

Narrator: Doris A. Huscher  
Date of Interview: September 30, 1987  
Place of Interview: Narrator's home, located at  
7102 Church Street, Morton Grove  
Interviewer: Yvonne Ryden  
Recorded For: Morton Grove Historical Society  
Transcribed For: Morton Grove Public Library  
Tape Running Time: 51 minutes

## INTRODUCTION

Doris Anderson Huscher grew up in an unincorporated part of Morton Grove, which later was incorporated into the village boundaries. The homes were torn down and the area became industrial. Now only one frame house remains to remind us that Kirk Street was once a residential neighborhood. Because most of the residents were of Swedish heritage, the area was called "Swedetown" by some. Others who felt it was a pejorative did not use it. Doris, in her interview, tells about life in that time and place.

DH: Doris A. Huscher

Q: Question asked by interviewer, Yvonne Ryden

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Q: Today is Wednesday, September 30, 1987. This is Yvonne Ryden and I'm at the home of Doris Anderson Huscher. Of course, I'm going to be calling her Doree throughout this interview. We're talking about her family and how she grew up in Morton Grove. We are sitting in the living room of her home at 7102 Church Street. It's a lovely, lovely fall day. Don't you think so, Doree?

DH: Yes, it is.

Q: Now, let's see, you began with the outline so we just have to start with your grandparents.

DH: My mother's parents were Emilia and Carl Olsson in Sweden. My father's mother was Charlotte Anderson. I think Charlotte is an unusual Swedish name.

Q: Yes, it is.

DH: Isn't it? I don't know where it came from. I never knew a Grandpa Anderson. I guess my dad was just an infant when he died, and their being in Sweden, you just never knew. So that's about my grandparents. My mother and father -- Mother was Helga Olsson Anderson. My father was Ernest Anderson. They came to the United States from Sweden. Mother came in 1912 from Olofstrom. She was only

sixteen. In fact, she landed in June and she was fifteen at the time and she turned sixteen in July. And my father came from Eskilstuna, Sweden, in 1911 when he was 20. That was just one year apart. They both came over by ship, the Lusitania, and they were a year apart -- one 1911 and one 1912.

You asked why they came, what brought them to this country. They always said America was the land of opportunity. Another thing they used to say was that those who had the get-up-and-go came to this country. The lazy ones stayed back home or -- okay, maybe they didn't have the money to come over either, but if they really had it then, they came over. I don't know where Mom got this idea, but she used to say that she came here to pick the gold off the bushes. That was a saying she had. I guess they really thought America was something. They settled in this area with relatives.

Q: When you say this area, was it ...

DH: Chicago. Chicago area. Mother had an uncle there and Dad had a brother-in-law, I think it was in Chicago.

Q: So they came to people they knew.

DH: Yes. They landed in New York and then came over. Mother did housework for a living at that time. I know she worked for the Palmers, who were relatives of the Potter Palmers. She made \$2.50 a week.

Q: But she stayed there.

DH: She stayed there. That included room and board. And within one year she had saved a hundred dollars and sent back to her parents to repay them for her passage money. She also told about -- at the time they came to this country, they had to show the immigration officials that they had at least \$25 in their pocket. If you didn't have it you couldn't enter this country. But she'd tell the story, too, about someone who had lost his money playing cards on the boat coming over, and he didn't have his \$25 anymore. So someone showed the immigration man his \$25 and passed it back, so the other one got in on that \$25, too, so they each could show what they had. (laughs)

Q: I've heard of that. I've heard that that was done, that there were even money lenders who would loan it to them, and then they'd have to borrow the money from someone nearby to pay.

DH: Well, they had to show it right in New York to the immigration, you know, here it is. Then they passed it down the line and gave it to the next one. (laughs)  
But only \$25 ensured them an entry.

Q: Maybe \$25 went further in those days.

DH: Yes, I guess it did. Well, mother went to work after she got here. My dad rode the rails for a while. (laughs) He tells about riding the freight cars. He was in Shelby, Illinois. He went down to Miami, and I guess he worked in factories and . . .

Q: Now who did you say sponsored him?

DH: I don't know that you needed a sponsor in those days -- a brother-in-law.

Q: A brother-in-law, like his sister's husband, perhaps. But he didn't stay with them?

DH: No, I guess that was -- what'll I say? Someone to go to, and then from there he went on his own. But he bummed around for a while, riding the rails. He worked in factories, and finally he came to Chicago. He was a tool and die maker. Whether he worked at that while he was bumming around, I don't know. (laughs) But anyway, that was his livelihood. They all had trades. I think that was drummed in any old foreigner's or old-timer's head. You have to have a trade. You've got to learn something, so you can go.

After my dad came back and settled down, he was active in the Swedish American Athletic Club. He played soccer. I know Mom, after they were married, used to get a little disturbed because it was soccer, soccer, soccer and all his bachelor boyfriends. (laughs) That's all their life was.

Q: Doree, can you tell me how they met? Where they met?

DH: Well, I think they met -- I can't be sure of it, but they used to talk about like dancing at Eiver Temple. It was a Swedish lodge. I think they met at one of those dances. They were married in 1916, but they met a year or two after they came here. The story goes that they felt they needed \$250 to save for furniture for their new house, so they couldn't get married yet because they didn't have enough money to buy furniture. So that's why they waited until 1916. They lived around Whipple Street and Irving Park in Chicago. This is

before my time. My brother was born there in 1918. Then in 1922, in the summertime, they moved out to Morton Grove.

Q: Do you know how they found the area that they moved to?

DH: Yes. Mother's -- well, I don't call him a sponsoring uncle, but that was the uncle she went to when she first came to this country, he moved out here. Now why, I don't know. That was before I was even born, and I don't know. But he was out here and a couple other Swedish relatives were out here at the time.

Q: Were they in the neighborhood that we're going to be talking about?

RH: Right. That's where they moved to.

Q: So this area, which is really near Lehigh and Oakton, we'll talk about that.

DH: It is Kirk Street really today, which is about one block south of Oakton and then just west of Lehigh. Right in that general area.

Q: Everybody wasn't a relative, though. Were there Swedish families there?

DH: No, they were all relatives. They were all related, and they were all Swedes except one, who, I think, was -- when I think back -- his name was Olaf Hansen. But he was not Swedish, he was . . .

Q: Maybe Norwegian?

DH: Yes, or Danish. I think he was Danish. He owned the property there and lived there at the time. Now, this is before my time. That's who they bought from. I wish I knew how much they paid for it, but I don't know.

Q: Did they move into a house that was already standing?

DH: No. No, they built a home, because nothing was out there. Mother and Dad bought three acres. Some bought a half acre. Mom and Dad bought three acres originally, then later on they bought three more, so they ended up with six acres out there.

Q: Was there more than one home on this six acres?

DH: No. just out home on those six acres. They did build a home. My mother's -- another uncle -- lived in Chicago, in North Park at the time, and he was a building contractor and he built their home. In fact, I think he built or helped build most of the homes out there.

Q: So everybody was related, more or less.

DH: Yes, except for this Mr. Hansen, who originally owned the property out there. And then later on some Germans, a few other houses came, a couple. We were maybe five Swedes and two, three German families.

Q: So that's all there was. Basically eight families?

DH: Oh, yes. I counted up just before. There were eight houses when they all started selling.

Q: Well, some of them were on Kirk Street, but at least one was on Lehigh, wasn't it?

DH: Well, one was on the corner of Kirk and Lehigh. That was Gunnarsons. Really, the Gunnarsons were not really related to us, but they came from the same town in Sweden that my mother came from.

Q: Your mother and father had not come from the same town?

DH: No.

Q: That's not typical either.

DH: No, they didn't.

Q: Do you have notes there that would list the families or do you just want to list them right off the top of your head?

DH: I'll list them off the top of my head.

Q: All right, we're starting on Lehigh, on Kirk Street south of Oakton.

DH: You mean from about the time that I was born?

Q: All right.

DH: Well, the Gunnarsons lived on the corner . . .

Q: That would be the north corner, nearest to . . .

DH: They're all on the south side of the street.

Q: They all are? Oh.

DH: Well, it wasn't a street. It was a little cinder road, one-lane road going back. They were all on the south side. The Gunnarsons were first. Then this Mr. Hansen's house. This is at the time I was born. Then an uncle of my mother's who was Gust Erickson and his wife. In fact, his wife is still living. She's 90 or 91 today. And then our family came -- Ernest Andersons. And then Axel Erickson, who was another uncle.

Q: He was further west.

DH: Yes, I'm giving them as they went westward. Then later on, Axel Erickson's son, Harry Erickson, built between Axel and us. Now Harry Erickson -- that's Alice Erickson who used to be on the library board. Then the Rossmanns built. I can't say just when. They would be, that would be an uncle to Denise [Rossmann] Christopoulos. Someone built those homes, and then Mr. Rossmann bought them. But they were brick -- ours were only frame. (laughs) So, the old places grew up.

Q: So there must have been space between those.

DH: Oh, yes, like I said, I think about the smallest was a half acre. Yes. And then, if we had the six acres, there was roughly three acres on each side of us. We were in the middle, you know.

Q: So you had a lot of land to play.

DH: Oh, sure. We played baseball in the cow pastures.

Q: As you looked out of your front window looking north, you wouldn't see much, would you?

DH: No, there was a farm there. Charles Moll, M-O-L-L, had a farm out there.

Q: Would that have faced on Oakton?

DH: Yes, their house faced on Oakton Street.

Q: M-O-L-L?

DH: Yes. That's right where Dole Valve is today.

Q: Oh. I know that there used to be a house over on, further west, the trees still stand, and there was a house there when we moved to Niles in 1951. There was a big frame house.

DH: On Oakton?

Q: On Oakton on the south side of the street. But it was in a ways, it would be like a block . . .

DH: And the Legion -- do you remember where the Legion had carnivals?

Q: Yes, the Legion used to be there.

DH: Okay, that's the Charlie Moll house that I just mentioned.

Q: All right. So it wasn't very close to Lehigh. It was quite a ways west.

DH: Oh, I'd say maybe half a mile west. Maybe not quite that far.

Q: And the Legion did use that for a carnival?

DH: Their carnival, yes, that area.

Q: And you called him Charlie Moll?

DH: Charles, I guess. There were a family of, well, Mr. and Mrs. Moll and then three children. They all worked the farm.

Q: Now, where you lived, you moved there as -- well, they built the house.

DH: They built the house before me.

Q: And then they brought you in as a new baby.

DH: Mom was pregnant when they moved in ,and she said she was doing something in the kitchen -- painting or whatever -- standing on the kitchen table (laughs) and fell. I always say that's what's wrong with me today. (laughter)

Q: Were you born soon after that, though?

DH: No, I wasn't born until November. November 13, 1922.

Q: Well, we got that on record, didn't we.

DH: I'm going on Medicare this year.

Q: How wonderful. I think you'll like that.

DH: I don't think that's so wonderful. (laughs)

Q: Well, you've got to look at the sunny side of it. There's got to be some blessing. (laughter) Doree, tell me about the houses that were in your area and what the neighborhood or what the surroundings were like.

DH: Well, they were all small frame homes. There were no conveniences. We had no water or sewer. We had outhouses, kerosene lamps. No telephone.

Q: How long did it stay like that? Well, you mentioned somebody built some brick homes later.

DH: Water was never brought out there until, I would say, maybe in the 1950s or so when they could finally afford it. In the beginning they couldn't, so everyone drilled their own well and had their own pumps. And the electricity, I don't really know. Maybe around in the '30s, early '30s that they brought electricity out. Or later, I'll bet.

Q: Now you sketched a map here for me, and there were about eight homes on the street, all on the south side of Kirk Street. So behind you, in back, that is to the south, was all farm land?

DH: It wasn't all farm land at the time. It had been subdivided at some time, because if you walked out in the field, in the prairie -- it was just open prairie -- and if you walked back about -- well, we were between Oakton and Howard Street. Say you'd walk halfway between them, there were sidewalks where someone had once tried to subdivide it and probably went broke or something. It was never completed. So that was never farmed directly behind us, but directly in front of us was the Charles Moll farm.

Q: And their house was quite a bit west.

DH: Quite a bit west . . .

Q: On Oakton, and they farmed all the way to Lehigh?

DH: No, not all the way to Lehigh, but about a block west of Lehigh, maybe, or so, they stopped.

Q: Do you really were out in the country.

DH: Oh, we were.

Q: And almost all the homes were frame, but there were a couple of brick homes?

DH: In later years, there were two brick homes. Other than that, they were all frame.

Q: That's interesting. Now, as you grew up you had playmates there in that area, didn't you? There would have been other Swedish families -- or other families.

DH: Well, our playmates were out relatives. We went to school in Morton Grove, but we didn't have those children as playmates. They were too far away. We were a mile and a half from school.

Q: How did you get to school?

DH: We walked. That gets interesting, too. We used to walk down Lehigh, which at that time was just a gravel road. Stones -- it was not paved or anything. We walked over Lehigh over to what is now the present village hall. The Morton Grove School is where I went to school. Sometimes we took a shortcut through the

woods, and that would be behind Poehlmann's.<sup>11</sup> Cross the railroad tracks and behind Poehlmann's . . .

Q: Did you ever walk the tracks then?

DH: Oh sure, we'd try to walk without falling off. Once in a while, we did it all the way home. (laughter)

Q: That would be like a game. To walk the railroad track?

DH: Sure, try to get it without falling off. But we would walk through Poehlmann's sometimes to take a shortcut as we walked to school, or home from school. That's where the hobos collected. They were just south of the Poehlmann property. I didn't realize this -- my husband said some of them even did menial work at Poehlmann's. But I didn't know it -- we just walked. They never bothered us, but we never looked at them either. We just walked right by their camps.

Q: You must have had to carry your lunch with you.

DH: Oh, sure. There were a few of us who had to carry our lunch all the time. Going back to the hobos, it's interesting, they used to come around and beg. And I can remember Mother telling that they'd come, and Mother would make them a sandwich or something like that. One time -- we had a milkman come and deliver milk and that. One day the milkman had left butter and milk and whatever, but

---

<sup>11</sup> Poehlmann's Greenhouse A on the south side of Lincoln Avenue extended west to the railroad tracks. It was the largest greenhouse in the world at one time.

after she had made the hobo a sandwich and he left, the butter wasn't there. So she went yelling after him, 'Give me my butter back!' (laughs) And he did. He gave her the butter back. (laughs) She knew he had taken it.

Q: So it wasn't enough that they got the sandwich, they had to take a little more.

DH: We used to cut through Poehlmann's as we came home. We didn't always do it. I don't know why we didn't always do it, but we did. But we'd pick flowers. They would pinch off the withered -- not quite withered, but anyway, and throw them on a big pile. So we'd stop and pick these bouquets of flowers (laughs) out of their junk pile.

Q: Wonderful.

DH: Oh, another interesting thing. We used to walk to school, but when the radio said it was zero or below, we were kept home. Then Mom thought it was too cold for us to walk.

Q: It had to be zero?

DH: It had to be zero, and then we'd stay home. And Grandma in Sweden used to make us these big heavy woolen socks, and we had to wear them. So we used to stop at the depot on the way in and take our socks off (laughs) because we were ashamed of them. (laughter) But we had to be dressed warm.

Q: but when you were at the depot, you were within about what -- five . . .

DH: Ten minutes or less of the school. Sure.

Q: So would you all walk pretty much together?

DH: Oh, yes, we all walked together. And on the real windy days -- I was always the youngest, and on the windy, bad days, I'd walk and hide behind the other, the bigger folks. Oh, yes there were -- I'm counting how many of us were walking -- six of us.

Q: Great, but then as you say, when school was over, you came right back. You didn't stay. You hadn't any playmates there that you could stay or play with?

DH: No, because there was no -- in the early days, you know, there was no car. Mothers didn't drive. In fact, at first we didn't even have a car. My dad worked in Chicago, and he used to walk to the depot every day. Took the train to work, and then later we got a Model T. After that came the Model A.

Q: Did your parents speak Swedish to each other?

DH: I never learned Swedish myself, which I'm sorry for. Although my first grade teacher -- in later years we'd meet her now and then, Miss Nitz -- and she said that I started school with a Swedish accent. But they spoke English to us in their own broken way (laughs) and they would speak Swedish to each other and their friends. But we never learned -- I can understand Swedish, but I never learned it.

Q: Your brother was older. Would he have spoken Swedish?

DH: No, they never taught us. I wish they had. But they wanted to Americanize us.  
(laughs)

Q: Right. They were so anxious to have you get into the American mainstream, that they didn't want to . . . that was true of almost all immigrant parents at that time. They were so anxious for the American way. Let's backtrack a little bit. Tell me about your birth.

DH: I was born at home, and when the time came, my father walked to Niles Center and got Dr. Louise Klehm,<sup>2</sup> who incidentally also delivered my husband. She came out in a horse and buggy. I don't know; I suppose my father came back with her.

Q: Of course. I'm sure he rode back with her.

DH: I was the little pink bundle they found in the closet. (laughs)

Q: Oh, they did? Is that what you were told?

DH: Yes. I was told the doctor found a little pink bundle in the closet.

Q: Well, that's different than the stork brought you, or under a cabbage.

---

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Amelia Louise Klehm [1870-1941], known as Dr. Louise Klehm, delivered many babies locally. She practiced medicine from her father's home at 8212 Lincoln Avenue, Skokie.

DH: Well, I don't know that we mentioned that I had a brother, have we?

Q: No, you really haven't.

DH: He was born in Chicago.

Q: I think you mentioned that, but his name is?

DH: His name is Roy. He lives in Morton Grove today. He's now 69; he's about four and a half years older than I am. So there were just the two of us. Shall I talk about roller skating? Where I learned to skate?

Q: Absolutely -- that's so interesting.

DH: I learned to roller skate on Oakton Street.

Q: Which sounds terrible today. (laughter)

DH: I can't remember when it was paved, but I must have been eight, nine years old -- somewhere in that vicinity -- when we'd roller skate down Oakton Street.

Q: Well, you would have to, if you were going to learn to roller skate. In your neighborhood your street wasn't paved.

DH: Our street wasn't paved, and Lehigh or Railroad Avenue it was called then, was not paved. We did have, there were some sidewalks, oh, about where Niles West now

stands. As if that had been subdivided, and we used to skate those sidewalks but the weeds would grow over them and it was too hard to skate. So we just used Oakton Street.

Q: Wonderful. Interesting to think Oakton Street could have been like that.

DH: Going back to another incident of my childhood. I lived near what is now Miami Woods and the river -- the north branch of the Chicago River. We didn't go to Hobo Island. That was more in town, that was too far away. So we went right down near Oakton Street.

Q: In other words, by going west on Oakton you would get to the river.

DH: Yes, the north branch of the Chicago River and what is now Miami Woods. That's where we did our sledding and our ice skating. Even in summer -- now, I wasn't in on this, but some of the bigger boys, eight, ten years older than me, would go swimming in that river. They cleaned up an area all by themselves. They didn't have to have someone come in and do it for them. They had a diving board there and went swimming. I never did, but I know these fellows did.

Q: Would your brother have been too young to have been in that group?

DH: He was too young for that. I can remember Felix Hoffman, if that means anything to history. He's not living anymore, but I remember -- and he was ten, twelve years older at the time than I was. Maybe they were eighteen-year-old kids -- in their upper teens -- who were doing that.

Q: So you had a lot of fun. You had playmates right there. You did a lot of activities, but you really weren't part of the Morton Grove community.

DH: We were not part of the village. In fact, I don't know if I mentioned it, we were not in incorporated Morton Grove. We were Niles Township.

Q: and you weren't part of the village actually?

DH: We were not part of the village, and this is interesting. We went to Morton Grove School, which is District 70, but in reality, we found out we lived in Niles School District 71. We should have been going there. They were collecting the tax money for us, and Morton Grove was educating us.

Q: When did you find that out?

DH: After I graduated from Morton Grove School in '36. Later, some of the Rossmann girls who lived down Kirk Street -- it wasn't even called Kirk Street at the time. . .

Q: Did it have a name?

DH: No. Later on it was called Kirk Street but not when we lived there. It was where the Swedes lived. But later on, the Rossmann girls had to go to Niles School. It was somehow discovered or maybe Morton Grove knew it and just let us come in. I don't know.

Q: That's interesting. It's possible that District 71 used the railroad tracks as their boundary. I know when we lived in Niles, they were unhappy because even though at that time some of the industry on Touhy was in Niles, it was not in the school district, because they didn't want children crossing the railroad tracks. So the railroad tracks had been the school boundaries.

DH: What was the district in? Seventy-two?

Q: It was the difference between 71 and 72.

DH: Yes, then it would be 72 surely.

Q: Because it was in Niles, it should have been in District 71, but the railroad tracks had become the boundary for the safety of the children. You see, you crossed railroad tracks.

DH: Right. My goodness, yes. And no crossing guard.

Q: And there must have been a lot of trains at that time. Lots more.

DH: Oh, I would imagine so, yes. Another interesting thing about the little road we lived on, as I say, in the beginning nothing was dedicated -- nothing. It was cinders. They had loads of cinders come out and dumped, and . . .

Q: Well, I think that they maybe had furnaces. They might have had cinders right out of their . . .

DH: We didn't have furnaces. We had stove heat. Then later we had oil heat. First we had coal stoves. Then we had oil stoves. No one shoveled. Gosh, we were in a quarter of a mile -- the final house where Axel Erickson lived -- maybe quarter of a mile west of Lehigh.<sup>3</sup> And the men would get out there -- we all would. We'd have to shovel two furrows for the cars to go by. That was a long haul to shovel.

Well, then, later on they got smart, and Steenie Lehman, Stanley Lehman was the Standard Oil dealer in town. They'd kind of see that someone would need fuel oil when we had a snowstorm. So they'd call Steenie up, and he'd come with his heavy oil truck and open up the road. (laughter)

Q: Now you've mentioned that the homes were small. Tell about your home.

DH: Well, now we're getting into another category. I truthfully don't remember too much of my little house, because in 1927, there was a tornado and our house blew over.

Q: Oh!

DH: You didn't know that?

Q: No! A tornado in Morton Grove?

---

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Huscher stated the street went west to what is now Nagel Avenue, about 6500 west.

DH: Yes, in 1927. It was November 11, 1927. Our roof blew off the house. We had no basement. The house blew off the foundation, and . . .

Q: Were other homes on the street affected the same way?

DH: No, our house got it. It went through somewhere in Niles and our house got it and there was a farm over towards Oakton Street more and a little more towards Skokie that got it. So it went just a path that way. But no, we had to move to Chicago then. We lived for the winter for about a year or so when I was five while our house was being rebuilt. That's the house I remember.

Q: Oh, all right. Tell us about the one you remember.

DH: At that time, it was just a two-bedroom house, and we still didn't have plumbing. That came later. And . . .

Q: You didn't have a basement.

DH: We never had a basement out there, no. there was no plumbing. We had electricity by then. Well, that came afterwards, after the tornado. But living room, dining room, kitchen -- just a typical bungalow type, but it also was frame.

Q: Two bedrooms and no front porch or a back porch? Not a stoop, but I mean a real porch you can sit on.

DH: No, we had a real back porch, but not a front porch. But, no, the tornado did strike and, like I say, I was just turning five at the time, and I don't really remember too much.

Q: That happened right before your birthday.

DH: Yes.

Q: When you went into Chicago, did you stay with relatives or did you rent a place?

DH: No, we rented a house in what is North Park. Spaulding and Foster.

Q: And did you go to school then in there?

DH: No, I wasn't in school yet.

Q: Oh, that's right. You were just five, right. How about your brother then? Would he have gone to the school in Chicago? Probably.

DH: Yes, the one on -- I know the name -- on . . .

Q: It's not the Peterson School? Further south?

DH: Bryn Mawr. It was -- I wonder if it was Peterson School? It was on Bryn Mawr and in that general area.

Q: Right. Bryn Mawr and Kimball -- the back of the school faces Kimball.

DH: That would be it. Yes, that's where he went to school, but I wasn't old enough yet. But we went to church in the -- what is that Swedish Lutheran Church? It's a strict one. (laughs)

Q: The Swedish Covenant, it would have been. You know, near North Park.

DH: We went to Sunday School there when we lived there.

Q: I don't know which church it is, but I do know the Swedish Covenant Church is quite strict.

DH: When we lived -- now we call it "when we lived on the prairie" -- on Kirk Street, we didn't go to church. Mother and Dad said everyone was German and they were Swedish. Now, in Sweden they were very good Lutherans. They went to church. My father talked how many years he went without missing. Then they came around here, and they didn't fit in. they didn't understand the German, and most of it was German.

Q: In other words, if he'd have gone to the Lutheran Church in town, it would have been the German Lutheran -- the Jerusalem Lutheran Church.

DH: Right. In fact, I was baptized there. But later I was confirmed and so was my brother at, uh . . . it's now United Church of Christ on Oakton Street.

Q: The one that's over by the Skokie Library?

DH: Right, right. That's where we were confirmed and went to church.

Q: I know that you remember a lot of things about the Morton Grove School and your experiences there. Why don't we talk about that?

DH: Well, I started in first grade, and I also have to mention my husband started school with me. We always say -- I say -- here we knew each other all these years, and we still got married. (laughter) But we started first grade in a portable building because there wasn't room for us. They were enlarging the school at the time. Morton Grove School, which is now the village hall.

This portable building was located, oh, I'd say it's in the parking lot of the present village hall on South Park Avenue. It was along that side, and that is where we had first grade. Our teacher was Miss Gladys Nitz. She was about four-feet, ten-inches tall. She wasn't much bigger than we were.

Q: What was her name?

DH: Nitz. N-I-T-Z. She was a real, real nice gal. Then we went into the big building in second grade, and we had Mabel Mayr, M-A-Y-R, as our teacher. Want me to name all my teachers?

Q: Sure I do, but I'm amazed that you can spell them, too. M-A-Y-R?

DH: Mabel M-A-Y-R. Third grade was Martha Konapa, K-O-N-A-P-A. Fourth grade was Helen Esther, E-S-T-H-E-R. Fifth grade we had Hope Osborne, O-S-B-O-R-N-E, I guess, and then later, Gretchen Stout, S-T-O-U-T, became our teacher.

Q: In the same year? In fifth grade?

DH: Yes, I don't remember too much but I know that Gretchen Stout was our fifth grade teacher, but I can faintly remember, it seems like Hope Osborne left, and then Miss Stout came over. Gretchen taught -- of course, she was Miss Stout -- taught at the school for years, and then she married Art Loutsch from Morton Grove. She's still living today, and they live in Golf now, but they lived in Morton Grove many, many years. Then in our sixth grade, we had Althea Carlson, another nice landsman.<sup>4</sup> (laughter)

Seventh grade -- and that's when we start playing basketball -- we had Robert Pendleton. We had a man in the school, and he was my seventh grade teacher. He was our basketball coach, too. I did play basketball seventh, eighth grade in grade school, and so did Ike -- Fred Huscher.<sup>5</sup>

Q: That's right, let's give him his formal name.

DH: Then in eighth grade -- that's the teacher I remember most. That's Esther Fowler, F-O-W-L-E-R. I think everyone who ever went there and had her for a teacher remembers the fiery red head. She drummed grammar into us that we knew

---

<sup>4</sup> A landsman is another person from the same village, province, etc., in Europe. In this case, another Swede.

<sup>5</sup> Doree Huscher's husband.

it inside out, and you had to know it. When we went on to high school, we knew the Morton Grove kids because they knew their grammar better than anyone else around. I also have to get in that in eighth grade, Ike and I both played basketball, and he was captain of the boys' basketball team, and I was captain of the girls' basketball team.

Q: When you finished eighth grade and you graduated, where was the service or the ceremony held?

DH: In the gymnasium of the school.

Q: There was a stage and was it big enough?

DH: Oh, yes. In fact, this Miss Fowler that I spoke about used to write the school plays. She really had a reputation; she really was very, very good at it. She'd write our plays and direct them. I even think -- I know of one year, and I think more than one year -- we were asked to put our plays on down at the Field Museum. That was quite a thing.

Q: Do you remember the subject of any of the plays or anything about them?

DH: Well, she had everyone in it and they were different. The one I remember -- and she'd go from a real quiet, passive scene, then the next scene would be the Mexican dancers and the jota, you know. I don't know that there was too much of a story attached to it, but . . .

Q: There might have been some theme and then she worked in a lot of different scenes.

DH: Like telling the story of different lands. One year I was a gypsy. (laughs)  
Bicycle built for two -- they had the Gay '90s scene and different things like that, but she wrote them. We did appear at the Field Museum.

Q: Do you remember anything else about your grammar school?

DH: I graduated in 1936. That I know. No, not really -- nothing.

Q: You mentioned to me before we started taping, that your brother went to Schurz as a tuition student. And where did Ike go to school?

DH: He went to Lane Tech High School. That was because Niles Township did not have a four-year high school in those days, and Niles Township would pay your tuition to attend any other school. I suppose of your choice, I don't know, because like Ike went to Lane Tech. He went there for three years. After that Niles East was built. At that time, it was just Niles Township High School. That's where, once that school was built, they stopped paying your tuition. That school had not been completed when my brother, Roy, graduated from Schurz High School in Chicago. He had to take the train. He walked to the train, and took the train back and forth.

Q: Now you were still living on Kirk -- on what we today are calling Kirk Street.

DH: We were living there when I got married.

Q: Oh, well. He really had to walk up north on Lehigh to the Morton Grove depot. There was no closer stop. Edgebrook would have been probably the next stop.

DH: Yes, that would be the next stop, but it would have been further.

Q: Well, now, about when you started high school, you said Ike graduated with you, and he went to Lane. Where did you go?

DH: I went to -- it was Niles Township High School, but because they did not have a building, we met at the Lincoln School on Lincoln and Niles or Babb or whatever. One of those. We went there for two years until the new high school was built. Then we transferred over there.

Q: Tell me about the teachers that you had -- first at Lincoln, the ones that you remember.

DH: Miss Harbert. Oh, Mr. Wilkins was the art teacher. I was always bad in art. (laughter) I think he passed me because I made an effort, but anyway that was my bad subject. But we had Miss Harbert and the Ronalds sisters -- Marjorie and Lucille Ronalds. I'm not sure -- was Mr. Benette over there at that time?

Q: I don't remember the name, but he could have been. And Harold Ohlson.

DH: Harold Ohlson.

Q: And the music teacher.

DH: Clifford Collins. Clifford W. Collins.

Q: Oh, really? You remember that? Any other teachers you remember?

DH: I can't think. I'm trying to think who might have been our gym teacher, and I just can't think of that.

Q: Well, you might have had the Lincoln gym teacher. Of course, Lincoln was a full school at that point, wasn't it?

DH: Oh, yes, it was a full grade school.

Q: Right. One through eight.

DH: That's right, it was a full grade school at the time. I can't remember too much -- if we ha some rooms or some floors. I don't remember.

Q: Did you take a general course then?

DH: Commercial course is what I took. There were subjects you had to take in the first year. That's why I got hooked with art. (laughs) Oh, and Miss Johnson was our shorthand and typing teacher. Mildred Johnson.

Q: I see. Then the high school opened -- the lovely big building, not as big as it is now, but so pretty, I though. The Lincoln Avenue side especially.

DH: I think that was built with W.P.A. money, wasn't it, or something? Didn't it help build it?

Q: I don't know.

DH: I'm not sure.

Q: But anyway, then you transferred over, so you were one of the first students to go into the new high school.

DH: I was not the first graduating class, because we graduated in '40, and I think '39 was the first class. We took the bus -- Maierhofer Bus drove us to and from school. They still do, don't they? Maierhofer's is still . . .

Q: But it's not a high school anymore. Not to Niles East. But Maierhofer may be the bus service.

DH: They do, they pick up kids from here. Maierhofer still services the high school.

Q: All right, how many were in your class?

DH: Oh, our graduating class was 116.

Q: What do you remember about your graduation?

DH: Well, I do remember that our class -- not our entire class, but most of the class or those who were able to -- took a trip to Washington D.C., during spring break. My parents told me I could either have a trip to Washington or a wristwatch, which would be my graduation present. So, today I think I was dumb, but at that time I got a nice Elgin wristwatch with diamonds in it. That was my present because that would have been the amount of money, I guess, that would have been spent on the trip to Washington.

Q: But now you wish you had gone to Washington.

DH: Right. I still have never been there.

Q: Well, you'll get there someday. Let's talk now about what happened after your graduation. After you graduated from high school, you had taken a commercial course and you were a super-duper secretary.

DH: No, I wasn't. I went to work, which was dumb again in those days, through Mr. Benette at the high school. His wife worked in a law office and I could have gotten a job in that law office for fourteen dollars a week. But I knew someone else who worked at the Federal Reserve Bank downtown in Chicago, and I got sixteen dollars a week. First I started out sorting currency, and then I worked in the bond department. And for those two dollars a week, I would have been much better off to go to work in the law office. But, in those days, that . . .

Q: In those days, two dollars made a difference.

DH: Yes, when you're young you want the money. You thought that was a lot of money. So I worked downtown. Oh, another thing. I graduated from high school and I think two weeks later I start working, so it was no spend the whole summer goofing around like they do now. "You go to work." I did work downtown for a year, which I'm thankful for. I learned the Loop. I learned how to get around. Of course, this was forty-some years ago, but I did enjoy it.

Then I was offered a job out here for the township school treasurer. I started working there in 1941. His office was at the Niles Township High School building. It was Niles East, and now it's the . . .

Q: It's a conglomerate of everything.

DH: Right. But our office was in there for, oh, years and years. Right in the high school building, and then they needed the room, and we rented another office over on Lincoln Avenue<sup>6</sup> -- then it was a one-girl office. I worked there off and on for about 35, 40 years. My children started school and I'd work part-time. If they needed extra help for some special project, they'd call me in. I had the experience; I was the old-timer. But it worked into a four, five, girl office. But when I was there, it was a one-girl office. It was a smaller operation. Schools weren't so big. And that was all. Those were the only places I ever worked all my life.

Q: Then you were working in the township school treasurer's office when you got married?

---

<sup>6</sup> About 8120 Lincoln. The building has been torn down. The Township Treasurer's Office is now in the Masonic Temple, 5405 Lincoln.

DH: Yes, that's when I married . . .

Q: You married your little first-grade friend.

DH: I married my little first-grade boyfriend, yes. We never dated in high school or anything, though. We knew each other naturally all our life. In fact, after high school, he dated other girls, but we were with the same crowd. We dated, double dated together, but not each other.

But we were married in 1944 when he was in the Navy. Then I left work and went to Miami where he was stationed. I was gone for a year or so, and then we came back here to Morton Grove in '45. He went to work -- his father and his brother and himself -- in the excavating business. And I went back to work for Mr. Klehm, the township school treasurer again.

Q: Where did you live then?

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

Q: We were talking about where you lived when you came back. Would you start again from where you lived when you got back from the Service?

DH: When we came back from the Service, we lived at 8648 Fernald Avenue in what we called the alley house. There were two houses on the lot, and we lived in the rear house. It was owned by Ike's cousin, Ernst Sonne. In fact, he still owns

it, I think, today. Or maybe his children do now. But we lived there until 1952. We had one child born there -- another Fred Huscher. (laughs) He would have been the fourth one, the fourth Fred Huscher in Morton Grove.

We lived there until '52 when we moved in our present home here on Church Street. In 1951, we moved our present home from what was then the parking lot of the Morton House on the south side. This house was located there, and we moved it up here. It took us about a year to remodel it.

Q: While you lived in the Fernald Avenue house?

DH: While we lived in the Fernald Avenue house. Then in March 31, I guess it was, of '52 we moved up here.

Q: I see. It's a lovely house. That's interesting.

DH: In October of 1952, our second son, Steve, was born. We were in this house.

Q: So we've got you happily living in this house. Let's go back and talk about the area where you were born and where your folks were living. And they were still living there. How long did they live in that house? Until what year?

DH: I'm not real sure. I could look it up. I would say the early 1950s my parents lived on Kirk Street. And at that time, the area was taken in by the Village of Morton Grove. Prior to that, they -- I'm not sure, I'll say early '50s -- prior to that, they were just Niles Township, unincorporated. At that time, too, the zoning laws were changed to heavy industry. So big factories started to come

around, and most of the people out there did sell. Of course, they got a good price.

Q: Yes, because they were selling to industry. You had mentioned to me that Dole Valve Company was already on Oakton Street.

DH: Yes, they were. They were about the only ones. I can remember when they did put a . . . on the south of our property, they put a one-way, what do you call it? A side track from the railroad, which helped . . .

Q: Like a spur line.

DH: Yes, spur line, that was it, which helped boost the price of the property, too. So we were real glad when that went through.

Q: So your folks managed to sell. Then they . . .

DH: They sold and . . .

Q: At a good price.

DH: . . . gradually everyone out there sold except there is still one house there. Whether someone is living there or not today, I don't know, but the house is still there.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> The home is still occupied.

Q: That's the one that's on Kirk Street quite a bit west.

DH: On Kirk Street approximately a block, maybe a little less, west of Lehigh.

Q: This has been most interesting, Doree. I really have learned a lot about Morton Grove History, and I thank you very much for all that you've told me. Do you have anything to say?

DH: No, I have no more. I thank you for spending an afternoon with me.

Q: I've enjoyed it.

DH: It's been a lot of fun.

Q: I've enjoyed it so much, and it's really been worthwhile.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B ENDS