

**Ann Munt Oral History Interview**  
**Southeast Seniors Neighborhood Stories & Memories Oral History Project**  
**November 9, 2018**



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## **Abstract**

Ann Munt has had major involvement with the Eastside Neighborhood Services and the Pratt School here in Prospect Park and surrounding neighborhoods. This interview contains information about her experience having grown up in Minnesota, her work with Eastside Neighborhood Services and Pratt school, and what she sees as the most important issues to the area today. Another big part of the interview involves all of her work with immigrants in Prospect Park, and how she explains her upbringing by her parents, and how it has impacted many of her views on the topic today. The interview contains multiple stories of individuals that Ann Munt has seen go through Glendale housing.

Southeast Seniors Neighborhood Stories Oral History Project

Interview with Ann Munt

November 9, 2018

Simone Hendrix, Interviewer

Simone Hendrix: **SH**

Ann Munt: **AM**

*Track 1*

*00:00*

**SH:** This is Simone SH with South East Seniors for the Oral History Project, and I am interviewing Ann AM who lives in Prospect Park at the address 215 Melbourne Avenue SE and it is November 9th 2018.

**SH:** So, where were you originally born?

**AM:** I was born in Minnesota

**SH:** For how long did you live there?

**AM:** My father was starting a produce company there and I was one year old, or a year and a half, when we moved to Paynesville to start another produce company, and from there we went to New London Minnesota to start another produce company, and by the time I was three we moved to Melrose Minnesota, where my father established a plant, and where i lived throughout my high school and college career.

**SH:** When and why did you eventually move to the Prospect Park area?

**AM:** One of the reasons I moved to the prospect park areas was because my husband and I were looking for a place that we could also rent out and live in simultaneously, and we wanted a liberal area that supports diversity and we found that in Prospect Park, and fortunately, we were able to find an apartment, small apartment complex, that we purchased and that I still remain living in.

**SH:** Do you know how long this apartment complex been here?

**AM:** Well I know that we purchased it in May 1965, and well I know it is 105 years old now so I would say it's about 1920, 1922.

**SH:** What is your education history and specifically in relation to the Minneapolis area

**AM:** I went to Gustavus Adolphus for one year, and went to the University of Minnesota Twin Cities for four and a half years, and majored in social work, and also in history.

**SH:** After College, what occupations did you have, or experience after that?

00:04:18.12

**AM:** I got a job on the north side, where Elsie Weinlick was the director and she had her PhD from Columbus(University) and was the head of the federation of settlements in Minneapolis. She hired me and wanted me to be her protigue, so I was given a lot of training experiences. The first five years I was very successful with working with gangs, and after that, I became program director, and I did a lot of work with individuals in supporting their school and their vocational interests, and working with a variety of Hispanics, blacks and the lower income white community.

**SH:** Is there more detail that you could go into about how you've seen the immigrant populations in prospect park change, like chronologically?

**AM:** Yes, um, first of all, Prospect Park chose to have the Glendale housing development built in Prospect Park and it was to house veterans and their families, I was named after two Aldermen, Dale Stanchfield and Glen Wallace, and the Prospect Park/Glendale community included Prospect Park mostly and Glendale neighborhood and Glendale neighborhood and Glendale neighborhood had 180 units of sustainable units for public housing for a population of a little over 600 people and the current population includes a large percentage of minorities, blacks, Native Americans, Hisapnic, Hmong, Somali, Ethiopan, Aromo, and many heads of households are single parents, mostly mothers. It's a rainbow colony of families walking their children to Pratt school, and in 1982 community education provided ELL, English Language Learners for immigrant adults and the major purpose was to give them roots and a leg up where they can propel themselves forward. Now in the 1960's the population in Glendale was composed mainly of GI's starting families and black families migrating from the south during the civil rights era. GI's took advantage of University of Minnesota Twin Cities Twin Cities Twin Cities classes that were adjacent to Glendale and within walking distance. Then Marshall U High was attended by Glendale and Prospect Park youth in 1968 to 1982. but at its inception, Glendale housing project was designed as townhomes, and gave a real new approach to public housing. It offered front and back yards, a sense of independence, and it fostered self betterment in the resident's individual growth, and the success stories of some of the Glendale alumni who became city council members, lawyers, dentists, entrepreneurs,teachers, actors, talk show hosts and neighborhood activists, and since Glendale sits on one of the most desirable real estate properties in the twin cities, and because of its age and deterioration, public housing is considering plans for other development and abandoning Glendale housing development. and If you are interested I can tell you a little of the short history of Eastside neighborhood service to Glendale.

00:09:26.19

**SH:** Yeah

**AM:** The following is a short story of the Eastside service to Glendale. Minneapolis public housing provide dollars to Minneapolis park and recreation for the building and Eastside neighborhood would provide the human services. the three would work cooperatively to help Glendale residents thrive and engage in their community. The following is an account of Eastside Neighborhood Service from 1968 to the present time, February 18, 2018. In 1968 to 1970, of course it was the influx of GI's and their families, and black families migrating from the South during the civil rights era. Eastside neighborhood services helped the residents to connect to immediate resource and support networks. From 1970-1995 we provided the first nursery, preschool and parent education program for residents of Prospect Park, East River road and Glendale, using the adlerian approach for encouragement, recognition and empowerment through group support. Families from all walks of life and diverse cultures and backgrounds, worked together and played together. The preschool staff were residents of Prospect Park and Glendale and represented black hispanic and caucasian cultures. Teachers included studies of different cultures and their celebrations using community residents as guest speakers and storytellers. Snacks at that time were healthy with fruits and vegetables, cheese crackers, lettuce tacos, you know what. and the first 45 minutes of the school encompassed four learning exploring areas where children could go to according to their interests. One was books, storytime, science exploration, drama/dress up clothes, puppetry, geography, Africa, Alaska, US, Norway, India, Mexico, Laos, maps and pictures. Then we had story time followed by snacks. Following that we had cooperative games. Then in the 1970's, Hmong escaped civil war, many of these refugees came to live in Glendale . Lue Thao and Ann Munt of ESNS(Eastside Neighborhood Service) lead a Hmong women's group and children drama group that presented plays, and one of the children got the lead role in Clint Eastwood's famous movie, "Gran Torino". As families moved out, many became entrepreneurs, and had successful restaurants. Then in the 1990s, Somali families fled to Minnesota to escape civil war as did Aromos fleeing from the ethiopian government. Then in 1999 six Somali women, a nurse , a doctor, a banker, a teacher, a business owner and activist, met with Eastside neighborhood service directors asking for a women's group that was called Somali Women in Minneapolis, (swim) to be formed in Glendale where 60% of the residents at that time were Somali, then they asked for Ann Munt social worker in Glendale to lead the group, with Hanna Aden as co-coordinator. Swim(Somali women in Minneapolis) was funded by the office of refugee resettlement, from 2000-2007 and was held as a national model to promote community engagement. 40 women from Somali women in Minneapolis(swim) attended school board meetings to discuss closing Pratt school and community education center. The Somali women were activists who saved Pratt school from closing three times, our council representative at that time, Paul Zerby, made a statement thanking the somal women for this important achievement. Somali families in Glendale and nearby areas were connected and educated to use resources such as schools legal issues medical

needs training such as personal care assistance, LPN(Licensed Practical Nurses), tenants rights, immigration concerns and ELL(English Language Learners)also issues regarding citizenship. League of Women Voters held workshops and SWIM did workshops on Somali culture and history for Hennepin County district court Ramsey county district court, University of Minnesota Twin Cities social work students, and neighborhood churches, SWIM staff were trained in leading parenting support and education groups through Lutheran Social Services with a grant of \$3,500. This helped fathers to engage in their children's school conferences and home parenting. Swim also helped Somali women to learn how to drive, take buses, shop, use gas stoves, learn the banking system, and even personal safety taught by Minneapolis police officers. The group had left very successful footprints on Prospect Park and beyond, it was remarkable to see Ilhan Omar to represent our district as state representative. Now I would like to tell you a little bit about a person's interest in young children, which drew her to volunteer at Luxton Park Eastside Neighborhood Service. Jean Emmons rented from Ann Munt Eastside Social Worker, and grew to know seven Hmong children who would visit Ann who lived four blocks from Glendale. She got interested in this culture and their charming personalities and she volunteered at the park, although she had her degree in landscape architecture. she got to know Somali children and their families as well as their culture. There was a group of sixteen children called Movers and Shakers, and this group was formally led by Jamal Hashi, and Jean took over that group. The purpose of that group was to build social and emotional skills along with cooperative problem solving. Her second part time job with the Eastside Neighborhood Service, was in life skills, working with the Asha Kushin, to teach the Somali women sewing and tie dye. Ausa Kushin was one of the best african tie dye artists in africa. Eventually jean worked in charge of an after school tutoring program, which also concentrated on emotional development. I was her supervisor and 'the group was very diverse and very successful. The group was very diverse, and very successful in drawing in parent interest. It then expanded to a full time position and it now works in conjunction to Minneapolis public schools. the group serves also as a community builder, between Glendale and Prospect park. As the only ESNS staff person working in Glendale, her role encompasses beyond this, and is recognized for her excellence in communication, the arts, and relationships with families from diverse backgrounds. Some of her Somali students had their paintings on display at the Minneapolis art institute. Jeane supervised and mentored Jamal Hashi, who I also mentored, and worked with the group movers and shakers, ten of the children were Hmong, and the rest of the eight were black and Somali. The Hmong children attended Somali celebrations and followed Jamal as if he were the Pied Piper. Jamal ended up at 28 as one of the youngest entrepreneurs in Minneapolis and was featured in the star tribune. Having been mentored by Ann, Jean decided that she had a purpose in her work, and has mentored many of her students who have gone on to higher education including a master degree. Her passion and belief in children possibility is contagious and she has had responsibility for the Summer Splash Program serving Glendale and Prospect Park children. She also recruits children to camp Bovey, and families for a week at camp. Ann Munt, myself did a lot of work in developing a family camp which had the most diverse family camp you could find. We even had Somali families attending family camp, and it was where it was a cooperative experience, and they would help rather than paying a fee, they would provide their talents, whether it was for arts , cooking, or whatever, to make family camp a joint activity. It was considered one of the most

successful in Minneapolis. from 1960-2000 ESNS has had three full time staff plus some part time staff, and also a youth worker. The Luxton nursery had three part time staff from 1975 to 1995, and in 2000 one full time staff. Pat Tritz, community social worker retired , and was not replaced and in 2008, I retired and was not replaced. so at the present time, Jean Emmons remains as the only Eastside Neighborhood Service staff at Glendale and I would like to leave with you for some information with the future of Glendale, with remains in Minneapolis public housing and HUD. During the Reagan years, Reagan decided that public housing should disperse low income disadvantaged people into the suburbs, rather than grouping them in one location. it disregards the need that incoming refugees and immigrants needs for group support, togetherness, and a place to call home and how to become negated. Glendale is a model for public housing that gives roots, and a leg up in a good neighborhood, where they can focus and propel themselves forward. It would be devastating to see privatization replace Glendale which was held up as a model for community engagement in 2004. It should also be noted that we are working on Glendale townhomes to become registered as a historic district. I am retired now, I still work to support Glendale and voting when it is time of voting, and I still help to mentor some of the different refugees I have worked with. At the present time I am very involved with the democratic party, and with trying to promote fair voting, In all states.

00:23:00.15

**SH:** Since you've been so involved in this community, I was wondering specifically if you have noticed any changes or big changes, politically while living here?

**AM:** Prospect Park continues to be diverse and progressive in its views, to follow Paul Wellstone whose major goal, was to make improvements in all people's life and provide equity. And I believe they are still interested in doing that, but a lot of the people who were icons in our neighborhood, have now moved into nursing homes, and so the few of us that our left, are trying to work in the neighborhood to get the support for a 2040 plan, that isn't just considered with density but is also considering home ownership and investment of families in their communities. So that is a big project that is important to me.

**SH:** What do you think particularly about the universities involvement in this area and the Pratt school, and South East Seniors?

**AM:** Pratt school and students from the university have always had a joint relationship. I think that is still there as long as we have Pratt. We also have many who are professors at University of Minnesota Twin Cities who care about this community and it's support.

**SH:** More about the Pratt school again, You talked a lot about all of the accomplishment of the school reiterated would you think is the most special, important about the school and its impact?

**AM:** I think the most important thing, is that they have teachers and a principle, who believe in diversity, and if you believe in diversity you have a school that is represented in diversity, that

you teach the cultures, you involve the families, you not only teach and have conferences. If a parent can't come, they will go to the parent home, and have a conference. It is a whole different approach than a lot of schools, they also, besides looking at the culture, and teaching to a diverse group, they find that their scores are good, and that students are coming out of their learning, ready to move on to future education. There is a lot more care involved in school in Pratt, it's amazing the different money raising projects that they do, and the big one, which is more to show where the community is, is the Ice Cream Social, and I can give an example of that. Gere Purple and I were involved with the twin cities public television to do a history of the building of I 94 (highway), and the response from Glendale and Prospect park at that time. The person from twin cities public television, Leya Hale, wanted to go to the park Ice Cream Social, so she wanted to follow me in my car to get to Pratt school, and I said fine. After attending the Ice Cream Social, she made a statement to me, "I don't know a word to explain what I saw happening at this Ice Cream Social" she said, it was like a project for love, where people were so caring, everybody was knowing each other, people were helping each other, it was such a positive experience, I know what you mean about this Ice Cream Social", she said, "there are people who come, who grew up here, who come back, people who were prominent, who still come back to this Ice Cream Social. This is amazing, what you told me Ann was true, there aren't words to quite explain it" but I see what it tells about the community.

00:30:03.11

**SH:** Do you have any stories or close connections with other people in the neighborhood, or anyone affiliated with the university or that you want to talk about.

**AM:** Janet and Dean Lund, were icons in this community, and when I was working with the Somalis Janet Lund who had been stationed in different countries in Africa, with her husband Dean, who was a professor at University of Minnesota Twin Cities. She was very involved in helping Somali women in Minneapolis feel welcome in this neighborhood. She and Dean had 14 Somali women and myself over for dinner, and she provided a lot of help in many ways to help them with immigration with many different areas. Jere Purple has, from the time I've worked here, been involved in the Pratt school, on the advisory committee, she has helped in numerous events and also with the garden club and the playground. Mary Alice Kopf, another icon, who sold real estate taught ESL classes to my Somali group. Another one, Esther Watenberg Bird, who was in the school of social work, teaching in the graduate school of social work and then went on to be the head of CURE, and also was very supportive and involved. She had the Somlai women of Minneapolis, do some work with her students on Somali culture and their history. Ann Jade, who worked in the department for Hennepin county, and lives on the corner from me, did many supportive things for my work in Glendale. We just have so many in our community, Merideith Poppele, her husband, and Sally Todd. This is an interesting story, it shows you connections where you live that are supportive when you come as an immigrant, or if you come from a family that is dysfunctional. Sally Todd's father and Sally Todd were very good friends of

mine. She taught at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, and her father was the head of government contracts for the federal government. He lived in the old town, where an apartment like mine, would go for a million dollars, and Sally's father passed away, and we went to the funeral, and after the funeral she asked if my son and I, and his friend, would go to her home in old town, and pack up her things, and She would arrange for two weeks of things for us to do. one was for us to meet with Eisenhower's former press security Dayton and his wife, another to go to a Chinese ambassadors for dinner, all kinds of things to see in Washington DC, so we said fine, and David had a friend from Glendale that went with. That young friend was from Glendale, and he ended up being mentored by this Chinese ambassador, and learned Chinese and became a millionaire actually a multi millionaire working in computers and in China. This is a child that came from Glendale and went to Pratt school and Marshall U high. It shows what connections can do.

**AM:** I'm probably missing some people here, but that gives you a little idea. Oh, I forgot, there is one that is extremely important, Janet Rose, and Richard Rose. Janet Rose was an artist, Richard Rose's father, wrote the first book on the Negro in America, and taught in the Psychology department. Richard's mother was the head of the YWCA and taught at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. The Roses were very liberal and progressive, Janet did all of the artwork for me, for all of the years I worked at Glendale, from 1967 until 1995, and then she passed away. But the support that they gave me was amazing. Their son went to our preschool, and we had him on the cover of our nursery program, with a saying that was her favorite, and that was, "look at me as though I was a star, and let me develop to be who I am".

38:40:13

**SH:** More in general, were there any recreational activities that you did, or were able to do in this community, that you appreciate?

**AM:** I think one of the most important things was when I got a \$3,500 grant from the Minneapolis arts, to do cultural exchanges. That is when I was working with the Hmong community, the Somali community, and the Afro American community, that's in Glendale. In North East Minneapolis, that's part of the Eastside service, there was the Italian and Polish. So we had five different cultural exchanges there. When the Hmong came, others in Glendale were shooting out the windows of the vans they would use to sell their arts wear. After we had the cultural exchange, where food and music and culture brought everybody together, that no longer happened, and they were supportive. The same with the black community, the Somali community. The changes that took place after the music, food and culture celebrated makes a world of difference. I found that from growing up as a child. My experience growing up as a child was amazing, because my father believed in inclusiveness and when the gypsies came to town, no one wanted them around. My mother put out blankets in the summer, and made homemade bread and served to them and they asked if they could put their tent up in their yard. We said they couldn't do that but we could go out to our lake home. So I ended up dancing with

the gypsies, and my father ended up hiring one of them, and built his home, which at that time it was ten thousand dollars to get the property and build him a home. My mother got rid of the head lice, and at that time you used fine tooth combs and kerosene. One of those kids became a head anchor in St Cloud, a TV anchor. My father was always welcomed to other people, and then an Afro American man, who worked as a chef at Murrays, which was one of the finest restaurants in Minneapolis, he was coming to Chic's Riverside Tavern, that was owned by Chic Moliter. Chic was building a house for him, but he had to stay in the hotel for awhile, and the hotel wouldn't rent to him. My father told 1300 employees that worked for him that if they didn't go and protest, they wouldn't get their check[laughter]. Knowing it was against the law, but they didn't know that. The hotel said they would rent to him, but he didn't want that, so he lived with us for three months. That influenced me to be welcoming to people from different walks of life. My brother Wall met a Dakota Indian woman and welcomed her into the family, and he married her, so I grew up with a respect for diversity.

**SH:** What time period were these experience you were having as a child occur?

**AM:** That experience was in 1941, when I was eight years old. At that time, 95 percent of the people in Melrose were Catholic, a great portion of them German Catholic, another portion Irish Catholic. They called us( Protest)ants, not Protestants, because we weren't Catholic, so my mother was able to change that. I was taking piano lessons from sister Dignata and she invited all the sisters there. Well father Shermers from the German catholic church was going to catch them, because he didn't want them to be with some Protestants, so when he came and saw all that good homemade bread and caramel rolls, he decided to stay. And that stopped him from calling us protestants after that. Their kids could go with our kids, Catholics could go with Protestants.

46:37.07

**SH:** Complete different topic again, in Prospect Park, I previously talked about political, but have you seen economic change a lot or increases in housing prices?

**AM:** More density, it's not affordable. People can't afford to live in Prospect Park, unless they are in the \$100,000 mark.

**SH:** When would you say that started changing?

**AM:** I would say that that started changing about...30 years ago, Starting to change, and now in the last 15 years, density is what the 2040 plan is looking at, and we have to also look at affordable housing. There are not enough landlords that will take section eight vouchers, and you have some people who are homeless-- This is as important as healthcare. There were some families that were homeless that has kids going to Pratt school. It brings up something that I shall never forget, when Rudy Perpich was our governor, my daughter was working for him. On his way to the capital he had seen a family living out of a van and talked to them, and he called Jennifer and said to her that she had to go over there and get them housing, that she had to help

them. What a governor. Isn't that something, isn't that a beautiful thing? I'll tell you, that was Rudy all the way.

**SH:** You always--

**AM:** You what?

**SH:** (Laughter) You always have another story that I'm not expecting.

**SH:** Oh, on this again with the density you were talking about, I think you might have mentioned this, but do you know how that is affecting the pratt school, and the children that go there?

**AM:** Communities support their school by families that send their children there and are invested in it, and when you just look at density and not enough at home ownership and affordability for families, you're affecting the future of that school. That is my feeling. Now, there is a plan that is out there, that is a trial basis, to see if they can have smaller units like maybe an upper and lower duplex, renting to four families, okay, and that if it is lower income, that the state would give them 20%, or 30%, or 40% off on their property taxes. In order to give more affordable housing, which I think is a very good plan, I'm not involved in that, but my rents here are affordable for a one bedroom, good size apartment, you can see mine, they aren't small rooms, with shower and bath, and I pay utilities. I think I could be in that grouping, but I'm not a fourplex, I rent out five apartments, but for fourplexes. That is one idea that they have. There is one other thing, that more landlords would be accepting section 8, if they had had support services for refugees coming here, immigrants from other countries, where we would have the support network that we gave them in Glendale. Where they learn how to keep their garbage, what day to put it out, how to use a gas stove, how to keep their food, so you're not going to get roaches. There has to be something that gives them a pathway to learn how to be a homeowner or an apartment dweller. You don't just know that when you come here, and they've come from horrific experiences.

00:54:25.26

**AM:** I would like to give an example of somebody who came here and why Garrison Keillor once said, "they are my heroes", because they are my heroes. Somali woman, her eight children, babies carrying babies, her sisters, five children, and an aunt, and a 76 years old grandma. They walked 30 miles with just what they had on their backs and some water, through a desert and when they heard the hoofbeats three miles away (you can hear the hoofbeats of the warlords) and they had to hide under the sand and they walked thirty miles to a refugee camp in Kenya. Where there they had to protect themselves, even from warlords coming in to ravage them.

**SH:** Did you say they hid under the sand?

**AM:** Yes, so when they saw a tree-- and how I heard this story, because Somali women are very strong and they're very quiet about things, they are very private, I saw tears coming down this woman's eyes, I'm getting them now, when she saw a tree, like the one they hid under, it brought back those memories. Then she told me the story, but none of them would ever share that type of story with anyone. I had a grandmother who stowed away on a fishing vessel for nine days, where they had the flaps that would open to put the fish in, and the water, and she lived on raw fish and water. So I also know some stories of hardships. When you see a story like that, and they come here and they(the Somali women from the story) have all these new things to learn.

**SH:** Ok, I think that's a lot--I've gotten a lot of information. Is there anything you want to talk about before I wrap up, I guess I have one more question, but are there anymore stories?

00:58:02.19

**AM:** The longest period of time, that young children that focus on something is fifteen minutes. The Hmong children that came over to my house, wanted to know all the stories of our family, they wanted to know about my rock collection, they would be here for two to three hours. they would bring a young child that couldn't walk with them, that they had to take care of. It amazed my brother ward and myself, how this was possible, I will never understand that. To me that was unbelievable. These same kids come back to me on Halloween to see me, and they come back on my birthday, and they come with their children.

**SH:** Do their children usually visit you too or?

**AM:** Yes, I'm going to show you the pictures.

[left to look at trifold board of pictures]

**SH:** I have one last question, about your favorite quote, and the story that might go behind it?

**AM:** The favorite quote, I have two. Just a minute. The first one, "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world, indeed it's the only thing that ever has" by Margaret Mead. The other one, "always hold firmly to the thought that each one of us can do something to bring some portion of misery to an end". A third one, "put a rainbow on someone's cloud at least once a day".

[End of Recording]

Total Interview Time: 1:03:05:18

