gangs of them, and they'd all play together, all different ages. It was really nice to see. Oh, this is a special memory. In the summer in those days back in the '60s and '70s, people didn't have air conditioning. So in the summer they would all come outside and be in somebody's backyard. Somebody would always go out for a pizza or the men would get beer, or make coffee or somebody would bake something, and sit out there until like 11 o'clock at night. The kids were at home, and it was before walkie-talkies or anything, but we'd just walk over and check on the house every once in a while and listen in—'Everybody OK?'—then go back and sit out there and have these lovely little coffee klatches. That's a special memory.

Some of the neighbors had pools and we would have pool parties. It was just a nice camaraderie. We were about 20 years younger than most of the neighbors when we moved in, so it took a while. They didn't really include us in stuff initially. We were the babies. It took awhile. I remember looking out the window and they'd be getting together and I'd feel sad. But then, eventually, we were included. We still have really close ties with our neighbors. We're like family.

Q: What did your husband do?

BC: He was an accountant. He was comptroller of a company in Chicago. He had some accounting clients on his own as well. He worked for a company called Oak Supply and Furniture. There used to be something called Mostow and Service Merchandise. This

was similar, only it was an independent store that just discounted a lot of different things. They had a catalog showroom and everything from jewelry to furniture.

Q: What are your memories of early Morton Grove? What was it like when you moved in versus what it's like today?

BC: Oh, well, it was quite different. I think when we moved in, you know how Church St. turns into Beckwith through the forest? Do you live in Morton Grove?

Q: No, Evanston.

BC: OK, with Church St. going west... well, you know Church St. because that's in Evanston as well. Here it turns into Beckwith. They changed the name when it goes through the forest preserve. So we live right off of that street. But when we moved in, it didn't go all the way through to the end of Morton Grove because that west end wasn't built yet. Our house was part of the first development that was built. Then there was another expansion. And then when they built those houses, they extended Beckwith Road to a street called Washington, which gave access to Dempster and Golf Road. I remember that. The house that we bought was seven years old, so the development was really very young. Our neighbors had all bought their houses right when they were just building them. They would tell stories of not having sidewalks when they first moved

in, and the streets weren't really finished, that kind of thing. But yeah, we didn't really experience that.

There was a big shopping center that was located on Dempster and Waukegan, something called EJ Korvettes, a weird name. We heard it was owned by "Eight Jewish Korean War veterans," hence the name, E.J. Korvettes. It was a large discount department store. We did a lot of shopping there. Later Dominick's opened there. Both of those stores are gone now. There's a health club there now. Also on Dempster just east of Waukegan, a big community center was built after we moved there. That area was still being developed. Morton Grove was pretty much an all-white suburb when we moved in. Everybody was white. There were Jewish families interspersed, but it was predominately a Christian area. Then, I don't know, maybe 10 years ago, I just noticed, 'Wow! Morton Grove, it's really changed!' It's become one of the most diverse communities around, which I think is really cool. There are so many languages spoken. You can spot colorful native garb. It's a much more interesting place to live and raise a family. I think it's really thrilling that so many people live together here in peace and harmony.

Q: Did you eventually finish college?

BC: I did. I went back to school in 1981 to get my degree. Before my daughter was born and I was back in Chicago, I took some classes at Wright and Amundsen Junior Colleges. Then when I was pregnant I went to what was then called, Chicago Teachers

College. I went there for a semester and then she was born right after I finished the semester, so I finished my sophomore year. But in the interim, in the 20 years since I had gone to Chicago Teachers College, it was taken over by Northeastern Illinois University. So it was much bigger and everything. So when I went back to the same exact location, it was then Northeastern Illinois University. It was weird because I had a few of the same teachers I had 20 years before. In fact, my oldest daughter was going to Northeastern at that time.

Q: Oh!

BC: Yeah, I know. We were just 20 years apart. She had just started, and as soon as she found out that I was going to be going, I said, 'Wouldn't it be cool if I was going to the same school you are?' She said no. She dropped out!

Q: Oh really?

BC: She really didn't think it was cool. [laughter] My kids were like, 'You're going back to school in your 40s?' and I said, 'Yeah!' They thought it was very weird. They didn't like it because I wasn't home when they got home. But when I went back, there were so many people my age. In fact, when I graduated, I was in my 40s and there was a man that was in his 80s that graduated. So I was like, 'See? I'm not the oldest one there.'

Q: How old were your kids when you did go back to school?

BC: Well, two of them were in college. My oldest daughter was going to Northeastern, and my second daughter was going to Parson School of Design in New York. She became the fashion designer; that was very exciting. My younger two were in high school. So they weren't babies, but they liked having the chocolate cake when they got home from school. [laughter]

Q: You went back to school and started working at the library after that?

BC: After I graduated. I majored in English literature at the time. I mean, I still didn't have any major career plans. I just wanted to finish the degree. I didn't really have to work, which was nice. I always said I was going to go back and graduate college, and I did! As soon as we moved to Morton Grove, we got really involved with the library. I started taking my kids here really young. They'd have storytime in... when I was here it was the big reference area on the west end of the library, that goes the full width of the building. What is that now?

Q: That's Nonfiction now.

BC: OK. At first when we came back here, that's where they were having the storytime. Then they moved it downstairs at one point. We were frequent patrons and I joined the

book club led by Barbara Todd and became active in Friends of the Library. I made friends with Joan Gross. I don't know if you've heard about her. She was the head of the Children's Department for close to 30 years. She and I got along famously. She was great. When I graduated school, I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do, so I got a job at Marshall Fields part time. I was at the library one day and we were chatting. She said, 'Why don't you come work at the library?' She just hired me; I didn't have to fill anything out or go through anything. It was so different then.

Q: Wow, yeah.

BC: She said, 'OK ... you'll start whenever...' It was unbelievable. As a part-timer I worked 21 and a half hours a week and got paid vacation, paid sick days, and a pension. I was the last person that ever got that deal. My husband always said it was one of the best deals. Plus the fact that he was getting some of his tax dollars back: he was paying in and I was taking the salary. Also, the library was paying \$2 more an hour than Marshall Fields: \$6 an hour! It was a win-win.

Q: Absolutely. What did you do in your library job?

BC: I worked in the children's department. I don't think I even had a title in the beginning, but eventually I was called an Information Assistant. I did pretty much everything. I did a lot of cutting and pasting and coloring. [laughter] And reading. Joan

always said, 'You need to read the books so you can recommend things.' I was like, 'Oh my God, I'm going to get paid for reading.' And we weren't ever that horribly busy. Maybe during the summer for the summer reading program, but otherwise... So I would read a lot of books. People were so nice here. I made a lot of friends here, had a lot of parties. It was a much different atmosphere. It became much more business-like as time went on. They felt they had to run it like a business, which people that had worked there before that were not that thrilled about. It was a whole different atmosphere. Then of course computers came in. I worked here when they got the first ones. I still use Apple products, because that is what we had from the beginning.

Q: What was that like?

BC: That was challenging and daunting and exciting, because they put this equipment in front of you and like 'Ehhh...' But we learned how to use it, and it was amazing. I remember it was right around the time of the Monica Lewinsky thing and we'd try to log in and see what was going on. It was really amazing. A big change, but also a scary thing. Some of the older people couldn't really adapt to it, and a few of them retired early because it was too much for them. You'd have to get the updates; you'd have to learn it and a few weeks later there would be an update. It was too much for them to handle.

But it was a great job. Joan and I were great friends. It was kind of wacky but we'd sing songs down there at times. We both liked to sing, so if there was nobody there we'd just start singing songs. [laughter] And we'd fight over the thermostat. They

weren't enclosed so we could play with it. She'd like it really cool then I would get freezing, so we'd be constantly be going, 'Did you turn the heat up? Did you turn it down?'

Joan did the famous Creative Writing class. That was extremely popular. Joan did that for a long, long time. She had so many students that adored her, and they kept in touch with her forever. At the beginning of each class she would give them a subject to write on. They would write a story and we'd go into the boxes to find a picture that would go with the story. Then we'd put it in a booklet and paste the pictures in, then at the end of the session they'd get the booklet back. The kids would be so thrilled! It was very, very cool. There was a giant cabinet with thousands of pictures that we had cut out of old magazines, Life and National Geographic, and others. One of my responsibilities was to organize these pictures into different subject headings, such as animals, babies, airplanes, buildings, places, etc. so we could find the appropriate pictures more easily.

Ronny Rund was the assistant director of the children's department. She was great. Ronny was in charge of the storytimes with little kids. She was amazing and very well loved. Ronny still volunteers here. Have you met her?

Q: Yeah.

BC: Yeah, she was great, just great with little kids. She would do all the craft things with them, all these craft projects. But the art room, Ronny would have so much stuff in there and Sharron... do you know Sharron? She used to be the Director.

Q: I don't remember her, but I've heard of her.

BC: She was neat lady, and she would get so upset with Ronnie because Ronny was saving all these little things for all of her various projects, and it would get to be a crazy mess. And then we also had all the various boxes of pictures for the Creative Writing Booklets. My husband would say, 'What did you do at work today?' [laughter] 'Cut out pictures, colored name tags.' [laughter] That was the most fun: doing the Snoopy nametags and designing different outfits for each Snoopy. Every time Ronnie had a different storytime class, there would be different nametags. And they all had to be cut out and colored and laminated and all these things. So yeah, it was a really great job.

Q: When did that end?

BC: In 2002. My dad got sick and, well... first of all, I should tell you this part. I was working at the library, and in 1993 my twenty-nine-year-old daughter, who was the fashion designer, was living in Italy and was killed in an automobile accident. I was devastated. The powers that be at MGPL were so nice and empathetic about it. I would hear horror stories later about people who had lost children and their bosses would make them come back to work. I was off I think for a month before I could come back. Then I would come in for an hour, and then something would happen and I would completely fall apart and I would have to run out and leave. Joan and Ronnie were so

nice about that. They never said anything like, 'You can't do that.' I don't know nowadays if you could get away with that or not because the library is run like a business. Between 1993 and 1995, I don't know if I actually ever worked a full schedule. Maybe after the first year I did, I don't know. I would see a mother with two little girls and I would have a breakdown and would have to leave.

So in 2002 my father got really sick—my mom had died back in the '80s—and I was taking off work a lot to care for him. They were getting to the point where they were getting more strict about stuff. I had already retired but I was still working 11 hours a week. And sometimes even that was too much because I wanted to be there for my dad and everything. It was 'suggested' that maybe I needed to retire completely. That was really the best thing for me, because it was very stressful trying to take care of him and worry about responsibilities here and everything. I retired for good in 2002.

Q: And then you took care of your dad after that?

BC: Yeah, he didn't live too much longer. My husband also had bypass surgery in 2002. I was still mourning for my daughter, and then my oldest daughter had three children by that time and two of her children were having some health problems, so she really needed me. I was available and was able to spend more time with my grandchildren, which was really good medicine for me.

The thing that I really wanted to bring out was the fact that Morton Grove evolved so well. I know when I was working at the library there were some problems when the

Muslim community wanted to buy that school. There was some kind of hullabaloo, but not that much, that I recall. It seemed to go pretty smoothly. Once they moved in... I don't know, you hear about these horrible things happening in some places. Maybe there was an incident or two, but the Muslim community seemed to be accepted readily and acclimated pretty readily. So that's really good.

I got more involved in political stuff. I was very disappointed last year when I was on the Morton Grove Committee for the minimum wage initiative. I was involved in that. There was an actual name but I cannot remember what it was. I was extremely disappointed that the village officials would not pass that resolution. But I was proud of the community many, many years ago when we passed the handgun ban. We were one of the first communities to ban handguns, but then of course that was overturned.

Q: You like to stay politically engaged?

BC: Yes, I'm very politically engaged in a lot of issues. My big concern now is gun violence. I'm a founding member of People For A Safer Society, a grassroots group started after Sandy Hook. I sit on the board of that organization.

A couple of years ago I got invited to join this group called Morton Grove Women Who Drink Tea. It was started after Trump got elected and the Muslim community was feeling very vulnerable and marginalized. It was formed by two women, one Muslim, one Jewish. Our members are different religions with the common goal of inclusiveness and learning about our different cultures and communities. It's such a fabulous group. Really

amazing! Our group is what democracy looks like. We are a social group, but also political. We have over 300 members. We come from many different towns.

Through one of my contacts, Morton Grove Women Who Drink Tea became involved with this African School Girl Pad Project. We make these washable sanitary pads and send them to African schoolgirls. When the girls have their periods they have to stay home from school because they don't have the proper resources to take care of themselves. This is like going back to the old fashioned way. I remember my aunt telling me about how she and my other aunts had to use rags that they'd have to wash. It sounds horrible. So we make these really nice-looking pads, and then they are shipped out by Bookfriends International and the girls get them and can go to school.

So Morton Grove Women Who Drink Tea are working on that one. We're very politically involved. Involved in the Women's March from this year and the March Against Gun Violence that took place recently. It's just amazing. I don't know if we've been written about in the paper or not, but I think Morton Grove Women Who Drink Tea is a really important organization, especially during these troubled and hateful times.

I guess that's about it. I still think Morton Grove is a cool community. I've lived here a long time and never thought I'd be considered like a pioneer. I've seen a lot of changes with the great diversity and all the young people that are moving here now. So that's really nice.