

Narrator: Florence Huscher Raft
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Interviewer: Yvonne Ryden
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FR: Florence Raft
Q: Question asked by interviewer, Yvonne Ryden

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

FR: Thank you very much for this opportunity to relate my life in Morton Grove.

I was born June 22, 1917, at the home at 8530 Georgiana Avenue, across the street from the now St. Martha's Catholic Church. This great event happened about 9:00 p.m., and they were having commencement services for the Morton Grove School at St. Paul Parl. My father, after he knew he had a daughter, dashed over to tell his mother and my Aunt Em that I had arrived.

Q: Did everybody go to the graduation?

FR: Oh, yes. The graduation parties were open to the public. It was in a pavilion there. If it rained, why, at least you were under cover. The sides of the pavilion opened up. They had picnics there and everything. Years ago, they'd have picnics there and then dances in the pavilion.

Q: But it's interesting that your grandmother and your Aunt Em were there. Did they especially have graduates in the class or

was it just a public . . .

FR: It was probably a function that my grandmother and Aunt Em were interested in. They probably, if nothing else, had a neighbor or one of Sonne boys graduating. At that time, too, they had little skits where the children would all sing and all that, so even though you didn't have somebody graduating, you probably would go there to see your niece or nephew or your grandchild singing.

Q: I see.

FR: Then, at a later date, we moved to Dempster and Jefferson, which is now Austin Avenue, and this was about 1921. The lot was on the southwest corner. This was property that was owned by William Huscher. In fact, he owned this house that we moved into.

Q: What relation was he to you?

FR: He was a first cousin to my father. All around there it was farmland, and there was still farming going on in that area. On that lot, we had apple trees and pear trees and there was a big barn, which later my dad took down.

Q: I talked to somebody who lived on Austin Avenue south maybe two blocks from Dempster, and she mentioned the big old trees in her front yard were part of Huscher Woods. So probably part of it at least, was wooded there.

FR: It was wooded. Where this house now stands at 6013 Crain Street, that was all farmland, and they grew produce.

Q: Like truck gardening?

FR: I think most of it was truck gardening. So, even when we

moved to the house at Dempster and now Austin Avenue, we had corn in the lots next to us. William Huscher and his son still did some truck farming around. In 1927, William Huscher -- we really called him Uncle Willie -- sold this property to the Brizzolara -- I don't know if they called it a real estate company or what. Brizzolara sold lots -- subdivided it and sold lots.

Q: Did he put in sidewalks maybe?

FR: He started to put in sidewalks. It was a development. Of course, this was before the crash of '29. I had a little wagon, and along the sidewalks they put these little pennants advertising that the property was for sale. At that time, everything was booming in this area. There were quite a few subdivisions opening up, and Brizzolara, I don't believe, did any more than sell the property. I don't think he developed it into any homes, but he sold property to many of the residents that have made homes here now. That was in '27 that Brizzolara bought this property, so my father bought the house from Brizzolara or ...

Q: Maybe from his cousin?

FR: Maybe from my cousin. I'm not sure. And moved this house that is now at 6013 Crain Street across the prairie to Crain Street here. It was a wooden house. When it was brought over here, my father had it brick veneered and added two rooms on the west side of the house, which actually ended up and eleven-room house.

Q: Wonderful.

FR: So that's why I have been able to make a little apartment for

myself when I come back from California.

Q: Upstairs.

FR: Upstairs. Of course, at that time, too, it was put on a basement foundation and, of course, the furnace and all that was in the basement. I was a real tomboy. I want to say that. I must get that in, because I think I was known in Morton Grove as a little tomboy because I was always with my father. My playmates were Julius and William Sonne, my cousins.

Q: They were your cousins on . . .

FR: My father's side. They were Frieda Huscher Sonne's children. At that time, Aunt Frieda lived on School Street and Dempster. Then I attended the Morton Grove Public School, and we had only first grade to eighth grade there. Because I was always playing with William and Julius, they would bring their wagon to school, and I would sit in the wagon and they would pull it and we'd play horses. One day, I think it was Miss Mulvey came up to me and suggested that I play with the girls, and I didn't think much of that idea. I can remember the schoolteachers we had in Morton Grove School, now the Municipal Building. There was Catherine Mulvey, Edna Snyder. We had a principal by the name of Salzgiver and a Miss Murray and a William Etherton. And Mr. Huckleberry was the principal at one time. Then we had a teacher by the name of Esther Fowler. She came when I was in about fifth grade. At that time, they started what they called departmental education where one teacher would teach maybe geography and English. Miss Fowler at the time taught English, and I'm very happy that she did because she taught me how

to parse a sentence and when I got into high school, it really helped me.

Many children coming in at that time did not know how to parse a sentence.

Q: That's like what we call diagramming?

FR: Diagramming, that's right. Miss Fowler at the end of the season when we had graduation would put on a play. It would be a musical most of the time, and it would have a plot, a hero and heroine, and there would be groups that would dance. She really tried to use the entire fifth, sixth and seventh grades. If she didn't have enough parts for the children, then she would have such a way that she would make one of the students responsible for maybe the scenes and what have you.

Q: Or the curtain or whatever.

FR: Yes. She was . . .

Q: She got everybody involved in one way or another.

FR: That's right. All the mothers made the costumes if we needed costumes and what have you. It was a big production, and it always went over very good. Then I might mention that Mr. Etherton, while he was there, we had a school band -- the Morton Grove School Band. I played the saxophone. Frank Frees played the saxophone, and so did Norman McLennan. Alvin Yehl played the tuba, and Meta Sigel played the piano. Julius Sonne, the cornet, and I think Bill Sonne played the drums.

Q: It sounds like a good band to me.

FR: Well, the music we played -- I'm sure that it wasn't jazz. It would be patriotic songs like *Sousa's Band* and *Stars and*

Stripes Forever and *America* and things like that. We did take private lessons, I will say that. It wasn't that we just picked up an instrument and played it. We were taking private lessons.

Q: Did you continue with that?

FR: Did I continue with the saxophone? No. I tell you, I am not a musician. I even took piano lessons, but because I didn't like being a sissy, I guess I just didn't even want to learn to play a piano. I took lessons, I think, for about two years, and the thing is I could play the right hand, but I couldn't coordinate the left hand with it. But I enjoy music and right now attend many concerts and that, but I do not attend any of the rock concerts. Then after I graduated from grammar school, Niles Township did not have a high school, so I attended Maine Township High School on Potter Road and Dempster. I had the choice of either going to Carl Schurz, Evanston, New Trier, and one or two other Chicago schools. If I had been a boy, I could have gone to Lane Tech.

Q: I think your brother went to Lane.

FR: Yes, he did for two years, I think. So that meant I went to Maine Township, and I want you to know how we went up to Maine Township. There were six of us in a car -- Herb Sibiski, Meta Sigel, Bernice Steller, now Wolfgram, and LaVerne Guenther, now DiSalvo, and Florence Huscher Raft. I want you to know that we used this Chrysler for four years, and we started out paying Herb fifty cents a week, so that meant he made -- there were five of us -- \$2.50 a week on his car. It had to be insured. I think we

left at 7:30 in the morning, and we had to be at school by 8:00. This is about the time the viaduct was being built on Milwaukee Avenue at Dempster.

Q: That underpass that they're rebuilding right now.

FR: They are rebuilding it right now. It's been there from 1935 to present day. I want you to know that every time, I think, we went under that, Herb would put his finger on the horn and we'd have that dull sound of the horn.

Q: Maybe the sound vibration is what weakened the underpass that they have to rebuild it now.

FR: I'm sure. But, anyway, you have to think about the fact that LaVerne only went two years to school. But after that there were the five of us in the car, and Herb was a very good driver. When I think of it now, children just wouldn't put up with what we put up with, but it was the only way we could get to school. If we wanted to stay for something after school, like there was a group of us that wanted to sing in chorus or we'd have to be there early in the morning, we all gave in and we'd all sing. It was just a matter of . . .

Q: So you all would still come early?

FR: Yes. That's what it meant if one wanted to do something. However, because I was athletic and I wanted to stay for baseball and basketball and volleyball and track and hockey, and I made all the teams every year, my father would pick me up at five o'clock or he would send somebody to pick me up. At that time, we didn't feel I should be driving a car to school. If there was something

going on in the evening, later on I was able to drive or Meta could drive if herb didn't want to go for some even or unique function.

Q: You mentioned that you liked sports so much that you had thought about making it a career.

FR: Oh, yes. That was my whole idea -- some day teaching physical ed. When I went to Maine Township, there were two courses that we could take -- either college entrance courses or business courses. Because I wanted to teach physical ed at a later time and go to college, I took the college course. For an elective or minor, I could take one other subject, so I took typing. So I had about two semesters of typing.

Q: What were the other choices?

FR: Cooking or sewing, and I wasn't going to cook or sew. That was up to my sister.

Q: So for your minor you took typing.

FR: Typing. I'm happy I did. I got out of high school and had a college . . .

Q: Let's backtrack a little bit. You were talking about all the things that were so great about your elementary school.

FR: Yes. Well, one of the things that I don't think I've seen anyone mention is the fact at Christmastime -- I think this was in first, second and maybe up to third grade. About October the teachers would put on the blackboard choices that we had to make up our Christmas list. This meant that we had a choice of several items that we could hand to the teacher . . .

Q: you made a list.

FR: A list, and we would give this to the teacher, and that meant that the items that she had on the blackboard were usually, I think, about a dollar or maybe a little more. That meant that at Christmastime, each student there in the grammar school would get a gift at Christmastime. Santa Claus would come. Now, I don't know if that went into the upper grades or not, but it probably did because why would they show any preference for any of the grades? I know many times it would be like a baseball that you could order, or you could order a pencil box. I think they even maybe had books like the Bobbsey Twins, I think, or something like that. One year I ordered skis, being a tomboy. It was the kind that you bind on your shoes.

Q: They weren't the expensive . . .

FR: Oh, no! In fact, I don't even know if they had the type of skis that they have today. My skis right now are in the museum over at the Haupt-Yehl house.

Q: Who do you think paid for that?

FR: I think the school board did. I'm sure it was that way, because of the fact I don't think we had an active Chamber of Commerce, I don't think we had any Rotary or anything that did that. I can't imagine. And all of these gifts, I might mention, came from Frank's Department Store. But imagine -- all these gifts had to be wrapped, and I think the teachers wrapped them. Then Santa Claus came in. I think I have a pen and pencil set that was given to me one year. But it was a gift from the school board.

Q: Probably, yes. Is there anything more we wanted to cover? As far as high school was concerned, you said you went to Maine, and that would be Maine East.

FR: Maine Township.

Q: Maine Township. It was the only high school.

FR: As I recall, I really think that it was a very fine high school. Some of those students from Park Ridge -- see it covered Park Ridge and Des Plaines and the outlying territories -- and some of those kids were able to go on to college. One of the reasons was, I know, that tuition was not very much at the University of Illinois. I think it was like a hundred dollars a semester.

Q: But that would have been a lot in those days.

FR: Well, probably, but . . .

Q: And tuition wasn't the whole thing.

FR: No, because the big thing was having a job to supplement your room and board. At that time, the WPA was active and those jobs were all taken up by . . .

Q: And that was really the only place you could go -- unless you went to Northwestern.

FR: Well, at Northwestern, the tuition was . . .

Q: Was much more because that's not a land-grant college.

FR: And even going to a Catholic school -- my mother thought it would be a good idea for me to go to even a Catholic high school, and I would have no part of it

because I wanted to be with the boys. [Laughter] That sounds funny, but truthfully I enjoyed the girls and all that, but the big thing was . . .

Q: What the boys did.

FR: What the boys did. They drove automobiles and all this. I might say that those things fascinated me. Anything in a kitchen or cleaning stopped me cold. The other thing is my mother wasn't very tolerant of my refusal. She would just say, "Go downstairs and clean the basement." I loved doing the yard. I would mow the lawn. It wasn't that I shirked any of the work to be done, but I just disliked it. I was clumsy in the kitchen, and I think I was clumsy purposely.

Q: You sure weren't clumsy when it came to sports.

FR: No, because I liked doing that. I think that about covers high school. What we did as children, I had a pony and we kept it in the garage. Then there was a Kawell boy who was killed during World War II and Donnie McLennan had ponies, and we would ride in the forest preserve, now Linne Woods, in that area. We were cowboys. We played "Cops and Robbers" and things like that. It was fascinating. Later on I had a pony, and my dad kept it down at the coal yard. In fact, we had two or three at that time, and my sister also rode with me then. I enjoyed horses.

Q: What happened to your pony?

FR: I think my father sold it later on. See, in the summertime, they would use it at the pony ring.

Q: Where.

FR: On Main and McCormick. Mr. Hester and my dad had an interest in it. They had a pony ring and rented out horses also there. In fact, my sister and I used to lead the ponies around this pony ring. I think if we got maybe a dollar and a half Sunday, that was our pay.

Q: That's a lot of money.

FR: Yes. My mother had made us red shirts and we wore little white hats and jodhpur pants. Oh, we looked real . . .

Q: You looked real cute.

FR: Oh, yes. My sister later on did quite a bit of riding with the Hester family. I think she rode in an international show. But I didn't ride that way. I rode like a cowboy. I liked a cowboy saddle. I didn't want to conform, I guess. Then the other thing is, as children we played baseball in the lot here along Austin Avenue to the east of the house. My dad put up a backstop, but after that we had to mow the lawn. It was like the East Side and the West Side. On the East Side, there was myself and "Bumpsy" Jimmy Orphan and Jackie Mueller and Billy Swanson and my brothers Carl and Fred. Oh, and I think there was Donny Mueller, too. Then we usually had games or competitions with the West Side, and that was Barney Stellar and a Schmidt boy.

Q: What's the Schmidt's boy's first name?

FR: I can't recall. He died. I think he was in about eighth grade or something, and he had some type of an illness. Then there was Lois Heidtke.

Q: Another girl!

FR: Another girl. We were competitors. So that was the way I did that. Oh, and then we also played football in this lot over here, too. My mother, of course, didn't want me to be playing football, but I did anyway. So, my dad bought me a helmet, and he bought my brother Fred a helmet so we wouldn't get hurt. Then another thing that we did, we would go ice skating on the river. We could skate as far as the Glen View Club and as far as Oakton Street.

Q: That's a long stretch. Oakton Street isn't very far south, but the Glen View Club is all the way north up to Lake Street.

FR: Yes. It was a good skate.

Q: The river was that hard?

FR: Oh, yes. I don't think there were any . . .

Q: And it froze smooth?

FR: Yes, unless there was snow or something like that. But most of the time, it would freeze first, before the snows came. Then if the snows came, we would just clean off large patches of ice. Then we also used to go to Hobo Island there at the bridge now at Dempster Street. We'd go down on our toboggans. Then we used to bring potatoes and apples and make a fire and we'd have hot apples and things like that. There was always something for us to do. Then I hunted in Morton Grove also. When I was a kid eight years old, my dad bought me a .410 and he taught me how to shoot it. We would hunt over in the Poehlmann's area where Plant B was, along there, and then over into . . .

Q: That's north of Dempster Street.

FR: Yes, north of Dempster Street into what was called the Dells Woods, and that was Austin and . . .

Q: Was that where the Dells nightclub was, back of there?

FR: Back of there, yes. We would have . . .

Q: Your grandmother had a house there, didn't she?

FR: That was my grandma's. The Dells originally was my grandmother's home, yes.

Q: And she had sold it.

FR: Well. She rented it. She rented it to the roadhouse. It was always owned by the Huscher family.

Q: I see. But back of where this nightclub was or supper club was . . .

FR: Yes, that's where we'd hunt the pheasants and the rabbits and what have you. Then we'd also hunt over south of Lincoln Avenue. At Lincoln and Austin there was a large gravel pit or garbage dump. Around there you could find a lot of pheasants, and we'd also find woodcock in there. Then also, if it wasn't a hunting season, people would go back there and they'd shoot rats for practice. There were a lot of rats back there because garbage was dumped there. I don't know if the village dumped the garbage there or what. Then across to the west of Austin Avenue was Poehlmann's, and they had a big pond there and sometimes ducks would even come in there. Around there you could maybe find some pheasants and what have you, so we kept busy.

Q: Now, that would be south of Main Street a little bit maybe or near Main Street but west of what became Austin, right? I'm just trying to kind of place it.

FR: Well, it would be almost directly across from Bell and Gossett's area -- right in there. That's where we did most of the hunting. That was all wooded in there, so that was our hunting here in Morton Grove. Of course, Dad and I and the boys and everybody, we'd go hunting up in Crystal Lake and places like that. This was just fast hunting, but we used to do a lot of hunting in Crystal Lake, Lake Zurich and those area.

Q: You told me once that you went hunting before you went to work.

FR: That's right. I used to take the train. I think it was at 7:30 that I would go in. at that time I was employed at U.S. Gypsum Company at 300 West Adams. Many times there'd be a snow that had just fallen, and I'd know that we'd be able to track a bird or something like that. We'd go out with the guns, and we'd see if we could get a -- most of the time my younger brother Carl was a little more active on that. Fred would do it sometimes. Then we'd shoot a pheasant or something, bring it home for that evening. Sometimes when we were just tracking before the season opened up, we'd find a spot where a pheasant had gone in and holed in. I would fall on the pheasant. Carl would reach underneath and grab the pheasant and wring its neck, and we'd bring it home and have it for dinner that night. That was sometimes -- not during the season, though. It was sort of outlawed. Well, let's see. Then I graduated from high school in '35, and I went to work for the U.S. Gypsum Company, and I took the train in the morning.

I bought a 25-ride ticket, and that was \$4.30 -- seventeen cents a ride, thirty-four cents round trip. It's hard to believe that at that time, because I was just a mail girl who delivered the mail or what have you, I started at \$62.50 a month. Then the NRA [National Recovery Act] came in, and for a forty-hour week, minimum salary was \$65. So the company very generously gave me a \$2.50 per month raise. At that time, getting a raise of five to ten dollars a month was a good increase. I didn't have any office experience and I was hoping that someday I could go to college, but during the Depression that didn't look very likely, so I went to Moser night school and learned shorthand, typing, and got some experience. I'm not sorry that I took a college course, because later on I worked for chemical companies, oil companies and that, and it turned out, I think, that just having a little knowledge of chemistry and physics helped me in the business world. I don't ever hear anybody talking about a skeet club that we had in Morton Grove. The skeet club was organized by my father, Harry Mueller, Fred Sonne, Red Harms, and I'm sure there were other people involved, but I can't recall. Many times Dad was a referee later on, and he would go around to the different skeet meets and referee the meets. My dad would have me open up the meets. They would throw out a clay pigeon, and my dad would be there with his fingers crossed that I would hit the bird, the clay pigeon, and open up the meet.

Q: And you did.

FR: Well, I think I did most of the time. If I didn't hit the first one,

my dad would say, "Give her another."

Q: Was that unusual for a woman to do skeet shooting?

FR: Yes, it was. But, I tell you, at that time, I still was a tomboy. Even in high school I wore half my hair in a boy's bob, so I looked more like a boy. It's hard to believe that my mother -- if she was going to buy me a hat, it had to have a little brim on it. It had to be a cap with a brim on it. Even in high school, all four years of high school, I wore short hair. In fact, just to digress, Roy Hester used to go out and buy ponies for his pony ring. Many times he and my dad would take me along, or Roy just took me, and because I had the short hair and all that, he'd say, "Let my son get up on that pony and try him out." So they all helped me along. It was just -- I couldn't believe that I was going to be a girl the rest of my life, believe me. I laugh about it now, but it . . .

Q: It was a rough life then. You told me about some dress when you graduated.

FR: Oh, when I graduated from grammar school -- I have to tell this -- it was sort of a real pale peach embroidered dress. I had the short hair. My mother made me wear high heels. I think that was the only time I ever . . .

Q: Was it floor length?

FR: Oh, yes, it was full length. The girls wore full-length dresses. The boys wore white pants with dark jackets. I can always remember I walked down the alley here because it was so close. We were practicing at the school. My mother wanted to

know if my dad should take me or have somebody take me to the school. I said, "No, I'll walk in the back here," and I walked down the sidewalk here. Mother said she never saw anybody so disgusted. My mother tried hard to make a young lady out of me.

Q: Well, when you went to work, was that a problem, being a tomboy?

FR: No, it wasn't. My hair was short, but at that time, suits were very popular -- a jacket and a skirt. I think by about that time I decided, well, maybe if I'm going to have a career in the business world, I'd better let my hair grow. So then I'd get a permanent and that. I guess I started to grow up about that time. I knew I'd have to put up with it. But even when I was in the business world, I had a much easier time discussing things with men than I did with girls. I was always interested in automobiles and airplanes and all these things. I was always interested in football and baseball -- the scores and the players and all that. So, as a consequence, it was easy for me to talk to men -- much more so than to talk to the girls. Now, the next thing I just would like to mention. In about 1933, there was a croup of girls that started the Chiquita Club. How they ever got that name and how it ever stuck with us! Chiquita means "little girl" in Spanish. So, the originals were Eleanor Winandy Anderson, Bernice Yehl, who passed away in about 1955, Marion Haupt Leider, Agnes Theobald . . .

Q: I know there were girls in the club who married -- didn't one marry the brother of one?

FR: That was Carol Sigel.

Q: What are the two names?

FR: Carol Hampton Sigel and Meta Sigel Hampton. So, those started, and then later on Ruth Riha Taggert was invited to join and myself, Florence Huscher Raft, and Meta Sigel Hampton and Carol Hampton Sigel. So, we ended up with the original group -- Florence Schuetz Harrer was in with that group, but she didn't stay in it very long.

Q: Her maiden name was Florence Schuetz?

FR: Schuetz. And later she married Lambert Harrer. But she didn't stay with the group very long, but we still get together. We've been together since 1933, so that makes it about 67 years, I guess. We still get together. Somebody gets together every two weeks. It was at somebody's home, and we'd play games. Sometimes we'd have parties. In October when it was full moon, we'd go over as a group and have a steak fry in the forest preserve, Linne Woods -- never have anybody bother us. Many times we'd go as a group. By that time, I drove a car and Ruth Taggert had a car, and we would go to No-Man's Land.

Q: Over on the lake?

FR: On the lake, and we'd have beach parties. It was always a group. We were more like sisters than we were just friends. We developed a very good bond. I might even mention that last year I couldn't come to Morton Grove, so the girls all put a package together for my birthday and sent it to Rancho Santa Fe. It was really a very, very nice gesture, and it made both Clem and I

Very happy to think we could be remembered. He constantly talked about what a bond we had. Just shortly after Clem and I were married in '80, the club had out fiftieth anniversary up in Lake Geneva. The girls all went up there and we rented two rooms in the hotel there, and we had a wonderful time. But even back in California there, he'd tell people about how we had been together fifty years and all that. He couldn't believe that we could . . .

Q: You mentioned to me that you even went downtown.

FR: Yes, we'd plan parties. We'd go to the theater, like the Selwyn or the Harris. Of course, we didn't have any money, so we'd have probably the last row in the balcony. But we'd see the plays, and we'd have dinner at Nanking's. The way we would go downtown, we'd either walk or get a ride to the rapid transit at Dempster Street or at Main Street, and then we'd ride to Howard Street and change and go all the way to the Loop. We'd get off, and we'd have dinner at Nanking's and then go to the theater, get on the elevated train and come home. A round trip at that time was twenty-five cents. It was seven cents if you just went from Dempster to Howard Street, so times have changed.

Q: Yes, times have changed. I do know that the girls still get together, though.

FR: Yes, they still get together once a month now. I think it's the second Friday of the month. You know, it was a bond, because we went through their marriages and their children and their grandchildren, and it's been quite an exciting group.

Q: I think there isn't anything more we have to say about the Chiquitas except that they're still functioning.

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

FR: Now, I don't think I ever heard anybody discuss the politics in this village. There was a Progressive Club, and I know a little more about that because my father was very active in the Progressive Club. This club operated throughout the year. In the summertime they'd have functions and they'd go even as far as Lake Zurich, and they'd have beer and races and baseball games. That was one way to keep the people interested in the progressive Club. Then when it came about February, March, the candidates would be selected, and they'd either be those that were in office or new candidates would be selected. Then the opposition was usually active -- I think it was called the Citizens Club. I'm not sure. During this period of electioneering, the Progressive Club would have several meetings to promote themselves and the speakers. These functions would be held at Mueller's Hall. Mueller's is now on Lincoln Avenue, and it's that Italian restaurant.

Q: Villa Toscana. I think at some point it was the Luxembourgs.

FR: One time it was called Luxembourg Garden. Behind Mueller's there was also a big picnic grove. At that picnic grove there used to be the Luxembourg picnic, and the Republicans and the Democrats would hold picnics in there. A little sideline here is if the opposition got ahead and asked Mueller's for the hall on maybe the night before the election, why, then the other party would

usually try to go to Dilg's Hall. That building has now been destroyed. They had a hall on the third floor, and then the opposition would have their party the night before election.

Q: So there were two nice places.

FR: Oh, yes. At these rallies they would usually try to get some type of entertainment. Sometimes it would be a ventriloquist, tap dancers, singers, magicians. After the candidates would discuss all the good points that they were going to do for the village, then they would have beer and hot dogs and cake and that for the people that had attended. My father was elected several times as a trustee of the village. Now, I think that just about covers Progressive Club. Then after that, I want to discuss the SMYLS, which was the baseball team.

Q: It doesn't sound like it, but . . .

FR: All right. It was the St. Martha's Young Lady Society. We belonged to the CYO League, and we were coached by Walter Rawling, and Barney Stellar even did some coaching. We would travel even into the city, and we had a very good team. One time we won our league division. Our first diamond was over off Lincoln Avenue. We didn't have a good park. We didn't have a good baseball diamond. Over there between the Schuetz house and the Paroubek home, there was a vacant lot. The village cut the grass for us, and we skinned the baseball diamond.

Q: Are you talking about Lincoln Avenue on the south side?

FR: South side.

Q: Is it Morton Avenue that's there now?

FR: Yes, Morton Avenue, but that was not there at the time. We made our own baseball diamond. It was between the Schuetz home and the Paroubek home.

Q: Oh, the Schuetz is that huge, big brick house.

FR: Yes, on Lincoln Avenue. And the Paroubek home is the two-story white frame.

Q: At some point, someone told me that had been a pasture.

FR: Well, it was a pasture before the Schuetz home came in there.

Q: Okay. All right.

FR: But anyway, our diamond was in that area. Just to show what the parks do today, the village mowed the grass for us, and we girls skinned the diamond. We made our own diamond. Then, before long, they permitted us to use the baseball diamond behind the Morton Grove Public School, which is now the Municipal Building, so we had a baseball diamond there.

Q: Would that have been used by the boys anyway, so you kind of had to work in a schedule?

FR: We had to work in a schedule, yes. Then, later on, the boys played across in Linne Woods. The boys had a baseball diamond over there, and I think those men even did their own preparation of their own diamond and all that, because we did not have a park system at that time, so it was just what the village did for us. Now, we're talking about the SMYLS. Eleanor Winandy Anderson was the pitcher, and I was the catcher. I want you to know that

you pitched underhand, and I think it was called 14-inch ball. We didn't use gloves or anything else. Our outfits were red, and it was like a romper suit. Across the chest we had the word "SMYLS," and then under that we wore a white blouse that came out under the romper suit.

Q: Are you saying "romper?"

FR: Romper.

Q: So they sort of like ballooned, blossomed or bulged . . .

FR: Well, that happened, the bottoms were like bloomers, and it had a top to it. Today, I don't think a girl would go out and wear that, but we did. It was fun because we traveled.

Q: Well, now you were in Chiquitas and Eleanor was in Chiquitas, and how many of the other Chiquita members were on your SMYLS team?

FR: On our SMYLS team, there was Agnes Theobald, Marion Haupt Leider, Dorothy Haupt Bacigalupo, my sister Irene Stellar.

Q: So there were people on the SMYLS that weren't in Chiquitas.

FR: Oh, yes. Alice was not a baseball player. It was a group from our Catholic church. That's what SMYLS means -- St. Martha's Young Ladies Society. As a consequence, we traveled around. Now, at that time, I think I was already working when we played baseball with the team. That was interesting.

Q: Yes, it was.

FR: Then I also wanted to mention that we had basketball teams also. There were girls basketball teams, and that was sponsored by the progressive Club. The men had a team. We played over in the gym here in Morton Grove, and

then men had a team. There were three Falknors and Harry Eisner and Art Loutsch and what have you. The girls would play before the men. In other words, we would be the first game, and that was sort of a compliment to us. Then this basketball team used to travel with the men sometimes -- we'd play the first game. Then many times our basketball team traveled as far as Crystal Lake to play basketball. There was myself, June Dilg, Virginia Sable, the two Lindahl girls, Marion Haupt, Ruth Riha. I don't know any more. But, anyway, we traveled. That was fun. Imagine going out on a cold wintry night, going all the way to Crystal Lake to play basketball.

Q: You had to love it.

FR: We did! That was some activity for us. What would we have done? We didn't have TV and you could always sit at home.

Q: You mentioned Virginia Sable. Is that right? It wasn't "Gable," it was "Sable."

FR: No, Sable. Yes, her stepfather was Mr. Artner. They had a greenhouse on Theobald Road.

Q: Maybe the greenhouse they had was one that had originally been the Harrer greenhouse?

FR: No, that was another greenhouse. There were two there. I might also mention that along with playing with the Morton Grove team, I also played with a team from Park Ridge, so I sometimes played basketball five times a week.

Q: Oh, you enjoyed it.

FR: My parents were always accompanying us. To all the baseball games, you always had a good following from the village. Now, we were talking about entertainment for us at that time. We'd go down to the theater. Many times I would be working, and I'd stay downtown to go to the theater. I think this is sort of a cute little deal. I'd come home on the midnight train, and my father at the time was no doubt a trustee on the board. He'd tell the police department that I was going to come home on the twelve o'clock train, and they would meet me and they'd give me a ride home. They not only did that to me, but they did it to anybody that came in on that train. They were there to protect you, you know. Really, I don't think we ever had any reason to fear. Not that I did it at midnight, but at nine o'clock at night I would walk from the Main elevated and think nothing of it. That was all open prairie. One of the things, too, for entertainment, a couple of times there was a group of us that would hike to the Loop. The one group that went was Eleanor Winandy Anderson, Helen Paroubek, myself, Marion Haupt Leider, and who was the other one? I don't know who the other one was. Anyway, we did that two times that I know of. Usually that would be in the fall when there was nothing else to do. There was no ice skating.

Q: What route would you take?

FR: Well, we'd go down Lincoln Avenue as far as probably Foster. Then we'd pick up the Outer Drive and go through Lincoln Park. Oh, I think we'd go down Irving Park, because I know we'd usually eat lunch, and we'd try to find some little restaurant. I think it was on Irving Park. We'd eat lunch, and then we'd

go on from there and walk all the way to the Loop and take the elevated train back.

Q: Oh!

FR: When I think of it now!

Q: Can you even think of walking to Irving Park?

FR: No!

Q: Neither can I.

FR: But, you know, it was -- I did it twice, I know.

Q: Well, you know, you had high energy.

FR: You had high energy, and there was nothing else to do. What were you going to do on a Sunday? We'd do this on a Sunday. See, there would be no traffic or anything like that. You'd get downtown, and you'd get on the el and you'd come back. Now tell the kids that you walked to the Loop, and somebody one day said, "Did you walk back?" That was at least seventeen miles!

Q: I know.

FR: It was at least seventeen miles.

Q: I know some ladies who walked around Lake Geneva one day, and that was twenty-six miles, and that's real hiking. That isn't strolling.

FR: Well, that's another thing. The Chiquita Club once a year would try to rent a cottage on Lake Geneva or Long Lake or someplace like that. The Finkes had a cottage in Lake Geneva, and often they'd let us have that cottage for a weekend and we'd go up there. At that time, I could drive, and Helen Theobald was always great for us. That was Agnes' sister.

She'd drive the other car. That was one of our activities, too. Did I mention that one of the things we would do is take the elevated to Howard Street, and ride around the Loop? Just out on an open-deck bus.

Q: Was there a double-deck bus from Howard Street?

FR: Yes, from Howard Street, and it would go through the Lincoln Park area and go around through the Loop. We stayed in the bus upstairs and come back. Sometimes we'd go to the North Shore Theater or Howard Street Theater.

Q: But you did the whole round-trip on one fare?

FR: On one fare, yes. It was a quarter. Then going to the theater was probably another quarter, so if we spent a dollar that day, that was a lot of money. You never bought candy to go into a theater. That would be another nickel. I think there's a cute little thing that I'd like to say. When the village was just starting here -- you've probably heard this before -- at a certain time of the year, there would be manure coming in on the train.

Q: On the train?

FR: On the freight trains, you know. Poehlmann's would get manure on the Milwaukee Road. They'd pull the cars in here, and then they'd take the manure from Plant A over here to Plant B. The streets were just new in the village then. My grandmother lived on Callie Avenue, and some manure would drop off in front of her house. Of course, all these people that had homes along the street there would complain of the odor. My grandmother would call my father and tell him that manure had dropped in front of her house, and my father would say,

“Okay, Mother. I’ll take it away.” But, I mean, when they’d move this manure from Plant A to Plant B, of course, everybody would complain about it. Of course, everybody on the village board, all the members of the village, would hear about it.

Q: Barney Stellar told me a little bit about that. You know, we talked about the fact that you got that job at U.S. Gypsum, but you didn’t stay there very long. Let’s just, for a little bit, talk about your working career.

FR: Okay. I started at U.S. Gypsum Company in 1935 or maybe ’36, and I stayed there until 1943.

Q: You stayed that long?

FR: Yes. I started out in the mailroom . . .

Q: But you worked up.

FR: I worked up, because I was studying shorthand. I ended up secretary to the controller of the company. When I saw that I couldn’t do very much unless I had some shorthand and typing, I decided that that’s what I had to do. Then from there I went to the Oliver Corporation. For nine months I was there. It was during the war, and I was in charge of the -- what would you call it? It was like a pool of stenographers. There were about eight -- and also the switchboard. The thing was that during World War II -- I’d have these girls all lined up on how Oliver Corporation wanted their letters written, and then one of the secretaries would resign, and they’d take my pool of stenographers. So, it was like a training program.

Q: And ongoing always.

FR: Always. It got to be so hair-raising that I felt like I was a schoolteacher, and I didn't think that I had to teach people how to be secretaries. So I left, and I went with Stauffer Chemical Company. I stayed with them from '43 to '61 or about '44 to '62. There I worked for the regional manager and assistant office manager. It was a delightful job working for them, because it was a regional office and we had about ten girls and about ten salesmen. I really enjoyed it. In about 1960, the man I worked for, the regional manager, had a throat operation. It was a laryngectomy and it ended up that he didn't have a voice. He continued to work. He had a phone, and I had a phone and would sit next to him and I would be his voice over the phone. That was before the days of the instruments that they have. From Stauffer Chemical Company, then I went to Houston Chemical.

Q: All in Chicago?

FR: All in Chicago. Then Houston Chemical moved out to Rosemont, Illinois, near the airport because our salesmen all traveled by the airplane. Then we were purchased by Houston Chemical, which was in the tetraethyl lead business, and our biggest accountants were the oil companies -- Amoco and Sinclair and Mobil Oil. Tetraethyl lead is what boosts the octane in the gasoline, and, of course, it's been outlawed since that time. You can't put tetraethyl lead in gas.

Q: No, because that's why you have unleaded gas.

FR: Unleaded gasoline, yes. Then Houston Chemical was purchased by PPG,

which is Pittsburgh Plate Glass, and I retired from there in 1980. I can truthfully say I enjoyed the business world. I really did. PPG was very good to me while I was there. Once a year they would send me down to Lake Charles. The women would all go on a duck hunt.

Q: At Lake Charles, Louisiana?

FR: Yes. They'd send me down there. I think they did that five years for me. It was just a little perk, you know. They were good to me. I enjoyed working with the regional manager.

Q: Well, being bought out proved not to be bad. So often lately being bough out, one company buying another, all the people . . .

FR: Well, now it's a different thing. Yes, each buy-out then was very good. I can truthfully say I'm not sorry that I wasn't a physical ed teacher, but I think I would have enjoyed it a little more.

Q: I'm sure you would have been a wonderful physical ed teacher.

FR: I enjoy children. I know that from my nieces and nephews in 1967 I took my niece, who was just sixteen, Lynn Stellar, and my two nephews, Michael Stellar and Fred T. Huscher, who were fourteen, and we were gone almost three weeks when we made a trip out West.

Q: How wonderful!

FR: It was wonderful. We went out as far as Yellowstone and Jackson Hole. We also went up into Canada, and we were gone almost three weeks.

Q: So you were a good aunt.

FR: Oh, yes. Well, it was nice, because I took the children to forest preserves. I had my own clay pigeons, and I taught the children how to shoot. I was a figure skater.

Q: Oh, you didn't mention that.

FR: I figure skated, and I taught the kids how to skate. Taught them how to shoot.

Q: Where did you do your figure skating?

FR: Well, they had ponds behind the school here, the village did. But at the time, there was a group of us that had access to the Glen View Club through Ruth Riha. She had her cousin working there at the pond. If we didn't interfere with the guests, why, we would go. And then also Howard Alford here used to be up there figure skating. He taught quite a few of us how to figure skate.

Q: He was someone from Morton Grove?

FR: Yes.

Q: I don't think I've heard of him.

FR: He was a barber here in the village, and he was Marie DiSalvo's husband.

Q: He owned the shop on Lincoln Avenue there?

FR: The shop was on Fernald, near Lincoln Avenue.

Q: Can you think of anything else? I'll stop the recorder for a minute, and let's think. [audio break]

FR: I don't think that many people are aware of this, but this must have been about -- just to give you a date -- it would probably have been about 1941 or '42. Maybe in that era. The PTA ladies wanted to have a gym class, and my mother was a member of the PTA. The older ladies of the PTA decided that

they'd like to have some gym and exercise classes. I don't know how they got my name -- probably from my mother -- and we had a gym class. We'd go through all the calisthenics and what have you. I was the teacher, and there was like Kay Geise and Mrs. Weber and Mrs. Rawling. Those are the only ones I can remember right now that were members. We would go through these calisthenics, and they did this once a week. So they were interested in keeping their weight down at that time, too. Then after the calisthenics, we would play a little basketball.

Q: Now, was this over at the Morton Grove School gym?

FR: Yes, gym.

Q: When was it, in the evening?

FR: In the evening at seven o'clock.

Q: Once a week?

FR: Once a week.

Q: How long did it last?

FR: We only did this in the wintertime, so probably two winters.

Q: You only did it maybe from the school year. Do you think it lasted through the whole school year? Would they have started in the fall?

FR: Well, no. I think it would probably start in about October, and we'd end about . . .

Q: All right, so you did teach phys ed.

FR: I did get some. I'm sure there aren't many very many people that would remember that, except Katherine Geise is still living. But

Mrs. Rawling, I don't know if she's still living or not, but I think I saw her a couple of years ago, and she said, "Remember the gym classes?"

Q: So you got to teach and they got a little good out of it.

FR: I can't think of anything else.

Q: Well, I thank you very much for taking the time while you're visiting here to do this for me.

FR: Well, I'm very happy to do it, because I think there are many memories here in Morton Grove. Morton Grove was a delightful little suburb. The other thing that I think we should remember is that the people took care of each other. I can remember during the Depression, if there was a family that really needed some help, my father would come home and he'd say, "So-and-so, they're on relief, but they don't have this or they don't have that." Mother would go down in the basement, and she'd get preserves and beans that she had cooked. Then they'd go over to Mr. Finke's and Mrs. Finke would supply something, and other people would put something in a basket and they'd take it over to the people that were really in need. During the Depression, the township had a relief board and what have you, but they had to have stamps and all that. At Christmastime, my folks always supplied provisions for somebody.

Q: I interviewed Anna Staak -- she was in briefly -- and I interviewed her very briefly. She mentioned that at one point there was a Depression store on Lincoln Avenue near Bringer Inn, in that area somewhere, where people brought things that they no longer needed -- not food, but clothing or

household goods.

FR: Yes, I sort of remember that, too.

Q: And that somebody who needed something was welcome to come and take it. It wasn't that they paid for it. It was like an exchange.

FR: Yes, I think there was.

Q: Just an exchange. Now, that's another example of looking out for each other.

FR: Oh, everybody. Even when my father had his accident and broke his neck, people came to my mother and asked if she needed any money. My father had insurance, but in those days, how much insurance did you have? But an interesting thing, even then. My father was in the hospital from October to December. He had an automobile accident, and it was a broken neck -- top vertebrae up here. Luckily it didn't sever his spinal cord. My father was at St. Francis hospital. He was in a four-bed room. They paid -- his medications and everything included -- they paid six dollars a day in a four-bed room. If we wanted the medication separate, it would have been four dollars a day. Imagine that!

Q: Isn't that amazing?

FR: And the doctors were fine doctors, for the time. But I know at that time there were several of my dad's friends who came to mother and said, "if you need money, we're here to help you." That's really small town.

Q: Right. So that's the way it is. They take care of their own. They did take care of their own. Thank you very much.

I appreciate this. I wish you a safe trip back to California.

FR: Thank you.

Q: Are you looking forward to going back?

FR: I am because this stay has not been very good because my asthma has bothered me so much more than other years. I don't know why. I do pick up infections very easily. I'm always on antibiotics of some kind.

Q: Well, I hope when you get back to Rancho Santa Fe, the asthma is fine.

FR: Okay. Well, thank you.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B ENDS