

Narrator: Agnes Theobald
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5609 Theobald Road, Morton Grove
Interviewer: Yvonne Ryden
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INTRODUCTION

Agnes Theobald was interviewed in her home on Theobald Road. The house is situated on a rise of land. Now it is surrounded by newer, smaller houses, but once it was a farmhouse surrounded by fields.

Theobald Road, once a farm road, is now a much traveled diagonal street connecting Lincoln Avenue and Dempster Street near the Edens Expressway access ramps. Agnes told about her interesting old house and the changes in the house since it was built by her grandfather about 1855. She also discussed her life on the farm, career and travels.

AT: Agnes Theobald

Q: Question asked by interviewer, Yvonne Ryden

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Q: Agnes, would you begin by describing the room we're in and how it was built?

AT: Well, right now we're sitting in the living room, which when the house was built was the kitchen and the living room with two bedrooms upstairs and, naturally, a staircase going up. Now the two rooms downstairs became the living room,¹ and the two bedrooms upstairs are still bedrooms after a fashion.

Q: Now, the house is much bigger than when it was built. Tell us first about how your grandfather built the house.

AT: My grandfather and grandmother both came from Germany, right near the French border. My grandfather's name was John Theobald and my grandmother's name was Anna Maria Emmerich. And they built this house. Somebody told me it was built in 1848, but I think that's a little too early. I think it was built in around the 1850s, because they were married in 1855.

Q: And they wouldn't have built the house much before then.

AT: Before they were married, no.

¹ Agnes had said the dividing wall with a fireplace on each side had stood until 1956. The chimney was over one hundred years old when it was removed.

Q: Now the house is much bigger than two bedrooms, so do you have any idea at what point they added on?

AT: In the late 1800s, sometime in the 189s, they put an addition to the house, which was a large kitchen and two bedrooms downstairs and four rooms upstairs. But in 1956, my two sisters, my brother, and I had the house remodeled and now the living room is what used to be the original kitchen and living room. And the dining room and kitchen used to be the added kitchen -- we had a large kitchen.

Q: It was a very large kitchen, because it's still a very good sized family kitchen, and yet you have a big dining room, too.

AT: After we got rid of the outhouse, we changed one bedroom downstairs into a bathroom. Then we still had one bedroom downstairs.

Q: Which makes it very convenient for you, so that the upstairs need not be used at all.

AT: Well, yes, we need it for clothes closets, because we only have one small clothes closet downstairs. (laughter)

Q: Oh, well, closets weren't important in the old days.

AT: No, they didn't have the clothes that people have now.

Q: Now this grandfather was John Theobald.

AT: John Theobald.

Q: And he and his wife had how many children?

AT: They had, I believe, thirteen, but only eleven grew up.

Q: In those days, babies didn't always . . .

AT: Make it, yes. My Uncle Henry, one of my father's brothers, was the first rural mail carrier, which was organized in 1895. He also was the first secretary of the Volunteer Fire Department as of October, 1904.

Q: So he performed a lot of public service.

AT: And he turned out to be a vet.

Q: A vet? Do you mean a veterinarian or . . .

AT: A veterinarian.

Q: In this area, I imagine he worked more with farm animals than with pets.

AT: At first, yes, but toward the end, he worked with people's pets.

Q: Do you think before that rural free deliver route was started that everyone had to go into town to pick up their mail? That must have been the way it was.

AT: It must have been.

Q: Before they started delivery out in the country. Maybe they were going into Dilg's to pick up their mail.

AT: Probably.

Q: Why don't you tell me about how your father got the house?

AT: Well, after my grandfather's children all grew up and most of them left, finally my father and mother decided to buy the house. Probably after 1900, because my grandfather and grandmother celebrated their 50th anniversary in 1905.

Q: And they would have continued to live on here. This really was the family home, I imagine.

AT: It was the family home, yes.

Q: You showed me a picture of your parents' wedding that was, I found, very pretty, very interesting, because your mother wore a lovely white wedding gown and veil at a time when I didn't think many brides did. Would you tell us a little bit about their wedding?² Do you know? You weren't there, of course, (laughter), but you see the picture. Where were they married?

AT: At St. Peter's.

² Helena Lichtenbert married Charles Theobald

Q: And do you remember the year? I think it said 1899 on the back of the photograph.

AT: 1899, yes. Then my grandfather and grandmother died in 1912, and they died three months apart. And my father and mother had three years difference in age, and the five children they had were also three years apart. (laughs)

Q: That is interesting. Do you want to give me the names of the children in your family and the years they were born? Just to show us this three-years-apart routine.

AT: My oldest sister, Helen, was born in 1901. Ann was born in 1904. Mary was born in 1907, Peter in 1910, and Agnes in 1913.

Q: That really does show that there was a three-year pattern between each one. Well, Agnes, I'm going to ask you at this time to tell me about your grandmother as a little girl, then we'll talk about your grandfather. First tell about your grandmother and where she lived. You said she was born in 1837?

AT: She was born in 1837, died in 1912.

Q: And she was born over in . . . ?

AT: In Europe.

Q: In Germany.

AT: Germany, right near the French border someplace.

Q: And you think she came over here as a youngster?

AT: As a young girl.

Q: Her family settled . . . ?

AT: In Niles Center, at the time, south of Dempster Street and in the vicinity of Skokie Boulevard.

Q: I see. And her father was a farmer.

AT: A farmer.

Q: And so they owned acreage there. Your grandmother was born in 1837, and she was married about what time?

AT: 1855.

Q: And then at that time she came and lived here because this was where your grandfather had started to farm.

AT: Right.

Q: The Theobald family.

AT: Yes.

Q: All right. So your grandparents lived in this house for a long time. They built it about 1855 or a little later and died within three months of each other . . .

AT: In 1912, and they lived here the entire time. Then my father bought the house when he got married, which was in 1899.

Q: So he brought his bride here to the house, and your grandparents continued to live here because families did that then.

AT: Yes, because they had the small kitchen here. Then my folks had the big kitchen.

Q: I see. So this really was a two-family home -- two families could live here very comfortably.

AT: Yes.

Q: Agnes, let's talk about you. The fact that you've lived here all your life.

AT: Okay.

Q: You were born in Morton Grove. Were you born in the house?

AT: All of us were born right here in this house.

Q: And the doctor came or the midwife?

AT: The midwife. We all grew up in this house, and the only one that left was my sister, Ann, who married.

Q: The others did not marry?

AT: No. She's the only one that's married.

Q: Would you tell about the house before it was remodeled, before you had the bathroom. The other, the big additions had been added, of course.

AT: Well, before the house had a bathroom, naturally every Saturday night was bath night, and everybody would get a bath in the kitchen (laughs) in a little tub, a portable tub. I don't remember too much of that, but I've heard about it a lot.

Q: Yes, I'm sure the family laughed about that.

AT: We didn't have a telephone, so every time you wanted to let somebody know what was going on, you'd have to walk. Naturally, we all went to St. Peter's School in Skokie³ and walked both to and from

Q: Now, would you have gone down to Lincoln Avenue and walked across? There wasn't Edens Highway; you could have gone probably over any street.

³ Skokie was known as Niles Center until October 1, 1940. Although Agnes refers to it as "Skokie," it still would have been "Niles Center" at that time.

AT: No, we cut across the neighbor's field to Harms Road. Then we would take Harms to Lincoln and Lincoln into Skokie. We all graduated from St. Peter's.

Q: You mentioned you took a bath in the kitchen, which isn't too unusual, and you also mentioned that there had been an outhouse before there was a bathroom. Do you remember any of that? Going out at night?

AT: Oh, yes. I bet I was in my early teens before we had the bathroom, because I remember one night some of our relatives from Chicago had been here, and the one son, who is just about my age, stayed overnight. He stayed for a couple of days, and after the company was gone, we decided -- Helen and Mary and I decided we were going to play cards. Then we found a bottle of wine, so we had a couple of little drinks, and before we went to bed, we had to go out to the washroom.
(laughs) But we survived.

Q: Of course you survived. So that's very interesting. About other buildings outside the house, did you have sheds and barns or were they not close to the house?

AT: At first, the first barns were built twice next to the house to the west. They were struck by lightning twice, so after that, they decided to put the barn behind the house. There it was struck by lightning twice. The first time that it was struck, it hit the barn, then the bolt must have traveled along the wires to the house, and knocked out our radio. And it . . . (pauses) . . . harmed my watch, which was in my mother and father's bedroom downstairs.

Q: It did? That's interesting.

AT: So, then after that, sometime later while I was working downtown, our house was struck by lightning again. That time was during the night. By that time we had a telephone -- and when my sister thought of that, she decided to call the fire department, but before they got here, it dawned on her that the hose was out, so she took the hose, ran it to the barn and put out the fire. (laughs)

Q: Good for her! Which sister was this?

AT: Helen, my oldest sister. Then the same day I went to work on the el, I was taking the Skokie local, and the train that I was riding was struck by lightning. Thank God, nobody was injured.

Q: Tell about the outside of the house. At first, you said it was what?

AT: At first, it was frame. Then after my father had it, and I still remember, too, then they had it stuccoed.

Q: And now it's . . .

AT: And then, while my father was still living, he had changed it to this, oh, asbestos shingles.

Q: I see, that's what is on the house now.

AT: Yes.

Q: Okay. All right. Now, you mentioned that your grandparents had been born in Germany, so they spoke German to each other.

AT: Right, and they spoke German most of the time, I guess. I remember Helen saying, when she'd come home from school and she'd start talking English, Grandma and Grandpa would get disturbed and she'd have to talk German.

Q: So she spoke German. Do you speak . . .

AT: No.

Q: Well, she was the oldest.

AT: She was the oldest, and I think the next one, Ann, talked German, too.

Q: Sometimes she may have understood it more than she spoke it. That sometimes happens. But your parents, they spoke German to your grandmother and grandfather.

AT: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, they knew German.

Q: Tell me about your sister, Helen. She was the oldest.

AT: She was the oldest, and after she graduated from grammar school, she stayed home and helped with the farm in the summertime, and in wintertime she would work in

Chicago for my aunt, who was a widow with four children. They had had a baker shop and delicatessen store. She kept on with that as her children grew up.

Q: I see, because she had been widowed and she needed something.

AT: She needed an income, and it was well established.

Q: Was this store down in a German area?

AT: It was right near Riverview Park, so every time we went to see my aunt and her family, why, a lot of times, we'd go to Riverview Park.

Q: That would be a real treat.

AT: Yes, it was.

Q: So your sister, Helen, helped there in the wintertime . . .

AT: But she would help here in the summertime. She'd work at home.

Q: Yes, because there was more work here for her.

AT: Well, she worked on the farm.

Q: Right. Okay. Let's talk about the farm. Now this was a truck farm you told me.

AT: Truck farm, and the property was from Dempster Street to about halfway between Theobald Road and Lincoln Avenue. And then maybe -- well, all totaled, it maybe was about eighteen, nineteen acres.

Q: And this house stood on, you said, a five-acre plot? Or was this the bigger part?

AT: No, this was the smaller part.

Q: And then the fields were . . .

AT: Well, the fields were this way, I mean both sides.

Q: In every direction.

AT: Yes.

Q: So what did your father raise?

AT: Well, he was a truck gardener. He raised corn and beans, peas, carrots, beets . . .
(pauses) . . .

Q: What did he do in the wintertime?

AT: Well, there's always a lot of stuff to be done. You know, like they would bury some of the vegetables, dig them in, and they'd have to take some into the

basement. And he would help around the house a little, do some repairing. At first they had cows and horses. Naturally horses for doing the plowing and everything.

Q: More cows than the family needed for milk?

AT: Oh, no, just enough for us. I guess a cow or two, and the pasture was right across the street from the house.

Q: Did you ever have to drive the cow home again?

AT: Not me, but Helen did. The older ones did, yes. Oh, yes.

Q: Being the youngest in the family was an advantage, wasn't it?

AT: Right. (laughter) Oh, and they used to help milk the cow, and all of that.

Q: Did your father take the produce that he raised, did he take it into the market in the city or . . .

AT: Yes. He would leave at night, travel at night and come back the next morning. At first it was by horse and wagon, and then later he had a truck.

Q: And you think he went into the produce market?

AT: South Water Street market.

Q: Did he retire eventually before -- did he stop farming or was he still farming when he . . .

AT: Well, no he farmed most of the time, because he died at 72, and -- because even after my father died, we rented out the property for a while. I know at one time, somebody planted corn and people would come and help themselves to the corn. Then we had somebody that rented it and raised gladiolus, but that only lasted about two years. People found out where the best gladiolus were and those plants disappeared.

Q: What a shame.

AT: So, we finally sold part of it then.

Q: When he was truck gardening, he probably just depended on rain to water, didn't he?

AT: Right, there was no . . .

Q: No irrigation or anything like that.

AT: No.

Q: How about the water in the house? Do you know how you got water?

AT: In the house, yes, we had a pump in the backyard.

Q: So you had a well.

AT: A well in the backyard, and then we had a cistern on the outside of the house at first. Then later on, the cistern was put into the basement. That's how we got our rain water.

Q: You mentioned that your mother shopped by phoning in an order or . . .

AT: Not phoning, no. there was no phone. But Schoeneberger used to have a grocery store in Skokie, and they would come and pick up the order on Thursday, and then on Friday they would deliver it. That's how she got her groceries. But while we were all going to school, we could always pick up a few items on our way home from school.

Q: Yes, because you said the store was near St. Peter's.

AT: Yes, right across the street practically.

Q: I see. Did she can much of anything?

AT: Oh, yes. I don't know about at first; I don't remember that, but I know later on between Helen and Ann and my mother, we canned a lot of beans and tomatoes and beets they would bury outside for a while.

Q: Like a root cellar.

AT: Yes. And I think they raised potatoes sometimes, too. And they used to have a lot of radishes and carrots and beets that they would sell, too.

Q: Did your father ever have a vegetable stand?

AT: No.

Q: As some of the people around here.

AT: Yes, some of them around here did. Like the Rosses did.

Q: Yes, then your father always took his produce into town, into Chicago to sell.

AT: Yes. In talking about the farm, one time my father was plowing in the field, and my little brother -- or my big brother, I should say; he's three years older than I am. He is retarded, and he crawled onto the land and got into the furrow where my father was plowing. When the horse saw my brother, he stopped short and he would not move until my father moved my brother. And they say horses are stupid.

Q: I don't think so. He certainly knew what he was doing, didn't he? Speaking about the farm, you mentioned that your sister, Helen, helped with the chores and worked in the fields.

AT: Yes, and Ann did, too.

Q: Did your father ever have outside help like laborers, day laborers?

AT: Oh, yes. He used to get some Polish women that would come from Chicago, but he'd have to go and pick them up. Pick them up fairly early, and then they'd go home, say, around four o'clock.

Q: I see. Where would he go to pick them up?

AT: I guess he'd have to go into Lincoln Avenue toward what used to be Tessville.⁴ Someplace around there. I don't know just where he got them, but some distance from here.

Q: Maybe even further into the city. And they didn't stay; they went home at night?

AT: Right.

Q: Then he never had help that stayed overnight?

AT: No.

Q: Except you mentioned a hobo or a bum.

AT: He didn't work here; he just came begging. He would make it his business during the good weather, he would stop, oh, maybe once every three months or so, and stay overnight, have a couple of meals.

Q: What did he do in return?

⁴ Now Lincolnwood.

AT: Nothing. (laughter)

Q: And he slept here in the house?

AT: He'd stay overnight, and he'd sleep upstairs in the room that was away from the family.

Q: But he didn't do anything to . . .

AT: No. (laughs)

Q: Well, that's interesting that your parents were so charitable. Is there anything else that you can think of to talk about the farm before we move on to other subjects? Do you think of anything else? Were there neighbors near, fairly near?

AT: Oh, yes, the Heppners lived right next door to us, maybe, say about a block

Q: Were they farming, too?

AT: They were farmers. Then a block -- that was east of us -- then about a block from there was the Rosses. Then to the other side, to the west of us, there were the Strucks. They had a farm. Then the Ruesches.

Q: You're naming good names that are known in the township.

AT: And then the Harrers had their greenhouse at the end of Theobald Road there.

Q: Yes, and I think those are the greenhouses that were just taken down not too long ago where new homes have gone in. In the greenhouse, did they grow flowers? Do you know?

AT: Oh, yes, and I don't know if they grew more things at first. I mean, I don't recall that, but that's what they did toward the end. It was flowers and vegetables.

Q: All right. Thank you. Tell about school.

AT: The first school that I remember was St. Peter's School behind the church, and it was a four-room school and . . .

Q: Was it on the Lincoln side?

AT: On the Lincoln Avenue, right behind the church. Naturally, there were two grades in each room.

Q: Was it crowded?

AT: Oh, yes.

Q: I meant, would there have been like 50? Twenty-five children in a class?

AT: Oh, I imagine there'd be at least 30 in a room.

Q: Did you have any teachers you remember especially?

AT: Oh, I know one name was Sister Alfreda, but I don't remember too much about any of them. The only thing I remember is that I had a piano teacher whose name was Sister Innocence, and she was quite a nun. (laughter) If you didn't hit the right keys, she had her pencil there.

Q: Was she one of the four teachers or was she a special teacher?

AT: Well, that was, no. She was the organist in the church and she taught music.

Q: Now was that four-room school -- you mentioned it was frame and behind the church -- was that one that you finished eighth grade in?

AT: No, no. No, before I graduated, the school disappeared, and then they had built another frame building . . . (pauses) . . . just a little further north of where that school was. They . . . (pauses) . . . oh, I don't why they did that, but they did. That's the building I graduated from.

Q: It wasn't connected to the first?

AT: No, it wasn't connected to the first one. No.

Q: So, and the brick school that they have now was not built while you were in school then?

AT: Oh, no.

Q: That came much later.

AT: I won't say much later, but somewhat later, because that's been there quite a while. Of course, it's quite a while since I've been there. (laughs)

Q: Then when you graduated from St. Peter's, did you go on to high school?

AT: Yes, I went to Mallinckrodt. That's in Wilmette. At first, I think I was the only one from Morton Grove that went there. In fact, there were only four girls that graduated when I graduated from grammar school.

Q: Were there more boys?

AT: No, four boys and four girls. I don't know why we had such a small class, because my sisters had larger classes.

Q: Interesting, but that must be just the way it was. Do you remember the graduation? Was there a little ceremony?

AT: Oh, yes, we had it in the hall there.

Q: Just because the class was small, they didn't stint on the graduation?

AT: No, no. it was a regular graduation, and . . .

Q: And then you went on to Mallinckrodt?

AT: Mallinckrodt, and at first there were several -- oh, no, there was Monica Meyer -- she went there. At first, well, sometimes Helen would take us. Then sometimes some people from Skokie would take us. If nobody would take us, we would have to take the North Shore from Dempster Street to Howard Street. Then we would take the Evanston train from Howard Street to Linden Avenue in Wilmette. Then we'd take the North Shore to some other street, and then we'd have to walk about a mile. (laughs)

Q: Well, of course, starting out and going from Dempster to Howard Street was going the wrong direction right at the start. Then to pick up the Evanston train . . .

AT: The Evanston train and go to -- no, we went to Central Street, and then at Central Street we'd pick up the North Shore and go to Linden Avenue. And then we'd have to walk. So, in the wintertime a lot of times, Helen would take us to school or some other people would take us, too. While I was in high school, toward the end I got a part-time job working at a dime store in Evanston. My sister, Mary, was working at Wieboldt's, which was right next door. Then Helen usually would come and pick us up.

Q: So you worked probably on Saturdays?

AT: Saturdays and a couple of evenings, maybe, but not too often in the evening. Then after I graduated, I worked at the dime store for a while, and then I went to Felt and Tarrent, which was a contompeter school. Before I even graduated from the contompeter school, they sent me out an interview and I got the job. (laughs) I worked for Cudahy Packing Company at, I think, it was 200 LaSalle Street. So, when I was going to Felt and Tarrent, I would have to take public transportation. I would usually take the Skokie Swift⁵ and then take the Evanston Express and get off at the Merchandise Mart.

Q: Then that was within walking distance?

AT: Yes, it was right there. The Merchandise Mart was right at the station there. When I worked for Cudahy, I was just across the river from there.

Q: How many years did you work for Cudahy?

AT: I worked there for seven years.

Q: And then?

AT: And after that, one of my friends at work there found another job, and she told me to get on my horse and find another job, so I did.

Q: You didn't go with her, though?

⁵ The train was not called the Skokie Swift. There were several stops before the train reached Howard Street.

AT: No.

Q: She just felt Cudahy wasn't paying enough?

AT: So, I went and I got a job working for American Marietta, which finally after about 20 years was bought by Martin Company and was known as Martin-Marietta. I lasted about a year longer -- I worked for American Marietta 21 years. Then I was out there. I left, and started working for the medical group in Evanston where I worked another thirteen years.

Q: When you say a medical group, are you talking about a group of doctors?

AT: A group of doctors, practicing doctors.

Q: Like a clinic?

AT: Yes. There were usually five or six doctors and I was the bookkeeper. I was always in the accounting end of it.

Q: So you had a long working career?

AT: Yes. I worked until I was 65.

Q: So the longest period was . . .

AT: American Marietta. While I was working for American Marietta, I started out in the cost department, then was transferred to payroll and finally got to be manager of the payroll department. While I was in that job, naturally figuring the taxes, payroll taxes -- we covered payroll for the entire company because this was the general office. So we would have somebody from the I.R.S. come and check our work. And who was the auditor? Who was the man from I.R.S. but Mr. Apcel from Morton Grove. (laughter)

Q: Mister who?

AT: Apcel.

Q: Now I've never heard that name.

AT: He goes to our church, to St. Martha's.

Q: Does he? Can you spell his name?

AT: A-P-C-E-L.

Q: Oh, okay. Now I recognize it. And he was the man that came from the I.R.S.?

AT: I.R.S. to check.

Q: Is there anything else that you remember?

AT: Oh, nothing, except we had a real nice boss.

Q: Did he leave when you left?

AT: Yes. Well, no, he stayed for a while, but he finally retired and moved to Arizona. But he was the best boss. There were about seven or eight of us gals. We organized what we called "The Birthday Club." Every time anybody had a birthday, why, we would go and celebrate. Every time we would go and celebrate, the boss would give us money for a drink. (laughs)

Q: Oh, how nice. How nice.

AT: Well, he was the controller, and he was, you know, our boss and he was a nice one.

Q: Do you still see some of those ladies that you worked with?

AT: Oh, yes. The one I used to travel with a lot passed away, it was two years in December. Before that time, we gals used to get together at least once or twice a year, but since that happened, we haven't been together. But I still see some of them.

Q: Maybe this would be a good time for you to tell us about some of the trips you took with that friend?

AT: Well, the best one was the trip to Ireland. That was really a good trip. We flew to Ireland. We got there, and we were all people from close-by here, you know, Chicago and maybe a couple of outlying towns. There was a couple from Wisconsin I remember because we kept up with them. We got there, and we were assigned to a bus and we were together for the entire two weeks. It was a wonderful group, and the bus driver was a quiet man but very nice. The tour guide was really outgoing and we had the best time with the two of them. While we were riding along, we'd be singing. Stopped at nice places to eat. One time we stopped in a town, and we were in a hotel outside of the city, and there was a theater in town, so a group of us packed up in the evening and went to the play and about midnight walked all the way home, which was about a mile. (laughs) Then one day, we were supposed to have a walking tour, and it turned out to be a misty day and they called it off. But my friend and I decided we were going to go on our own, so we started out, and I guess we got to one corner, and we must have looked lost because a man came up to us and wanted to know if we wanted to know something. We said, well, we were just touring the town, so he took us and showed us all through town. Gave us a real nice tour.

Q: There were other trips you took with this friend, too, I'm sure.

AT: We took a nice trip to California. My friend knew some nuns on the South Side of Chicago who had a hospital in Torrance, California. They had a car there they wanted back in Chicago, so Kathleen and I flew out to L.A. There the nuns picked us up, and we went and stayed in the hospital overnight. We had breakfast with them. We went to church. Then we picked up the car, and we started our trip home. But before we started home, we drove all the way to San Diego and

parked our car at the borderline and walked across to Mexico. Stayed there a couple of hours just to say we were there. Then we started our trip back. That was a real good trip.

Q: Because with the car you could sightsee on the way. You were not in any hurry.

AT: No, no. We had two weeks.

Q: That was wonderful, and you had mentioned a trip to see the Northwest, too. Did you go with Kathleen on that trip?

AT: No, no. that was with two Morton Grove gals. Laura Ross and Mildred Guenther and my sister, Mary. The four of us drove out.

Q: You drove out?

AT: We drove out for three weeks.

Q: Did all four of you share the driving? Were all four of you drivers?

AT: No, my sister didn't drive, but the rest of us did, yes. That was a real nice trip, too. Except we all got sick on the way over. It wasn't too bad, but it must have been something we had to eat. We, oh, it was the year after the World's Fair at Seattle. So we went up in the Space Needle. We had dinner there. I had a drink in a pineapple, and we all got a straw and we all drank out of the same drink. (laughs) Then we came home through the Pacific Northwest.

Q: You've had some nice trips. Very nice. Agnes, you told me that you and your brother and your sisters were delivered by midwife. Did you ever see a doctor?

AT: Well, yes. For one thing, my uncle was a doctor -- my father's brother, Frank.

Q: So there's a Dr. Theobald?

AT: Yes, and seeing as how my brother was retarded, he saw to it that he went to a specialist who was Dr. Sauer. I don't know if that means anything to anybody. But then my uncle moved out to Cary, Illinois, and naturally he didn't get here too often. When we had any problems, there was Dr. Sintzel in Skokie. In fact, I went to school with his daughter. He came out here at times, but I don't think we were sick that much. Then of course, after we were older, we could go in to see him.

Q: But did he make house calls?

AT: Oh, yes.

Q: For example, when your grandparents were ill and dying, would they have seen a doctor?

AT: Well, that wouldn't have been him. I don't know who they had then. No.

Q: Of course, they died before you were born. How about when your parents were ill? Who was the doctor that would have come then?

AT: Well, they had Dr. Sintzel.

Q: I see.

AT: Of course, I mean, way back then I wouldn't know anything about that. Truthfully, we weren't sick too much, except we'd have colds. We would get milk and honey. When we were a little older, maybe we'd get a hot toddy, but that wasn't until we were much older, you know.

Q: Tell me about your church.

AT: As I said, we all graduated from St. Peter's grammar school, and as long as we were all in school, we always went to St. Peter's Church.

Q: The whole family?

AT: The whole family. Finally the time came when Morton Grove parish was really organized and the church was built. Then finally we transferred to Morton Grove.

Q: So you became then parish members?

AT: Of Morton Grove.

Q: At St. Martha's.

AT: Well, and the reason my father stayed at St. Peter's, too, is he and his brothers used to get some of the sand from Lake Michigan that they needed to build the church. So, I mean, they sort of grew up with the church, and they stayed as members.

Q: Did he ever change to St. Martha's?

AT: Oh, yes. There was a time where we had to. I mean, there were regulations that we had to follow.

Q: That if you lived in the parish, that was your parish church.

AT: That's where you were supposed to go to church, and that's what we did. So my folks were both buried from St. Martha's.

Q: From St. Martha's, but to St. Peter's Cemetery.

AT: Yes. Well, we'll be buried at St. Peter's, too.

Q: So you have a large family plot there?

AT: Yes.

Q: And that's where your grandparents are.

AT: Well, no, we're not at the same plot. In fact my mother's parents and my father's parents are in different lots, and then my father's one brother, Peter, who used to live on Harms Road, they're buried on the same plot that we're at.

Q: And this is St. Peter's near Haben's Funeral Home.

AT: Right.

Q: Tell me about the Chiquitas.

AT: Well, we started when we were just -- I was just out of high school. There were five of us. It was Bernice Yehl, Florence Schuetz, Eleanor Winandy, Marian Haupt and myself. We organized this group of gals. We would meet every other Friday. We'd meet in the evening.

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

Q: We were talking about the Chiquitas and how you met every other Friday night.

AT: And then eventually we decided we wanted to have more members, and we asked different gals, and we finally asked -- let's see, who was it then? Florence Huscher, and then Florence Schuetz decided she was going to quit. And there was Alice Heppner who joined later and Ruth Riha.

Q: Now you're naming Alice Heppner. She wasn't Alice Heppner then.

AT: No, she was Alice Winklhofer.

Q: You're naming maiden names on most of these.

AT: Yes.

Q: And who else? Now let's see. We had -- you want to start again? Bernice Yehl.

AT: Bernice Yehl, who passed away. And Eleanor Winandy Anderson. And . . .

Q: Marian?

AT: Marian Haupt Leider. And myself.

Q: So there were four after Florence Schuetz had dropped out.

AT: And then we asked Ruth Riha Taggart and . . . (pauses) . . .

Q: You said there were nine.

AT: Florence Huscher Raft.

Q: Irene? Was she in it?

AT: No.

Q: Okay, because she was younger, I think you said.

AT: And you got Alice Winklhofer Heppner. And myself.

Q: Now why were you called the Chiquitas?

AT: Well, we just thought of names, and we couldn't come up with anything, and finally we thought, well, we're young gals. We'll be the Chiquitas, which is...

Q: Little girls? Young women?

AT: Yes, young women in Spanish. So we became the Chiquita Club. Eventually we got tired of meeting every two weeks, so we finally decided to meet once a month. That's been for pretty many years.

Q: And it still meets once a month?

AT: Once a month, but there are only five of us here.

Q: What do you do at your meetings?

AT: Oh, we . . .

Q: Do you meet in homes?

AT: Homes. We meet at homes, and we used to meet at night, but since we're all retired, we meet at noon now. So we meet for lunch and then if we don't gab all the time, we play cards, either, oh, canasta, Uno, or we play Boggle or Scrabble.

Q: So you play either card games or board games.

AT: Yes, and then we usually try to break up by about four, four-fifteen, because one of the gals lives in Libertyville and one lives in Arlington Heights. They like to beat the crowd, which is okay with us. During the war, we were a part of the Pals Letter Gals, and we would write letters to the boys in the Service.

Q: So it wasn't just social then.

AT: During the war we did that. (TAPE STOPPED AND RESTARTED)

Q: Start again. Years ago you used to what?

AT: We used to go on short trips. I mean, we used to go to Lake Geneva. Remember Mr. Finke?

Q: Yes. Max?

AT: Max Finke. They used to have a summer home some place around there and we used to go there sometimes.

Q: Would these be day trips or would you stay overnight?

AT: Oh, no we'd stay sometimes three, four days. We did that quite often.

Q: Did you go anywhere else besides Lake Geneva?

AT: We went to Lake Geneva several times, and where did Finke have his -- I don't even know where it was any more, but he had a summer home that we used to rent sometimes.

Q: Oh, you rented it?

AT: Or he'd let us stay. I don't know any more. (laughs)

Q: He'd let you stay there maybe. Now at this time we're talking about, basically there were eight or nine of you.

AT: Yes. Nine of us. Then Bernice Yehl died, and then, now there's still eight of us. The six of us meet every month.

Q: And then Florence . . .

AT: Florence and Meta come in. Florence comes in at Christmas time, and then she comes in three months in summer. And then Meta comes in occasionally.

Q: Now what's Meta's name?

AT: Meta was Meta Sigel Hampton. Oh, and there's Carol Hampton Sigel. (laughs)

Q: Are they sisters-in-law?

AT: Sisters and brothers. Two sisters, no . . .

Q: A brother and a sister married a brother and a sister. Oh, that's interesting.
Now let's talk about the SMYLS.

AT: Well, the SMYLS, S-M-Y-L-S, stands for St. Martha's Young Ladies Sodality. We organized this sodality, and all of a sudden got the idea that we were going to have a softball league. So we, that's what we did. We joined the C.Y.O., which was a Catholic Youth Organization, so we played different teams in Chicago and outlying fields around here. We always had a pretty good following. I know my sister would drive, and different people like Walter Rahling was our coach. And Lam Harrer was one of the umpires. He later married Florence Schuetz. Father Wand was the pastor, so he would come to our games. We had a pretty nice league.

Q: I hear you won the championship.

AT: Championship one year. We had nice bright red suits. We wore white shirts and had white lettering. We used to go as far as the Near North Side in Chicago.

Q: Because there would have been this whole organization, network, where you would play other girls' teams.

AT: Other girls' teams and . . .

Q: In 1935, you won the . . .

AT: We won a championship, yes.

Q: How many years did the SMYLS actually work?

AT: Oh, I think we probably were together maybe six years or something like that. But we were working gals. I remember coming home -- I was working in Chicago. I'd come home, and I'd quick run in the house and change my clothes and Helen and I'd be out of the house in minutes. (laughs) Because, you know, you had to get going early.

Q: Right, to play a game. I wonder did you play under lights? No, you'd have to play when there was daylight.

AT: Then every year St. Martha's would have a summer picnic, and we would always have a game that day. We'd invite another team to come and we'd have a game.

Q: Where would you play -- over at the St. Paul's Woods?

AT: Yes, it used to, yes, the picnics used to be at . . .

Q: At St. Paul's Woods. At the end of Lincoln Avenue?

AT: Yes, I think so. No, we had it at the church grounds.

Q: Oh, right at the church?

AT: At the church grounds before they had the school. Then we'd probably play at the public school diamond. There's where we usually played. Yes. See I'm getting old. (laughter)

Q: No, it's just that the landmarks changed. Things that help you remember change. So you played for about six years, and then I imagine you were getting older . . .

AT: Well, gals got married. You know, and people moved away.

Q: We have a picture that you gave me that we're having reproduced and you've identified a lot of those people.

AT: Well, we'll identify them again and be sure I'm right.

Q: Okay. (TAPE STOPPED AND RESTARTED)

AT: I cant tell you too much about the men's teams.

Q: Well, tell me what you can. The girls had a softball team, and the men had . . .

AT: Had a basketball team -- what was their name?

Q: It was not connected with the church.

AT: No, no.

Q: It was just the village.

AT: It was the village.

Q: And everybody in the village supported the team. You said they hired buses and . . .

AT: Oh, yes, or something Helen, you know, different people would drive.

Q: How did you get your two-and-a-half-dollar gold piece?

AT: I won it. They had a drawing for something or other. (laughs) I don't know how we did it, but I know I got it, and I still have it.

Q: And that's from the men's basketball team. No, no one that I know of has talked about that.

AT: Well you'll have to get to know somebody.

Q: Did the men play baseball? Was there a hardball team? The SMYLS played softball.

AT: Softball.

Q: Right. Sixteen-inch probably. Big softball.

AT: Twelve-inch. I think twelve-inch. And Eleanor was the pitcher. And Florence was the catcher. I was the shortstop or right field.

Q: Our outline here asks if there are any other things to say about dances, music? You've told me a little bit about dances.

AT: Well, dances. Oh, they used to have a lot of dances. I wasn't a dancer, but my sister, Helen, she and Mary were the dancers. My sister, Ann, would go, but she wasn't as much into it as the others were. But Mary and Helen, they were the dancers.

Q: Where were the dances held?

AT: Oh, they'd have them at Dilg's Hall, you know, on top there. And they'd go to Alf's in Skokie. That's where Krier's is now. Or where Krier's used to be.

Q: You mean on Lincoln Avenue just north of Oakton?

AT: On Lincoln Avenue just north of Oakton on the west side of the street. That's where Schoeneberger's grocery store was, too. You know where the baker's stop is now?

Q: Yes.

AT: That's where the Schoenebergers was.

Q: What was Paroubek's Bakery, and now it's Vitello's.

AT: No, first of all, Paroubek's Bakery was on the other side of the street. Then they moved over that way.

Q: Was Paroubek's Bakery there when you went to school?

AT: Yes, I think it was Paroubek's. Must have been.

Q: There have been several bakeries there in downtown Skokie, because when I moved in there was a Robinson's Bakery. The building is gone now. It's part of the bank grounds. Anything else that you did for fun right in Morton Grove? Or in Niles Center, because after all, it . . .

AT: Well, like Helen, they used to walk to Skokie, you know. And like when my sister, Ann, and Helen went, and then, of course, the Heppners. And if the gals would walk, and if they walked home at night, they'd have to walk down Harms Road and there was a cemetery on each side. And once there were cars, if they'd see a car coming, they'd quick run in a cemetery and hide behind the tombstones. (laughs)

Q: That is a spooky little place. That's just north of Lincoln Avenue. It's quiet -- there are cemeteries on either side right there.

AT: But myself, I never went to a dance. I think I went to a dance in Chicago once. That's all. I don't know, I guess I was a tomboy.

Q: I was going to say, as a tomboy, where did you do things like go swimming or ...?

AT: We used to go ice skating. There used to be a gravel pit, oh, sort of on Lincoln Avenue right behind Heppners there. There used to be a big gravel pit, and we used to skate there at times. And we used to skate down the river. And then, at the Glenview Club, we would go there sometimes and skate there. We'd go tobogganing there.

Q: Why? Was there a hill at the Glenview Club?

AT: They had a toboggan slide. And, oh, there was a lot of things to do. Now the Chiquita Club (laughs), one time we decided we were going to hike to the Loop. So on a Sunday morning, we went to church, and we started out. Our first stop was at the Edgewater Beach Hotel. So we went in there, because we wanted to rest and things. We were cheapskates. Instead of paying a dime to go into the john, one of the gals crawled under the door. (laughs) We all took turns.

Q: That doesn't sound so awful to me. Did you make it to the Loop?

AT: We made it to the Loop, and then we took the el back. But we made it.

Q: When you say you took the el back, it was like the same thing you did later on. Where you were working, you took the el . . .

AT: Back to Howard Street, then the Niles Center train to -- we got off at Main Street and walked home. At that time, the fare was a quarter a round trip.

Q: Now Main Street isn't even a stop on the Skokie Swift, and, in fact, even Oakton Street used to be a stop. Okay. So you've told me about skating.

AT: Yes, of course around here the neighbors would get together and we'd play hide-and-go-seek, you know. Peg in the hole.

Q: What's peg in the hole?

AT: You'd dig a hole in the ground, and then you had a little peg about six or eight inches long, and you'd put that over the hole. Then you had a long stick and you'd try and see who could throw it the furthest. And we used to play hopscotch. Make marks in the sand, you know, because we didn't have cement at first. But there were a lot of things to do.

Q: So you had a lot of playmates.

AT: Yes. Well, the Heppners had a big family.

Q: How many were in the Heppner family?

AT: Oh, there must have been at least ten.

Q: See, the only one I knew was Herbie, Herbert.

AT: Well, there was Herbert, Arthur, Albert, Ida, Edna, and then the older ones I don't even know. But there was a Fred, and there was Lillian and a Mae and a...

Q: You've named quite a few. And they farmed. They, too, had a farm. Like a truck farm.

AT: Right next to ours on both sides of the street. Then the Rosses were next to them as far as up to Harms Road and quite a distance.

Q: It must be interesting to look now and see all the homes. When you looked out you used to see nothing but fields and a neighbor's home some distance away.

AT: And Edens Highway took a corner of our property. That, of course, broke up the Heppner property and the Ross property.

Q: Did it actually divide their property or did it take a good part?

AT: It took the Ross house and everything, because it was right there, you know, at the corner of Harms and Dempster.

Q: I don't know where it was, but she has told me that she will talk to me. Laura. We're talking about Laura.

AT: Yes. Then she'll probably give you better information, because she's more in to all that stuff.

Q: Did you ever eat out?

AT: No, no, not -- you mean as a family?

Q: As a family, did you ever?

AT: No. no.

Q: Well, did you go to cousins or family?

AT: Oh, yes.

Q: Did you have family in this area?

AT: Oh, yes. We had, well, our cousins on Harms Road that we used to keep up with. Then the Schuetzes that used to live here in Morton Grove on . . .

Q: Are they related to you?

AT: Oh, not that Schuetz. This was, oh, I don't think you'd know any of those. In fact, one of those Schuetzes was a movie actor in Hollywood. (laughs) His one sister was a . . .

Q: You're talking about your relatives?

AT: Yes. Was a hair dresser in Morton Grove. One of the men was Jack. They used to live on Fernald Avenue in Morton Grove, and he worked for Vaughn Seed Store for many, many years.

Q: He was a Schuetz?

AT: Schuetz, yes. Mrs. Schuetz was Elizabeth, and that was my father's sister.

Q: Oh, so they were relatives. How about your mother's side of the family?

AT: They were all from Chicago. She only had two sisters, and one was the one that had the shop in Chicago. Then the other one was a nun and she died when she was quite young. Then there were two brothers and they lived in Chicago.

Q: Did you see those? I know you mentioned you saw the widowed aunt that lived near Riverview.

AT: Yes, we were very friendly. In fact, she lived with us several years after she gave up her home in Chicago.

Q: Let's talk about holidays.

AT: One Halloween, the Chiquita club, we all met in the village, and we were having a Halloween party. Just us gals were having a Halloween party in our barn here. Evidently somebody got wind of it, and as we were walking here, the boys came and started throwing tomatoes at us. Then the police came along and drove us the rest of the way. (laughter)

Q: Now, you see, you were a young woman at this point. This isn't kid stuff.

AT: No, we were about, I mean . . . What else did we do?

Q: Did you ever have Christmas parties? The Chiquitas I'm talking about.

AT: Oh, yes. One Halloween we had a dress-up party. Everybody came in costume. In fact, that probably was the one -- we had other ones, too. Then, I know while we were in the barn having our party, my father came and scared us. He dressed up as something and scared us. (laughter)

Q: As a family, you probably celebrated Christmas with relatives.

AT: Yes, well, my Uncle Henry, the one that was a veterinarian, they lived in Roselle and then they lived in Elmhurst. We used to get together practically every Easter and Thanksgiving. We'd have Thanksgiving or then we would have Easter here. We'd change off sometimes. Then Uncle Frank, the M.D., he lived in Cary, and we got together several times a year both here and there. My father also had a brother George that lived in Wisconsin, and he had only one son, and one time he came down here on his motorcycle. It was just at the time that they had the underground road at Milwaukee Avenue. He took all of us gals on a ride to Milwaukee Avenue bridge. We went under the bridge and then we came back.

Q: That was kind of fun to ride on a motorcycle, wasn't it? Let's see, you're kind of young to talk about this. The streets were paved here, like Theobald Road was paved.

AT: Well, it was blacktopped. My sister was here when it was still gravel. See, because, Theobald Road really was the path that they used for the farm, you know. It went through the farm. It was a farm road.

Q: Which is why it angles the way that it does?

AT: Yes.

Q: Then it really was a road just for your farm?

AT: Just for the farmers here, yes.

Q: You've mentioned that your sister, Helen, did a lot of the driving. Do you remember the first car?

AT: The first car was a touring car, and it was a Model T with the isenglas curtains, you know, that they would put on in the wintertime. They used to crank it. One time she broke her arm cranking the car.

Q: Do you mean she actually caught it?

AT: No, the handle slipped, and it came back and hit her on the arm. She had a bad break. You know, there was a big hump there.

Q: She would have gone to the hospital and had a cast and everything.

AT: Oh, she had a cast, but I don't know if she went to the hospital or if she just went to the doctor.

Q: Would things like that have been done in the doctor's office?

AT: I really don't know.

Q: How old were you when you learned to drive?

AT: Oh, I must have been -- it was after I started working, because I didn't drive right away.

Q: Well, here in Morton Grove you didn't have to have a license.

AT: No, and I didn't have to drive. Well, Helen was a real tomboy and she did all of that stuff, and she started, like I said, when she was seventeen, eighteen years old. She did most of the driving then.

Q: Well, she partly did it because she was the oldest and it was necessary. I'm sure your mother didn't drive.

AT: No. and my sister, Ann, didn't drive.

Q: So in a sense, Helen did what a big brother would do.

AT: Yes, she used to help do a lot of things on the farm, and so did Ann. I know we had a smokehouse out here, too. It had an oven in it. I guess Grandmother even baked bread in there.

Q: Did you actually cure meat? Do you know?

AT: Yes. My father used to do a lot of butchering for the neighbors. Oh, yes, they'd cure the hams and bacon, you know. Make sausage. They had chickens.

Q: You kept chicken.

AT: Chickens. I don't remember the barn that was to the west of us. I only remember the one that was behind us. Then it had the chicken coop attached to it, and then, of course, the fence was around that. I know one time Helen was going to kill a chicken, and she chopped once and the head didn't come off, and she -- that was it! The chicken ran with its head half cut off. (laughs) That was the only time. We got rid of the chickens after my father died.

Q: Now during World War I, you were just a little girl, so you wouldn't have had any recollection of that, would you?

AT: The only thing I remember is my aunt and uncle, the Schuetz family, one of their sons was in the Service and he later got to be the postmaster in Portland, Maine. I guess he was a little, sort of a gruff man, and we were afraid of him. I don't know if she was the only one, but he's the only one I remember that was in the Service. He must have been the oldest one.

Q: And during Prohibition? Do you have any recollections of any adventures or anything?

AT: Not really. The only thing is, remember when they used to have the Dells and the

Lincoln Tavern on Dempster? A lot of times we'd walk there and stand outside and listen to the music.

Q: They had big name bands, I know.

AT: Bands, yes. Then, you know, we would hike there and stand there and listen to them.

Q: During the Depression, do you have any recollection of the way it affected people in Morton Grove?

AT: Well, you know, you couldn't use the sugar you wanted. There was a shortage of some things. I don't remember too much of anything.

Q: How about World War II? The Chiquitas were part of -- what was that called? Pals?

AT: Pals Letter Gals.

Q: And you've mentioned that Edens Highway took part of your farm.

AT: Just a small triangle of it. Not much of it.

Q: But more of the Heppners' and all of the Rosses' or nearly all. Do you remember how much you earned on your first job?

AT: Yes, I think it was about \$65 a month. But we only paid a quarter a round trip, you know, for transportation. Then you could go out and have a sandwich for fifteen cents.

Q: So \$65 was good money.

AT: I know I was working at the dime store, and I think I got twelve bucks a week.

Q: Well, can you think of anything else that we could discuss that you would like to mention? Well, if you can't think of anything else that you'd like to mention, I would appreciate it if you would tell me what the names are of the people who are on the different pictures of the SMYLS. Which picture do you want to start with?

AT: Well, we might as well start with the first one.

Q: All right, which is the first? The informal picture?

AT: Yes.

Q: Now as you read these names, why don't you give me the full name. Their first name, and then their maiden name, and then if you have it, their married name. If you have it.

AT: That'll go from . . .

Q: Are you going to start at the top?

AT: Yes.

Q: Start at the top, and then go from left toward the right.

AT: Okay. The first one is Margaret Sesterhenn, then Agnes Theobald, then Jeanette Platz, P-L-A-T-Z, Jeanette Platz Happ, Ruth Riha Taggert, then Virginia Sable who lives in California now and I don't know if she's married or not. Then Katherine Miller and Theresa Meier.

Q: Now that would be all across the top row.

AT: Right, and then Marian Haupt Leider, and Eleanor Winandy Anderson, and our coach, Walter Rahling . . .

Q: Now Rahling was . . .

AT: R-A-H-L-I-N-G. And then Florence Huscher Raft. And Connie DiSalvo Huber.

Q: Fine, thank you. Now that's the first picture. (TAPE STOPPED AND RESTARTED)
All right, now Agnes, let's talk about that studio portrait, that very formal picture that was taken indoors.

AT: Okay, Florence Huscher Raft, Marian Haupt Leider, Virginia Sable, Margaret Platz -- I forget what her last name is now -- and Ruth Riha Taggert, Jeanette Platz Happ and Agnes Theobald.

Q: Now that's by the top row.

AT: Top row.

Q: Who's the figure standing on the side there?

AT: That -- the one side is Lambert Harrer and the other side is Father Lawrence Wand.

Q: Now what part did Lambert play? Was he a coach or a manger? Maybe he was the manager.

AT: Oh, maybe he was a -- I don't know.

Q: By that time, well, you still have another man in the middle. That's Walter . . .

AT: That's Walter Rahling again.

Q: So he was your coach?

AT: Yes.

Q: So maybe Lambert was like the manager that made sure you had the bats and balls and transportation or something like that. You don't remember. Well, let's go on with the picture. After Lambert now, you're going to identify the girls going across from left to right.

AT: Okay, that's Lorraine Webber. I think she married one of the Gabel boys. And Elizabeth Platz Happ . . .

Q: Now that's the third Platz girl in there?

AT: Yes. Then Walter Rahling, Theresa Meier, Betty Krisor. That's that.

Q: That's that row. On the bottom row?

AT: And then is Dorothy Haupt Bacigalupo. And Irene Huscher Stellar and Eleanor Winandy Anderson. And then Marian Gabel and then Lona Schuetz Kirschoff and Catherine Mueller.

Q: All right, fine. So that's everybody.

AT: That's it.

Q: Everybody on that picture. The name you're saying Gabel, is that spelled G-A-B-E-L.

AT: Yes.

Q: All right. Are there any other comments? I think it's great that you're giving us copies of these pictures, and the Historical Society thanks you. In fact, Agnes, the Historical Society, thanks you for this entire interview. I hope it

hasnt been such a bad experience. (Pause) Say yes or no! (laughter) Thank
you very much.

AT: You're welcome.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B ENDS