



Sandra Villano

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Interviewer: Chad Comello

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Transcriber: Elizabeth Ceisel

INTRODUCTION

The daughter of Canadian immigrants, Sandi Villano is first-generation American and has lived in Morton Grove for almost her entire life. Her parents moved here in the early 1950s, when it was still considered the “outskirts” of Chicago. Sandi remembers being a “latchkey kid” who learned chess at a young age, witnessed the moving of the Haupt-Yehl House, and participated in the village-wide Beggars’ Night and Halloween festivities of the 1960s.

An early adopter of personal computers in the 1980s, Sandi talks about serving on the District 70 school board, raising three kids in Morton Grove, and how Morton Grove has changed over the years.

SV: Sandra Villano

Q: Question asked by interviewer Chad Comello

SV: My name is Sandi Villano, I was born Sandra Harris at 9032 Lindor Avenue in Morton Grove. That's the only home I ever lived in. I lived in that house 'til 2003 where I raised my three boys to attend the same schools that I did at Park View and Niles West.

Q: That's great. Tell me about your early life, your family, that you know about.

SV: My family moved to Morton Grove in nineteen-fifty... two? '53? Right in there, and I had not been born yet, but my mother was pregnant with my sister, who she subsequently had lost. And I guess I was the replacement child. So I got doted on quite a bit. We used a lot of the amenities that Morton Grove afforded the 1950s family. And we had a very nice park district. It was just a different time.

Q: So you're the oldest then?

SV: I'm the youngest. My sister, my one sister is seven years older, then there was one in the middle, and then me, the youngest. I'm first-generation American. My family is from Winnipeg, Manitoba. My mother is from Windsor, Ontario, so both sides were Canadian. And my father, being an architect, found Chicago to be the place to be in the 40s when he naturalized to Chicago. He was an architect with some of the larger firms in downtown Chicago and while living in Morton Grove

still continued to work for an architect in the Northfield area and actually designed the Northfield Village Hall. That's one of the things he did in the mid '60s.

Q: So your family came directly to Morton Grove from Canada?

SV: They actually, my parents, before they were married, were living in the city, living on the North Side of Chicago. My mother on the North Side of Chicago and my father on the South Side of Chicago. He was on Drexel Boulevard, my mother was on Montrose. It was right in that area, because actually I met my husband right along Montrose. I lived on Montrose at the time.

Q: How did your parents meet?

SV: That's kinda iffy, because I've had different stories. Actually, my parents were dating other people and they ended up with their siblings. So my mother was dating my father's brother and my father was dating my aunt. And as it turns out there's a twelve-year age difference between my parents, which was rather unusual back in those days. My parents were married in—actually this is their anniversary, Pearl Harbor Day, in 1945.

Q: So a few years after Pearl Harbor.

SV: Right, but they stayed together the whole time. It was the '50s, that's what you did. We had family around, the family was in the city, when we would visit it would be into the city, on the north side. We did not have relatives in Morton Grove. We were the only ones that were suburbanites.

Q: So how did you end up in Morton Grove? Do you know?

SV: They were looking for the outskirts; they did not want to raise their children in the city. They already had seen what the sprawl was leading to, and Morton Grove at that time was considered the outskirts. That's what they called it, the outskirts. And the Edens Expressway had not been built yet, at that point. In fact, that one picture of the house, there is not only no paving, there are no curbs. They used the blacktop. We didn't get paved until I believe the mid '60s, closer to '67, '68 where they actually put curbs in. And the Edens Expressway wasn't built until—well, it wasn't finished until the early '60s. So I still remember it as a child and I also remember crossing that road with blacktop on my feet and getting yelled at because I walked in the house with tar on my feet. That wasn't a good thing.

Q: What else do you remember, your early memories of Morton Grove as a kid?

SV: Morton Grove was a place that you felt safe being away from your home. Because at that point, when you were home, during the summer, or not school—you know when you were out of school, you were gone, but when the streetlights

came on, you had to be home. Your parents didn't know where you were. *You* didn't know where you were. You were wherever anybody else was. You just would find people.

Q: No cell phones back then.

SV: No cell phones back then. The cell phone was putting the fingers together and whistling. You knew your father's whistle. Other parents had whistles, they had bells, they had other things that would call you home for dinner, but other than that that's all you had. And the street lamps—everybody knew when the street lamps came on, you had to be home. I mean, that was universal. Even in the city the kids knew that, when the streetlights came on you go home. So it was very—a very communal sense.

I was one of the first latchkey kids, being in the '60s. My mother worked, and most people didn't work. I had a neighbor that I could go to when I got scared being by myself, that I could go over to her house and she took care of us. And she was so monumental in my life that that's the name of my two dogs. Hermie and Walter are named after the two people that took care of me since I was a child. They're Great Danes, by the way; they're not little fluff balls either. It was a communal sense—it was where it took a village. If you did something wrong, your parents knew about it before you got back home, because some neighbor was calling your mom and letting her know, "Hey, you know, she just kind of threw an egg at a passing car," or whatever was done.

Q: Is that the kind of hijinks you got up to?

SV: Yeah, usually Halloween especially. I think I spoke to you before that Halloween was not just a one-day event; it was a two-day event. It was the 30th and 31st—the 30th was considered Beggars' Night. It was village-wide. It was area-wide actually, that you just kind of did both days. I don't know if it was because of the fact that there were so many kids during that time, because we did have a baby boom at that time. But, it was a two-day event, a two-day affair, and everybody participated. In Morton Grove, the thing to do was, the park district sponsored a poster contest, and all of the elementary school kids, could get a nice large sheet of butcher paper to draw on with tempera paints. And you would paint a nice large picture of maybe a witch, or a moon, or whatever scary picture you'd think of. And they would be in the windows along Dempster Street. All of the businesses along Dempster Street would tack them up in their window and they would be there until November 1st. And there would be a contest, and I don't think there was anything big; there wasn't like a bike or something. You got a \$20 or a \$10 gift certificate to one of the local stores, but there was a winner for it and you got to point to show everybody, "Hey that's my picture, that's my picture." So that was kind of interesting.

Q: Did you have a group of friends that you would hang out with a lot and get into trouble with?

SV: Yeah, I did. Unfortunately, well, we didn't get into that much trouble, because my friend's parents were schoolteachers, so they kept us on the straight and narrow. I had Dr. Cocking (?) who was a counselor at Niles West that was my girlfriend's father, so he kind of kept his eye on us and kept us on the straight and narrow. As far as other friends near me, it was just the people you went to school with. The funny part is Lindor Avenue is like the borderline between Morton Grove and Skokie, so anything east of Lindor, they all went to Niles North, went to Jane Stenson. You didn't socialize with them. I socialized with a couple of kids because their father was my dentist, so I knew them that way. It was so strange because it was just going across the street—it wasn't a big to-do—but because you weren't in the same school you just didn't socialize with those kids. And back in the day, by the way, there were three schools in Morton Grove—we had three elementary schools. There was Grove, which is now the police department. I went there. Then there was Borg School, which is now the Muslim Education Center. And then Park View, which still remains. Grove was the oldest school in Morton Grove; it was there from the very beginning. Borg was named after a teacher in the district. But that was built in the mid-sixties, so that was still considered somewhat modern school, so they didn't sell that one first; they sold Grove first. And it was just whittling down after there.

Q: What do you remember about being in school? What was the general atmosphere like?

SV: For the most part it was fun. My first grade was the assassination of President Kennedy, so that was rather traumatic. We had trauma during our years. That was traumatic to me because that was the first time I saw adults cry. I had never seen it, and it was the secretary to the principal on top of it—you know, these were educated people, and they were crying. So that was a big deal. The other things that I remember, just things that other kids would remember. You have a teacher that got pregnant—teachers don't get pregnant! Teachers don't have a life, they're teachers! Those kinds of things that you see on a child level. Now of course we all want to go back to those days, but there's no way. We can't go back to those days. But I have very fond memories, but it's hard to recall. It just seems like... wow. To give you a for-instance, my parents used to send me in the summers, for summer vacation, would send me on a greyhound bus to Winnipeg, Manitoba, changing buses in Minneapolis/St. Paul. Now would you do that with a ten-year-old child these days?

Q: Yeah, probably not.

SV: Probably not. It was one of the best experiences I've ever had. I learned so much. My parents gave me independence. That's one thing I was able to give to my sons. I taught them to be independent. Yeah, I want them to rely on me, but it was more important for them to be able to stand on their own. That taught me a lot, giving me that...

Q: What other sort of lessons did you learn from your parents and family life growing up?

SV: Well, one of the things that I find that parents aren't teaching kids nowadays: my father taught me how to play chess when I was very young. I had a teacher when I was in fifth grade named Mr. Williams. He would forego all lesson plans; you could sit in the back of the class and play chess. He would have four or five chessboards going and you could play chess. That's one of the things I remember. Now, he wasn't a very good fifth grade teacher as far as you know. Did I meet my goals when I should have? I don't know. I didn't suffer. But that was one of the things, one of the extracurriculars. He didn't need to teach us that—it wasn't part of the curriculum—but that taught me a lot of logistics for later in life, and even in high school. Nowadays, if my kid came home and told me in fifth grade that the teacher wasn't teaching what he was supposed to be and we were able to play two hours or three hours worth of chess in the back of the class, I would have had a conniption. But it worked. It worked back in that day. Don't know why it worked, but it worked. Maybe we were different back then as well.

Q: Well, there was no Internet. There were no other ways to entertain.

SV: Exactly, we didn't have a lot of stimulation. There wasn't a lot of stimulation. That was the other thing.

Q: So actual hands-on games were a big part of it then.

SV: Right. The other thing was, we had special needs children back then, but we did not know them as "special needs" back then. I didn't know until my sons were diagnosed that I'm actually ADD. I know I'm ADD, no doubt about it, and probably very severe on top of it. We had words for it like retarded, which are not used any longer. We had people that were "slow." Well, for a lot of people it was Asperger's. We had a lot of bright people, but they were just... there was a little something off. They were Asperger's. What we know now and what we knew then... unbelievable. Unbelievable what we learned in 40 or 50 years.

Q: Right. There's got to be so many things like that, that you look back on and say "How did we not realize that?"

SV: My fourth grade teacher still lives in the area, Peg Mensinger. And she's my Facebook friend still to this day, but she has seen all of these changes, from a teacher's point of view as well, because I'm just giving you the kid's point of view. I'm sure there were a lot of different things. The superintendent of the schools at the time was Ed Eckhardt, and Ed Eckhardt had problems with my father being an architect, because of the fact that Ed Eckhardt put a classroom down in the

basement of the school that was not up to code. My father knew it and he was calling around the carpet and really getting nasty about it. Nothing was ever done about that year, but after that year there was never a third grade class down in the basement of that school any longer.

I don't know if you're aware of the fact that classrooms cannot be upstairs either. They have to be over the first grade level to be upstairs, and that's a result of the Our Lady of the Angels fire in the city of Chicago in 1958. I only found that out as a member of the school board, because as we were making additions and things like that; these were things we needed to know. And as a parent, I was either going to homeschool my child or I was going to be on the school board, and I got on the school board. And I became an elected official after five write-in candidates got on. Ooh, that was a nasty time in our history. There was such apathy for school board and library and things like that, we couldn't get people to run for the boards. Actually five people got on the school board that were write-in candidates. They knew nothing. They were bigots. In the short amount of time, in the four years that they were on, they did so much damage, at least we were able to fix, but they had done some.

Q: When was this?

SV: This was nineteen-ninety... one? Ninety-two? I'm sure it will be on the Internet, and if you were to Google me, you'll see I was involved in a lot of it. There was a lot going on in District 70 back in the '80s and '90s. I was actually successful to

get a candidate thrown off that wanted to run for the school board, because she was running on the ticket that she wanted to do away with all foreign language at school. You would learn English. She was a German teacher in junior colleges in the city! Yet she didn't want Spanish being taught. Anyways, she had forged... I was able to prove that her petitions were invalid. She didn't even have 50 signatures from people within the district. So it was easy to get her tossed off.

Q: Interesting, all these politics.

SV: Oh, yes, politics do occur. And there were politics here as well. I mean we had our times of Mayor Flickinger and Bodie (?) and all that back there. There were some—the Action party, or the Act On party, or the Act Out party, or whatever they do to change their name from year to year, but they're basically the same party. But yeah, there's lots of stuff. I live in Glenview as you notice, but my friend became mayor. Rick Reer (?) and I are friends. My kids went to school with Mayor Dan's kids. Anyways, she was in theater with my kids. I was a theater parent after I was bringing my kids up through the school system. I was part of the people that got the theater named for Bob Johnson, because he was really—never had another teacher like him. Never. I mean, this is a man that gave up his winter break to take a bunch of kids to London during the energy crisis in 1973. What was he thinking? I would have never done that—I could have never done that! It was different at that time. We had wonderful times. From my point of view I don't see any of the bad times. I'm trying to give you a balanced view, but I'm

just so go-go Morton Grove that I can't even tell you the bad parts. I mean there are, I'm sure, but I didn't—

Q: I guess it's a good sign then—the good overwhelms the bad.

SV: Well, I didn't experience, maybe other people experienced it, but it didn't touch me, maybe?

Q: Well, let's hop back. You said your mother worked. What did she do?

SV: My mother worked at Turnstile, which was Venture, which was Target. Before Target was Venture, before Venture was Turnstile. Turnstile was actually at one point part of the Jewel-Osco family of things. That's where it was at, over there on Skokie Boulevard. But she worked retail, nothing smart. My mother was not an educational... my father graduated magna cum laude from university; my mother graduated eighth grade. Disparity. My mother was wonderful with domestics. She made me flannel shirts without a pattern. She could sew, she could knit, she could crochet, she cooked like a chef, and it was wonderful. And televisions, that was not where the focus was back when she was growing up. Of course, when she was growing up they went through the Depression. And the Depression in Canada wasn't that much different than the Depression in the States. They still were prairie and they still had the Dust Bowl, so things were rough with them as well. It was really strange, the disparity. I had a balance,

because I had the domestic and I had the intelligence, although my father wanted a son, and he raised me up to do things that sons do and things like that. I was considered a tomboy back in those days.

Q: Did you resent that? Or did you enjoy it?

SV: No, I enjoyed it to the point that my father tried to buck the system to get me on the Little League team back in the end of the '60s. I think it must have been about '67, '68. I was pretty good in baseball, in fact, when I was in high school. I did play for interscholastic, and as a theater major at Illinois State I was actually on the intercollegiate team there as well. They were pissed at me, because I was taking a space that a P.E. major should have. I didn't last. I gave it up because I did feel bad. Plus theater and sports; there's only twenty-four hours in a day. And I found that out in high school because I did sports the first two years, theater the last two years.

Q: When did you sort of figure out what you wanted to do with your life? Was that in high school?

SV: I'm still figuring it out. Nobody would ever have thought I'd gotten into computers. In high school, as a freshman and sophomore I was doing sports, and into GAA and all of that. In my sophomore year I took a stagecraft class and as part of that stagecraft class you had to give ten hours of service to the stage painting or

doing whatever. I got stung. I loved it. I got bit. I started phasing out the sports and getting more involved with the theater to the point that, by the time I was a senior in high school, I was the tech director of the musical. It was my independent study and I actually got graded on it, because I had to keep the budget, I had to keep the floor plans, and I had to make the working drawings for the flats. I mean, it was really involved. I'm Facebook friends with Tom Engel to this day, who was the teacher there as well.

Q: What was the show?

SV: The show was *Sweet Charity*. Would you ever think high school children being whores... what parent would allow their child? Judge Holzer's daughter, Bambi, was a call girl. I look back at the footage and it's like... I'd never let my daughter wear those costumes and have their legs spread above their heads, over their shoulders. It was another time. The director was gay; it was nothing to do with the teachers, nothing like that. They were very artistically forward. And we learned a lot. It was something about our parents not getting involved, because they knew that there was a line that you didn't cross. The teachers were in charge of school and the parents didn't get involved. They didn't need to get involved. Now parents need to get involved and they're not getting involved. So it's the other way around. They let the teachers do their thing, and it was a good thing that they did, because they really gave a lot to our world that we might not have otherwise had, which is one of the reasons I did not homeschool my child,

because I figured I'd be limiting my child to the scope of what I know, rather than to other people.

Q: So did you want to pursue theater from there after school?

SV: Yes, actually I was accepted to Illinois State on the recommendation of the theater people, because I did not have the academics to get into college. I was ADD. The only thing that kept me in school was theater. Had I not had theater, I probably would not have graduated high school. I was all over the place. I had no focus. That was the best thing for me, the theater. I did pursue it in college. I actually did a main stage show as a freshman, which was almost unheard of, but they saw my credentials and what I had done at Niles West. And Bob Johnson being a friend of the director at Illinois State didn't hurt. I kept that up, but I did not complete college. I only did the two semesters, because I started having problems with other social problems in the area and I just didn't go back. And I'm sorry I didn't go back; I would have liked to go back at another time, but I did the reverse of what most kids do. I went to a four-year school and after I dropped out of there, I went to a two-year school. So I went to Oakton, but Oakton was a factory over here on Oakton Street, before it got to the campus it got to be now. But I never did get a degree. I just was never focused. It's the ADD. I'm the "jack of all trades, but master of none"—that's what my father always said, and it's very true.

Ask me how I got into computers, I can't even tell you. I started when I lived in Morton Grove, after I started having kids. I needed to have a job. My husband was working for Cadillac for Grossinger in Lincolnwood, as a mechanic. And we needed some additional income, so I started typing transcripts from audiocassettes for the Department of Labor, whoever needed it. Basically for federal agencies, and state. I did do some Department of Labor work as well.

Q: When was this approximately?

SV: Nineteen-eighty... four? '83, '84. I was typing from audiocassettes on this electric typewriter. It's like, no, I'm not erasing all this stuff. So I was the first person to start doing audiocassettes, at least with the group. I was working for Heritage Reporting out in Washington D.C. and I started using computers, but I was running Word Perfect with a dual floppy disk. I don't know if you know anything about computers, but it was even before [the personal computer IBM XT] 286, so there weren't even hard drives; we only had floppies. But anyways, I ran a successful business for ten years out of my house, out of that little office area on Lindor Avenue. By the end I was actually working for the American Medical Association downtown and Eric Hoffman off of Channel 5, because he found it easier to edit his tapes when I typed up his audio portion—like he would do the audio of this and I would type up whatever was said.

So I had a lot of different things, but I started doing typing just to earn some money. Typing went into computers, because I was frustrated having to

erase everything, so then started doing computers and had to bring another person that was helping me, like back up for me, how to do computers. And she was another twenty years older than I was, so I started teaching her. Well, now it comes down many years later, now I'm working for the library, teaching people how to use a computer at the library because they have no clue. They know they want to do something on a computer, because they know that it's the next literacy, but they don't know what they want to do. So I would sit them down and pull up Mousercise and let them play with the mouse. And that was my projection. I mean, coming from sports, to theater, to typing, from typing to computers. In between, I got involved in Scouts because I was raising three boys within five years of each other. My oldest to youngest was five-year difference. So I was the district camping coordinator. I was the committee chair for both the troop and the pack, which meant that I did all the logistics and the paperwork and all that stuff for them. I did that for many years until I was diagnosed with MS. One year, while I was at Napowan Scout Camp taking thirty kids, I started not being able to feel my legs anymore. I thought it was just that maybe some Deet got into a scratched mosquito bite or something, but it kept going. It got worse.

Q: And when was that?

SV: Well, that, I didn't get diagnosed until I was almost 40, so that was like '98. I wasn't diagnosed until almost '98. So I did quite a bit. I was a referee on the soccer field for AYSO, I was a camping coordinator, took the kids camping, did

all of the Boy Scout, Cub Scout stuff, and all with MS. They said I probably had it since I was a kid.

The other part of Morton Grove that I left out, that was very essential to my childhood, was the fact that we had stables, and every little girl loved stables, loved horses. But we had the stables on Austin Avenue, but I didn't go up to Golf Road, it was Austin Avenue back there. I don't know if you're aware that there's a stable back there, but it used to be called Northwestern. I don't know what they call it now, but the Jane family was involved in that. But I was able to exercise horses and muck stalls and get paid. I was able to get paid by exercising horses. So I would muck the stalls and clean them out and stuff and if I did a good job, I would get to ride horses for free.

Q: That's quite the deal.

SV: It really was, because my parents had nothing. My parents were much, much older than most parents. Most people thought my parents were my grandparents. I think my mother was almost 40 when I was born. I was a real late-in-life baby, so they didn't do activities with me, so I was doing all this without their knowledge. All they knew is that I really smelled when I came home. They just about made me peel off my clothes when I came home at the back door.

Q: No questions asked though?

SV: No. No, well, they knew it was horses, but they didn't know. No, as long as I wasn't in trouble and the police weren't calling, they were fine. Like I said, it was another time. You didn't do things that you knew you weren't supposed to do, for the most part. We still smoked when we weren't supposed to; we were still smoking in eighth grade or in high school or whatever. But once that it wasn't such a big deal, once it wasn't a big deal to the adults, it's like why bother? Just an oppositional type thing that kids did.

Q: When and where did you meet your husband?

SV: When and where, that is funny. Where Marilyn's is on Dempster Street, that used to be a Denny's and I was a graveyard waitress at Denny's.

Q: Was this after college?

SV: No, no, I was going to college at the time. I was going to Oakton and to help pay for it I was working overnights. He owned his own coin business and would come in to drink coffee. He wanted the first cup off of the pot of coffee, because he didn't want burnt coffee. He wanted the fresh cup off of each pot and he would sit there and drink coffee all night. And he'd leave me a two-dollar tip for a cup of coffee, a sixty-cent cup of coffee. That was sixty cents back then. Silly me, I thought the man had money, and I learned later that there was no money to be found. That's how I met him though; he was one of my customers while I was a

waitress. The other people that worked at the restaurant I lived with in the city on Montrose. There was four of us that shared an apartment on Montrose: two of us worked graveyard, two of us worked the morning shift. And he was friends with the morning shift. He came in on the graveyard and waited for the other to come or whatever. Well, anyway, we met each other and then we became friends, because he'd come and party with us at our house, and stuff like that.

I met him in '75 and we got married in '78, so almost three years. I didn't get pregnant until about four years after that. We couldn't... it wasn't working. We were Catholic in those days. We were brought up Catholic. So we thought we needed to do what Catholics do, which is go through the Pre-Cana conference and all that stuff. We went to his parish because my parents weren't really Catholic, so we went to Our Lady of Mercy. Catholics are supposed to go to the bride's church. Well, I didn't know that and I didn't care. So we went and the first thing the priest says to me, when we filled out our paperwork and we both had the same addresses, "Why are you bothering to get married? You're living together, why are you bothering?" It's like, well, I'm not pregnant if that's what you're asking! I was really indignant. I was really upset, because it's like, you know, we're doing the right thing! Why are you squelching us? We're finally doing what we're supposed to do, and you're pooh-poohing it. Anyway, we went through Pre-Cana and we did get married Catholic—except for the fact that, in the Catholic church in the city of Chicago, you must get married in the church. My husband's father had had many, many strokes and could not be transported. So we had to ask for special dispensation from, at that time it was Cardinal Cody, for

a ceremony to be held at the house. So we were married at my husband's house, but we couldn't have the sacrament; we couldn't have communion or whatever the case is. But the marriage has lasted for the most part—I mean, we're still married, it's gonna be 39 years next year, so it's worked, for good or bad. And we've got three kids that are halfway decent and we're gonna have our first grandchild next month. They're in Evanston, so they didn't move that far away.

Q: All three of them are?

SV: No, one's in Wheeling, one's in the city, and one's in Evanston. The one in the city went into the Army. He's Sergeant Lays (?) He served seven years in the military just so he could go to college. He will be the only one of my children that will have a college degree. Which is wonderful. And it will be in theater—well, film. He's at Columbia. He's gonna graduate in the spring probably.

Q: So kids, grandkid on the way... what's your life like now?

SV: Well, right now I'm on disability, but I'm working at the Glenview library, part-time, fourteen hours a week, and my husband is retired after 31 years at Grossinger. He works full-time for Whole Foods and he rides his bike, because it's right across the Willow Road. We live south of Willow Road and Whole Foods is north of Willow Road. There's no travel involved for either one of us. Glenview library is nine blocks from where I live, so it's very comfortable living. We're barely keeping

our head above water still to this day, because of the fact of the economy, the medication cost, that kind of stuff. It's comfortable. We're getting ready—we're done with the snow. We want to move out of here. I'm looking anywhere, after this election. We're not happy with the election results, so I'm even ready to go back to Canada. My father would be turning in his grave, but my cousins are ready. They got a room ready for me, they keep telling me.

Q: But I guess that won't help you with the snow.

SV: Exactly. I'd love to be a snowbird. I'd love to summer in Canada and winter in Mexico, but it's not gonna happen. We take cruises. We go to Mexico a lot. We like the warm weather. I lived for a short time in Arizona. I gave my husband his freedom on our twenty-fifth anniversary and I left him. I sold my childhood home, I sold our house, and moved to Arizona with my sixteen year old at the time, the youngest. Obviously I'm back together with him, but it was just the fact that he was undergoing a depression and I couldn't shake him out of it. I thought putting out a For Sale sign would have shaken him out of it, but it didn't, and I followed through with it. He was convinced that our walls were twisting. Our house on Lindor Avenue, the house in that picture, had no basement. It's built on a crawl space, a three-foot crawl space, so there's no foundation to the thing at all. We were seeing cracks in the walls, but he was actually seeing it twisting, where he didn't see a proper foundation, and when we sold the house, we sold it as-is. We were not selling the building; we explained that the foundation is bad, you're

gonna need to tear it down. They didn't, they built on the foundation, and they built—it's three stories actually, ground level, median, and high. It's the ugliest thing you ever seen. But it's swampland, all of Morton Grove and Skokie is swampland. There's no stability anywhere. You have to really, when we were building the addition to Park View, the footings really have to go deep to get any solid ground. So bad situation all together, but when I left, I was going for the warmth, did not know that the heat is not good for MS. I was not good in MS, the MS was not good. I was getting all sorts of flare-ups and it just didn't work out. Plus, things weren't working out real well for him. So I came back to bail him out, he bailed me out, and we're back together.

Q: You're making it work?

SV: Yeah, but not for the reasons I wanted to come back. It was more for convenience. It's still not perfect, but this is how it goes. You have your ups and your downs, and you're together because you built a life, and now you're looking back at the life you built. It's not all like you see in the movies, it's not gonna be. But I have somebody that I can talk to, that understands where I'm coming from, that I have a history with. You're not gonna find that anywhere else. We didn't leave each other for other people; we didn't leave for infidelity purposes. It was just that things weren't working, and it was stagnant, and it was like something needed to get shaken up. I wish I hadn't have done it, but oh well. You live and learn, just one of the things. Because I basically gave away my inheritance, I sold

my inheritance to move. Because it was costly, I couldn't move by myself, I had to have a moving van and all that, so that ate up a lot of my inheritance. So you know, live and learn. That's all I have to say, live and learn. You do what you do, you do as best you can. I didn't have my parents. Both of us lost our parents within a matter of five years. My dad died in '82, his mom died in '83, my mom died in '83, his dad died in '85. Now, his father was the one that was the sickest, and had the strokes since 65, but because of all of that care, he outlived them all. And really it was probably the nursing home that did him in. We probably should have followed up with the nursing home, but he may have been neglected through the nursing home as well, we don't know. But, it's just the factor that we didn't have adults to help guide us through that time in our life, and our kids hopefully will have it. They haven't been asking for our guidance, hopefully we get our guidance early, the way it should have been done. So I'm hoping I did right by them. My son is an Eagle Scout with the troop 228 out of Park View, so I got one Eagle Scout out of three. One Eagle Scout, a lifer, and a non-scout, a tiger scout, that's as far as he went. But, they're good adults, they're good humans. I'm really grateful to Morton Grove for all that they did. If not for Morton Grove, I don't know where I would even finish, because I'm telling you, I was behavior disorder before they even had a term for BD. Put it this way: I scared the hell out of my kindergarten teacher. I sat the first day—I was so bored, I just wrote my name, I turned the paper and I just kept writing my name and I must have written it about a hundred times. And these are kids that can't even spell, can't write, but I had older parents, that they didn't have anything to do with me

so they taught me how to write, taught me chess! I was playing chess in kindergarten! Poor teachers, they didn't know what to do with me. Here's this kid that, there were kids that couldn't do anything, and there was one that was ready to read. That was reading to the rest of the class. I do remember reading to the class. But it was good times, we had a really good town here, we had people that were escaping the city. That's what they were doing, they were escaping the city and this is the first stop before they went any further. Then the next they went a little further, they went out to Northbrook, then they went a little further they went to Highland Park and just kept going.

Q: So what is Morton Grove to you now? What is it like?

SV: I'm disappointed. Because of the fact of all the wonderful memories I have, I'm very disappointed at Dempster and Waukegan. The lack of development at Dempster and Waukegan, that's money that's being lost. And I'm looking as a person that sat on the school board that knows it; we're losing tax dollars! And when do get somebody in, it's Illinois Bone and Joint Institute. But they don't pay taxes, because they're a non-profit. You don't want that. You need people. I'm disappointed at how just now, with Dan DiMaria, they're trying to woo businesses into the village. I don't like the fact that it's a pizza company that's coming into the village, because God knows we don't need another pizza company! I worked at Pequod's for a moment. That was the other part I left out. I worked at Pequod's in 1972 at its inception. I was with Burt and Bryant. Actually they looked like the

Smith brothers. Burt had the long beard, but Dave who was his partner at the time had the short beard, and they looked like the Smith brothers. But, yeah, I did Pequod's in the '70s. That was my high school. What parent let their child work until 1 o'clock in the morning? And we did, not only did we work 'til 1 o'clock in the morning, but then we went over to Mandas on Beckwith, over on Waukegan Road, and we'd have breakfast, because that was the only place that was open. That was across the street from the whorehouse, and that's why they were open, because the—I'm sure somebody has had to have told you about the whorehouses that were on Waukegan Road.

Q: No, not yet. I think you have to tell.

SV: Oh my goodness, well, it was where Walgreen's now stands. It was two no-tell motels that were on Waukegan Road, and I'm sure you'll find pictures there, but it was a well-known fact and the police knew it as well. In fact, Lieutenant _____ had—there was... whether or not it was being patronized by some of the police. But that was there for quite a long time. It was really an eyesore because there were kids at Hynes School, and it was right there. But with the TIF district that's what it took to get rid of those. Those were there up until the Waukegan Road TIF district really—the very first one.

Q: When was that?

SV: Now I have to really think. It's probably end of '79, '80, right in through there. Because I wasn't as much in Morton Grove as I was in the city at those times. I was kind of—I was doing a little of both. So that was probably around '79, '80. But they were finally able to get rid of those. And Mandas right now is the new Montessori School. That was the restaurant that everybody went—the all-night, the only 24-hour restaurant in the place, before Denny's and then once Denny's left. 'Cause we actually had a Denny's, and we had a JoJo's. Remember JoJo's?

Q: No.

SV: JoJo's was another place like a Denny's, coffeehouse-type place, but that's where Giordano's was. That's the biggest disappointment for me with Morton Grove, was how they were unable to lure businesses in and to hold them and keep them. The appearance committee, all that stuff, all of the requirements... that wasn't necessary, because the village is what it is. It still doesn't look the best. I mean, when you're coming off the expressway... I'm sorry, it doesn't look the best. When you're coming off of, when you're coming eastbound down Dempster Street, it's just not attractive. Waukegan Road is a little better—I mean, it's not the best, but Waukegan Road looks better. When you're looking at other communities and their gateway to their communities... you know, especially Wheeling. Wheeling right now looks beautiful with all their Christmas lights. Niles looks beautiful, I mean, they have—we're not able to have that because we're split up, we've got two town squares basically. And it's always been a problem.

But that's all the reason between the two school districts: "You lived in Morton Grove? I didn't know! Oh you went to Hynes? No wonder I didn't know." You know they were on the other side of town, but east side didn't know west sides. It's like two different towns. It's a shame. I'm still friends with a lot of them. Facebook is a wonderful thing.

Q: Is there anything else that comes to mind?

SV: Well, I'm trying to think of anything else, I mean, I'm sure that there's things I'm gonna think of as I go home, but I'm thinking - is there anything you've seen in Morton Grove that you've wondered how it's gotten there?

Q: Well, I don't live in Morton Grove. I've worked here just about a year and a half, so just slowly getting to know the area.

SV: Did you ever wonder how in the middle of Harrer Park there was a green house? How that Haupt-Yehl House ever got in the middle of Harrer Park?

Q: I think one of the interviews actually told that story, someone who was involved with that.

SV: I watched it. I watched it move. It was actually a house that was on Lincoln Avenue. It was right on Lincoln and Austin, on the corner, on the southwest

corner, was where it came from. And they rolled it on logs, down Austin, down Dempster to where it is now. It was just amazing. I'm sure my father has pictures somewhere. I don't know where they are. I have to look through the slides. I've got slide cases now; I know where the slide cases are, but I've got to actually look through them. There are just certain things, like how did that doughboy statue get in front of the library? These kind of things, some people have questions that—how come? Some of those things I can fill them in, because there are some strange things that happened back in the day. But, you know, they're to the wind now. I mean, I'm looking at all the new houses on Beckwith Road. I used to love Beckwith Road, just to ride along there, because it was—that was a farm. Delaney farms, where those Delaney houses are, that was a farm! We had horses and it was pastured and it was gorgeous.

END OF INTERVIEW