

Jere Purple Oral History Interview
Southeast Seniors Neighborhood Stories & Memories Oral History Project
November 15, 2018



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Abstract

Jere thinks of Prospect Park as a campus – “it is a defined neighborhood and, within it, you can find almost everything for a very pleasant life.”

To Jere, the most important aspect to the campus neighborhood is Pratt Elementary School. All four of her children went to Pratt beginning in the late 1960s. She walked with her children to school each day and was a school volunteer and a member of the PTA.

Jere felt very much a part of the Pratt and Prospect Park community and so when Pratt was closed in 1982, even though her children had moved on to high school, Jere became part of the Pratt Council – the organization that would work for 18 years to save Pratt from demolition and to get it reopened.

Members of the Pratt Council worked under the assumption that as long as the building was being put to use, it wouldn't be torn down. To that end, in addition to Adult Community Education, which remains housed at Pratt to this day, many other programs and organizations have called Pratt home. The members of the council also felt that the ice cream social should continue even with the school closed and no PTA. Jere is very proud that the Pratt Council was successful in organizing and holding the Ice Cream Social every year.

In addition to Pratt, Jere has also worked very hard on behalf of Southeast Senior Services, the Glenwood community and Luxton Park.

In 1995 Jere received the Minneapolis Award for her leadership and efforts on behalf of the Pratt Council. Jere is quick and adamant to point out that there were many people involved in the work of the Pratt Council and she just happened to be the Chairperson at the time.

To this day, Jere continues to volunteer at Pratt Elementary School. You can find her in the gardens weeding or in the Community Ed office doing whatever needs to be done.

Jere would not have wanted to live and raise her children anywhere else. “That's the whole thing... when you have the right balance and you're trying to do good things, everybody doesn't always agree, but there is enough that can come together that you can feel like you're doing something and you've got completeness to your world.”

Southeast Seniors Neighborhood Memories and Stories Oral History Project

Interview with Jere Purple

November 15, 2018

Peggy Schulte, Interviewer

Peggy Schulte: **PS**

Jere Purple: **JP**

Track 1

00:00

PS: This interview is being conducted for the Neighborhood Memories and Stories Project on Thursday November 15, 2018. The narrator is Jere Purple, a resident of Prospect Park at 63 Barton Avenue Southeast. So Jere, you told me that you think of this neighborhood as a campus and I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about that and how you found this neighborhood when you came to live here.

JP: Yes. I don't know if I thought about this when we first came here. It's something that happened over time. When we first came, everything was about the first child going to kindergarten in the fall, and it would be at Pratt [Elementary School], and we were really excited about that. We had just moved in to Barton Avenue. We had lived for a couple of years at 230 Bedford Street right across from the wonderful Dawis family, a grand place to live with small children. Everybody shared in watching the kids. It was a flat street, no hill. And, when the kids were playing outside, whoever was at that property would watch them on their tricycles or whatever. So it was like the meeting place, mainly for the moms. Because this is 1969 and very many of the people who were home were the moms at that time. Very many of the husbands, and some of the wives too, but husbands were employed at the U of M, and it was walking distance and that was really nice. There was bus, walking, cars—the University was a lot—a campus that was transit kind of campus in comparison to now—many more students live walking distance from where they live to where they're going to school. But that was a different thing.

So, over time, I could see that there were very active churches. There was never any grocery store. That was always the complaint. But within our—we had a park. We had Luxton Park. We had many lovely spots with trees and grass. We had terrain because we had the Tower. And the tower was just a central piece, a marker for the whole neighborhood. This is the Witch's [Hat] Tower, the water tower. And there was that triangle, the Tower, Pratt School, Prospect Park United Methodist Church right across the street. At that time, there was a very good nursery school within the church. It was rented. It wasn't affiliated with the church, but that was the

space that was available. And very definite outlines to the neighborhood. It went all the way over to the Mississippi River. It had a border with St. Paul. It had a border with the University. It's a defined neighborhood and, within it, you could find almost everything for a very pleasant life.

Except, of course, that grocery store (laughter). That's when I began to think of how complete it was in many respects. Over—

PS: Were there corner grocery stores?

JP: Oh, yes, and they were wonderful. The main one was on—now that's—never mind—I'll have to come back with some of these addresses. On the other side of Franklin Avenue, the Chergoski family and they were a central family here. They were just knowing everybody. They had meat as well as snack things. It was—the grocery stores in those days—they've evolved a lot since then, but you could get mostly what you need at the Chergoski's grocery store. And, on Halloween, they would have hot dogs outside and the kids would go buy—and then balloons too, if I remember. And Mrs.—boy, I'm sorry I'm not good on names every time when I need to be, but she ended up being a volunteer who worked with the patrols for Pratt.

The kids all walked to school. There were no buses when my kids started here. And that would have been 1969 with one going to kindergarten. And that was a K-6 school, a neighborhood school. That was it. Janet—she would sponsor the patrols, giving them prizes, having hot chocolate for them if they were standing on the street corners in the winter time—special treats all the way though. And the kids knew her, and Don was her husband's name. People knew that grocery store, and it was really—we were sad to see it go.

PS: What do you miss most about how the neighborhood used to be?

JP: How it used to be. Hmm—that's hard to say. I miss the people because I got a feeling for the neighborhood by who the people were. It was so openly neighborhood. You knew the people next door; people helped each other. Mr. Lenhart who lived right next door to us on Bedford Street helped my husband rebuild a crumbling staircase up the front of the house two or three steps. Mrs. Lenhart gave me recipes like her special bran muffins. And they were the older couple at that point on the neighborhood, and we just shared so many—we knew everybody up and down the block. And I think that's still very much the same, but it has expanded. At my age now, I don't know everybody up and down the block like I used to. It's a good thing we have the meeting time when you meet together—that special Tuesday. You know what I'm trying to say. You have your come together block by block—block parties.

PS: Oh, the—

JP: Yes.

PS: National night out.

JP: National night out is a good thing because we have—people may be changing who's living in the houses—more and more houses; more people to know. But that feeling that you—when you saw somebody, you knew their name; you said hello to them. You knew where they

lived and things like that. That's a wonderful feeling. And it's not been lost. It's just been altered and expanded as we get more people.

PS: And has the campus feel of the neighborhood changed?

JP: No. Now we have a neighborhood grocery store—the Fresh Thyme—walking distance. It's been promised for a long time. No, I don't think it has. We didn't have time to do a lot of other things perhaps, but you could run your day without worrying about getting—except to the grocery store. About getting some other place. And there were groups that met within. There was the Goods Group Book Clubs—it's not a political group, but you know who I mean. I'll come back to that because that's a very good group that's all over. But we had a part of that within the neighborhood, like a book club, but this is you read who—they endorse candidates and they have monthly meetings. Sally Sawyer for a long time was our person. I'll fill that in some other time because I'd like to be able to say the name of that group—yes-yes. In fact, it was one of the neighbors who got me involved with that group, studying water quality that ended up being something that I followed for a long time—Janet Hively—and she lived across the street at Bedford. And she was in—

[phone interruption]

League of Women Voters. Yeah—and Janet Hively—she ended up doing things at the U of M [University of Minnesota] when she was older. She had a position with them bringing programs to older people and making attachments fairly recently. Right, so yeah.

PS: So you said that you were very excited about Pratt School. Can you talk a little bit about that and your children's time at Pratt and being a parent of children at Pratt?

JP: Well, we were just delighted that the one who was five years old would be able to walk to school, a very easy walk. At that time, they came home for lunch, and that's part of this campus idea that we would walk with the kids to school, especially the younger ones. So you got to know the school, you got to know the teachers and, boy, that's something that has changed. In those days, nobody ever thought about somebody coming into the school for harm. The doors were open. I don't think parents and visitors ever even had to sign in. I don't think people thought that was a possibility. And so we were very comfortable.

There was a PTA. It was part of the national organization. We joined it and after a while when we ended up with more things happening, and later on when we had Pratt Council, the people who did the parent-teacher organization decided we really didn't need to join the national one and send our dues to them because we were handling things within the parent group very nicely and could use that money in other ways. It was a very open feeling. It's good nothing ever happened. We had report cards. We were invited in for activities, especially with the younger grades. It was a very small student body.

The playground was where now the parking lot is. That was a shock in the winter time. You'd come down to the school; you'd come down the hill; you'd look over and see this slush-filled great big area, all fenced in. And there were big gates that would swing across where the cars now come in and out. They would be closed. And the kids in the wintertime—did they ever stop

to put on their boots?—I don't remember. But they'd be out there in their sneakers in two-inch slush playing football or whatever there was. And I'm sure they—that, for the rest of the day, I doubt they ever had dry shoes on, but they had a great time. The other side where the arbor is now and the playground has been erected, that's where the head in parking was along there. It has really gotten much spiffed up and nice. And that was money from the NRP [Neighborhood Revitalization Project] and other donors when we had a chance to ready the school to reopen again at some point.

PS: So all of your children went to Pratt?

JP: Um-hmm—right. And I think, at one time, they may have all been at that—yes. They looked forward to walking to school across—that would have been down into the neighborhood—the school is no longer there. That was the first one to go.

PS: Motley?

JP: Motley—yes. For the upper grades, it would—sometimes it was—Pratt must have gotten more crowded, and so the upper grades were not all here, but they were moved over to Motley. Motley was one of the schools in the Southeast Alternatives experiment that happened in the neighborhood. And that was, what, probably ten years after our little ones started here—yeah.

PS: So they all—all of your children made it out before the school closed in 1982?

JP: Yes. Our oldest one got to—well, yeah. We have to think about that because the next step after elementary school was Marshall-U—Marshall-University High School. That was 7-12 at that time, and some people thought that was an incredibly wide span of ages, but my kids loved it. They knew there were dangers. I will never forget the day I heard that our second son had spent some time being hung over one of the stairwells because of—I don't know what started it, but nothing ended bad. And it was a wide-open school in some respects. But it was on the campus. They loved being in Dinkytown; being able to get out, go across the street and get something at oh, what was his name? José

PS: House of Hanson.

JP: Yes, but the name of the man who was right across the street. Oh, well—that may come—let's get something—that will come back to me. And of course, there was a Burger King there at that time. They just felt like they were very grown up. And some of the—and the sports teams that were available to them while they were at Marshall-U High opened to 7th graders. I don't think they would have ever thought of going out for any sport thing except for neighbors who belonged to the swim team and told these little kids that we need you on the swim team, and brought them up and into it, and that ended up being wonderful for the family. I had to laugh because I would admit to people that getting—I think we had one upstairs bathroom that had a shower [unintelligible]. Yes. And I would say it was a blessing that they would go to practice and have a shower and [unintelligible] (laughter). It made living at home much easier—yes. But it was that feeling of the older kids being mostly very helpful. A great [unintelligible] —the teachers there too.

PS: And so both Pratt and Marshall-U were closed that same year in 1982?

JP: I think there were 18 schools if I remember. And on the school board at that time, Judy Farmer, who I'm sorry you missed in the interviews because she certainly—she was the leader—she and Timmy Stevens were the leaders for the development of Marcy as an open school when the Southeast experiment was able to be funded here. And Jane Star who lives just a couple of blocks from here—wonderful family, much involved for—a little bit older kids—. We had two people on the school board at that time. It was a difficult—I think the main thing that may have pushed it—well, it's always money that pushes things, but there was a forecast that we weren't going to have that many children. We didn't have enough children to be coming and having all these schools. Southeast alternatives, that wonderful program while my kids who were in school—that had come to a close and money was dropping off.

There was a huge amount of money given for transportation. And it was—I think I'm right in saying it was going to help integration. The open school that was at Marcy, the continuous progress which was at Pratt—they were open to people from all over the city, and that meant that if you were going to—you don't expect the people to transport their children, although some did. I don't know—it wasn't always the same, but that's when the bussing started. And when the bussing money no longer came from the Federal Government, that was a big hit. But 18 schools and some of them—that was a junior-high, senior-high combination. That was a lot for this neighborhood to take.

PS: So what was the response of the community—?

JP: When it closed?

PS: —when it closed.

JP: Oh, boy. Well, I think people always thought we'd get something back here. It was a nice school—looking good. We loved the big halls and the stones. It needed work, whether the roof was—the windows—lots of things could have been done to make it more energy-efficient. And that took a lot of money. People always thought it could be used again. It was remarkable that Community Ed[ucation] thought it was a good time to have Community Ed. programs. And there would be some revenue because those are paid-for programs, but nothing huge that's going to pay for the heating and everything else. But, after searching around for a long time, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, NRP, that happened then. At the same time, the school had some money that was designated to make physical improvements to buildings. And they had gone through—I think it had some name like Octopus or something. And that's an odd memory, but they had made—you know, they have people go around and say: this would need new bathrooms, this would need new window, and made a lot of recommendations for physical places where money could be used. And that money combined so that something could happen here. And, at that time, it wasn't designated to be a school again, but it was making it look much better.

PS: And was that when Pratt Council came to be when all those schools closed?

JP: When all those schools closed, originally the plan was the one over at—Motley was a newer school. Motley would be the school that would be saved and Pratt would be closed. And there were—and there was a good chunk of neighborhood people who were used to being very activist who said, we need to switch that around. Motley is a wonderful neighborhood, but it has been reduced in family because of the student outgrowth and the University outgrowth. Motley, as the school for this neighborhood, is really not the right spot. And, although it's a newer building, it's not necessarily as large or as good as the one at Pratt. So the pressure right away was to ask the original people who decided what schools would be kept that they would make that switch.

And Motley was then sold and built into the nice grandma apartments that are there now, and that was Gar Hagens, I believe, who at that time lived in the neighborhood—well-known architect living in the neighborhood. And Pratt would be saved. And remarkable—I don't know if there ever was a single standing school that would be just Community Ed., but Paul Boranian was head of Community Ed. and he was willing to go along with that. They must have had enough money for it. It was drummed into our heads that the money that was for Community Education was separate than the money for the other—for the elementary schools, that that was—you don't mix the two. Sometimes they come together. Sometimes it's handy that the aims can come together and you can kind of use monies in ways that help both of those programs.

But—well, we were—Bruce Graff came here and lucky for that, he had been very successful as the Community Ed. person at Marshall-U High. And the group here lobbied for him. And he was certainly willing to make a shot at what was going to happen. They were about—I don't think we ever realized what were all the different arms of community education, like ESL [English as a Second Language], the programs for the GED and, at that time, there was Early Childhood Family Education, ECFE [Community Education], the adult classes. I'm probably missing one. Probably a very obvious one.

PS: JOY [Just Older Youth] we talked about—is that—?

JP: Yeah, but I don't think they were a separate thing. Did we have any separate thing for seniors? No, I just think they were the people who were home at that point, and they were—so that was partially, at one point, funded through the Park Board in some ways, because other places in other sites of the city had started having groups that met just for older people.

PS: And so how did you come to be on Pratt Council?

JP: I guess I had worked at—I was mainly a volunteer at Pratt, and I have a neighbor. Well, one of the strongest people at that time saying, we got to keep Pratt. We're not going to let Pratt go—was a neighbor of my—Ann Barnum. Her husband Cy—a very strong person at the U of M—and I think he may have been in chemical engineering or something like that—and she also had four kids. They were all older, but she really would use her time, money and energy for things that were going on in the neighborhood. Cy was busy with other things or kids—yeah. And she got together with Gar Hagens was a person who had children going here, and he was very much in favor or not letting Pratt go. So I'm sure that—there were many people who were

used to working together in school. And they're the ones that banded together, made that proposal that Pratt be saved, and when they started out—.

Oh, one of the first things they did was they got a grant from the Minneapolis Foundation. We've had really good support from them—really good support from them. The money was to go for a needs assessment—always a good idea that people I think automatically look to now, but that was the idea. And there was some money to do that needs assessment—Marsha—she was a good one who did a lot of that work. I have to keep myself on track here. Anyway, after they—and they had a treasurer and—oh, boy—they don't live in the neighborhood anymore, but that was a good church family, still around, but they've just moved out. Anyway, they asked me after that first year if I would be the treasurer, and I certainly—you know, I'd do anything for the school. And so that was it, and yeah—that was how it started.

PS: And so what did you do as the treasurer?

JP: I don't—well, we had that grant. And I think we—oh, yes, they had to spend a little money then to get the 501c3 whatchamacallit—and we had help from the Brown Bag Group that would help you write your application. And it probably cost \$300. It wasn't a big deal in money. It was a big deal to write it up, but it was worth it because then we could apply to other places for grant money and, as a matter of fact, when Southeast Seniors started, one of their requests—they came to Pratt Council one day and said, this is what we'd like to—Wanyce Sandve, and I'm sure you've heard her name. Her husband came along too—that was Ruven. They live in the neighborhood right across from what you don't see anymore, the big lumber company Weyerhaeuser. They came to Pratt Council and said, "We have really worked hard. We see there is a block nurse group right over the line in St. Paul doing well, and there are grants and monies and teachers available where we'd like to start one here." And they had gone through the neighborhood and found lists of nurses in particular who were interested in helping older people and that was just the beginnings of that thing that's so strong now—helping people live at home.

So I was talking about the money—alright. (Laughter)—you start writing grants. You start writing grants for everything. And some of them really paid off. And the beginning, because we had the 501c3, we shared the treasury kind of—. And, eventually, they had to do a lot of fundraising in order to keep up. The government would give help for starting another Southeast Seniors. And the Southeast Seniors already there would get grants, but it was—you had to meet certain steps and have money in the bank before you could keep going along. I'm sorry, I haven't told you the name of the one that was the lady's name and the name of the group that was already started, but they ushered us in, and they were great. You'll get that all from somebody else.

So we did eventually split off and give them back their money that we'd been collecting from other things. Then we—the only big requirement was that we would have to write the state and the federal income taxes, which we didn't have to pay because it wasn't a big deal of money in those days, but you did have to turn in those forms. And I was so relieved when there was a volunteer with Pratt Council who knew—who was a money person and knew how to do all that, because I was quite nervous about that. I didn't really realize that you'd get fined if you didn't do

those things on time. And then you'd have to make an embarrassed telephone call. But people were nice about—you know, they understood this was a little neighborhood group and never any bad problems.

PS: Sometimes it's better not to know.

JP: It began to get really better. At one—oh, yeah. Some of the adult classes that were here, especially for ESL people and GED people—well, you've got to think always that Ann Barnum and the people who were here had gone through a period of some debate and heart-wrenching and what-not because of Glendale housing. And there we had a population of people who could certainly benefit from sending their kids to Pratt. And the older people there we would hope would be using the services available at Pratt. And so one of the needs for those people was what do we do with our kids. And there's space here. At that time, there was a greater Minneapolis daycare association. I'm not sure if that is still around, but if you could get some funding through them. If you could show that you were doing funding for kids while the parents were in classes, count the number of people you had to have who—the kids who were there. And that worked. But we didn't have money to spend for something like that. I'm pretty sure I'm remembering Meredith Poppele was the one who offered to write a letter that we would send to the neighborhood asking for funding. And it would be used for that purpose. I think that was the first neighborhood fund letter that we ever sent out. And I think, thereafter, we kept it up. It became not money just for the one purpose of being able to offer free or at least—yeah, I'm sure it was free. But then we would ask for general money for Pratt Council.

PS: So was the focus of Pratt Council on working to get Pratt returned as an elementary school, or was it really focused on the programs that were happening in the interim period?

JP: It was really both. The neighborhood—I think the neighborhood said it's too good not to be a school. And so I think—and it had a history. Boy, when you're a part of Southeast alternatives, there were three cities they picked for the government grants for that. I can't remember—out west—maybe Oregon somewhere there—I can't remember where they all were, but after you were chosen to be the alternative program here and given money as you needed—that was a—. I mean, we had specialists and everything. We had the newspaper that went around that Sally French did. There was so much money and for good reason. It wasn't wasted. These were terrific people. After that, it got in the news. You also at school had to be open to groups of maybe 30 people, 15 people coming from other places to visit and see how does it work—how does continued progress work? It was hard. It was hard on the teachers, but they were willing to do it. They put in extra hours—the principal. This is something you don't always when you're teaching expect to be having people come in and watching and taking notes on what you're doing. And so there was an activist population here.

And it was also coming this feeling that you would have within this campus that I'm thinking in my head where you might get some health, help. You might have any number of other social issues could be addressed while there was space for that at this time. And we were happy to have that. I mean, I'm sure I never had any idea. Community Ed., when the kids were here, had after-school programs. And that was fine. They'd play in the gym. They'd play floor hockey and what

not, but—and that was the only thing we thought about. But, after that, you'd have all these other things and people realize the GED and things like that, you'd want to bring them in and have them happen here. And that's probably, beyond the neighborhood, the impetus for what was going on at Pratt. But we also had to look for other money—big money.

And that's how the Loft came here for a while. And I'm sure you've probably heard about that. They did some nice remodeling. They had some classes here that we thought that was terrific. There was always the feeling that, if we didn't keep the classrooms full and if we didn't have things that were working out well, the building could be closed, and there would be somebody ready to tear it down or turn it into some other thing and that would be it—that it would be a private, not public—we had ownership. We began to feel, yes, that we have ownership when [unintelligible] had here. That we—that if the—we didn't think about using the schools on weekends. We even had times when the schools were able to say, if you want to have your birthday party here, we can arrange things like that. People really began to think like this is something that they owned. And it was an awakening kind of time too what was in Community Ed. But always, always the family people thought we can start a school again. And when there is money to put in the new windows, they said, oh, it's a wonderful old building—it's a hundred years old now. All those things came together.

PS: And so what was—is there maybe one or two things that you can point to that were the clinchers in getting the school back open again?

JP: Definitely, I think the NRP money that the neighborhood was willing to put into fixing the building. The needs—I don't think the anticipated downturn in student population perhaps never developed as much as people thought it would. Now, Marshall never came back again—Marshall-U High. But there was not a lot of other schools maybe available—a strong reason because of the children at Glendale. If you really hope for integration, probably your best chance is for personal interaction and experience makes a difference more than anything else. And here was a chance for young kids to have personal interaction and really make some shifting there. There was a need for it and people here who'd point that out.

PS: So are you still involved in the Pratt Council?

JP: It's no more. It's mothballed at this time. And wonderfully, that's because the school is able, with their—they now call it PTO—they're able—. I should say, when it started back here, you probably realize, first year, there was just a kindergarten and then it grew, grew, grew and struggled. Those were struggles because you had to really hunt for those kids to come. And what was I talking about before where I was talking about the kindergarten starting slowly?

PS: The Pratt Council not being—being mothballed.

JP: Yeah—right. So, in the beginning, there wasn't a lot of families in the PTO, but right now it's stronger and stronger. And you know we were going to talk about the ice cream social? Boy, that was a big thing. When we sit around—the Pratt Council sits around—it's coming up springtime. And the ice cream social, I believe, was mainly something done by the PTA [Parent Teacher Association] at that time. It happened on Tower Hill because the arbor was not here.

And I think Mr. Prosser was the music teacher here—wonderful Mr. Prosser. In I think 3rd grade, everybody did the recorder class so he could select and find people who were interested in going on with other—whether it was the violin or whatever. I don't know how many days he came. It wasn't every day. But I think part of the ice cream social was a concert up on the tennis courts. And it certainly was at times an art show, because Norma Olson would volunteer art students—they had a class—grown-ups or any age over the park—would bring their artwork and put it around on the tennis courts for people to see. And, if they even wanted to buy one, that would be fine.

So the question was, what about the ice cream social? And we are not the PTA. We are like 10 or 15 people. And somehow, we decided that, yes, we would have an ice cream social. And we did, and it was tiny, but there were hot dogs, I well remember, and there was ice cream, and cake. Because we had somebody in the neighborhood who could make great big cakes that were not too expensive because we were right across the street. Although the first year, I just saw in the newspaper, Schwanns—not too close to here—the first year I think I was going to do the ice cream and cake. Anyway, early on, and Schwanns was kind of far away. And I went for that on Friday. This is not the very first one, I guess—it could have been—went to get it and it was Friday traffic and I thought—oh, I'm not going to get back with the ice cream in time for the ice cream social.

Well, after that—and I did stick with the ice cream and cake for a long time because I realize that right across the street was Marigold, Brown and Kemps. They had all those different names and that was that building. So we made a push for them and they like the idea and we eventually had like over 20 tubs—three gallon tubs of ice cream and the cake and things got bigger and bigger and bigger. But that—I think it was really important. I remember thinking, if we don't do an ice cream social on the usual day which is the weekend right after Memorial Day, sort of like part of the graduation ceremonies here at Pratt—if we didn't do it, it would be harder and harder to ever get it back. And so it was tiny, but it kept going I think every single year.

Now that's another thing—Pratt Council people decided at some point that maybe we did—(laughter)—we would get more people to come if it was Saturday or some other time. And for a couple of times only, I think we tried different times—wasn't the same. People go away on the weekend. Saturday wasn't so good. And other days just didn't work. So it was—and then we didn't—I can't remember when we started to get the Tower open. That was a big deal.

PS: Do you remember when the Tower closed?

JP: I don't think it was ever open to people while we lived here. Nobody ever thought about being inside it. That was our first opportunity, I think, to see that it was a spiral staircase and a big water tower in the middle. At one point, someone said we should turn it into an aquarium. We could have—you know—we could walk around it. Well, there were many good ideas, but NRP money didn't make a lot of minds work. And Mr. Garmers—Tony Garmers is the man that I think of as the person who talked to the people at the [Minneapolis] Park Board and arranged for the fact that we could have the Tower opened, and there was probably in the beginning, not the line there is these days. People talk about having it open more days. For a while, it was one

of the big money-raisers when the more recent PTO people have a part of the ice cream social that is a silent auction. And one of the things was you could bid on having, at a certain time that you would choose and work out with the Park Board, the use of the tower when it would be opened. People had some weddings and things like that. That's no longer a possibility, but there's still—I'll read every now and then that somebody's looking into maybe having this open at a certain time. It takes manpower, and that's what we don't have, but it could happen again at any time. NRP money was voted for fixing up the Tower too. They were some of the highest things on the—when the neighborhood votes on how do you want to spend your money. NRP was really something.

End of Track 1

40:56

Track 2

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PS: Okay. Can we back up a little bit? Maybe we should just start by talking about the importance of Glendale and the relationship with the school and getting it back.

JP: Yeah. That's fine. Okay, so Glendale—oh, when we first came here, there was no park building over there. There was something like a long square on cinderblocks, and that was the Park Building [Luxton Park Building]. But we could see that something was going to happen because there was big pile of dirt and the kids loved to play in the big pile of dirt. And over here was becoming this modern thing. It did not have a gym at that time. But that's something we worked hard to get.

PS: The school.

JP: The Park Board building—the Luxton Park Board Building. It was this wooden thing and it was kind of just a warming house maybe. But, once you have a building, then you have programs and everything like that. Well, Norma is on Arthur and she's an artist, and she is a very good, strong person. Like I said, Norma Olson just looked the Scandinavian part and she's been doing good works for the neighborhood. Like I told you, the tulips, that she would say to Daytons, if you're throwing those away, bring them over here—we can plant them. Q was the name of the thing that she started and that had something to do with neighborhood improvement and awards for people who did things with flowers and everything. Well, I was delighted to go to her art class. And she had someone who would come and take care of the kids which was wonderful for somebody like me because it was just forget the kids for a while.

Well, she would go walking along up and down in Glendale and she saw somebody who was not doing something. She's say, come, we'll give you brushes and you can pose for us and do

pictures and we're getting together. So she had strong—always strong feelings for the people at Glendale. And she had—she was the one—you'll see it in the witch's book. She was the one who got together with a number of people when the [Interstate] 94 was going to squash out Glendale, she wrote—there's a good chapter on that because she wrote the governor. I said, you can't do this. This is an important place in our neighborhood.

And when I thought back about Norma and how she felt about Glendale, she was just always doing things and bringing people together. It was activity, not just talk. She gave so much of herself. I have wonderful stories of doing art classes for the kids in the summertime, and she would bring a goat that they were going to draw—a real one. They were going to draw the goat. And she would get the people in her art class to come help with her thing in the summertime. And you'd be mixing up pots from that powdery paint, and the kids would come, and you'd have them spread out and just express yourself and whatnot.

Well, she gave so much of her energy to that that other people had to give their energy too. (Laughter). I remember thinking Norma was like, make an offer you couldn't refuse. I have heard people saying, if I saw Norma coming, sometimes I'd run around the corner because I knew she was going to get me to do something. She knew how to get volunteers, right? You need people like that. Just a wonderful family. And when I looked back on it, I thought, their feeling about Glendale I think had a lot to do with looking back on their own people who had come here. I mean, you picture her family upstate—she's a strong conservation person for the prairies and all—that they really respected the hardship of somebody who comes. And the idea was you can make it a little bit easier.

And so I think when I was really aware of all that was the time when AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children]. And then the atmosphere at Glendale became more dedicated to AFDC families needing help. Here were the refugees coming and I really never thought of it as a place where there were veterans or students anymore was the refugee families and the families needing help. They went through a very hard time—a lot of money came from the government about better to own their own home. They have this huge government program—let's move to them owning your own home. It never worked there because they're continuous—you know, the construction. It wasn't like it was your own home. The idea was you'd get strong enough there and be able to look for a place to live. That's still the idea.

And I think a lot about—people say we should open up and have people next to each other that works in some places. But there is also a balance where the people who came there, if they had a different language—not that they thought this was a wonderful house to live in always, but it was wonderful to be around people who spoke your own language. And I don't think we could ever—I don't think you can ever write that down on a piece of paper. But the idea is—the balance of the kids at Pratt—the balance of how many people are of your background and all—the park had to be heavily brought in. Because it was observed after a while that, when they built Luxton Park—when they built Glendale, there was no community rooms, no community kitchens. It was an experiment.

And the neighborhood pushed hard for it and Norma was one of the ones who pushed hard for it. And people fought it and they didn't want it. And all this about what's going to happen and who's going to live there. It's almost like now the people coming in the caravans and can we—you know, that's always—people have points on both sides. But—and there was—while about the time they were building—the gym got built on there—and that was a fun, wonderful thing, and the kids here helped lobby for that. Pictures of what I'd like to have happen. That was—that made it a much more useable building. There is the PICA [Parents in Community Action] which is part of HeadStart—they had a—that was a—social programs were in there heavily. Ann Munt has told you tons. I realize after a while that the people of Glendale were able to elect a social agency, and they elected Eastside Neighborhood Services. And we were not really part of Eastside Services because we didn't have a part that needed that then. But once Ann was employed over there and started working there, then we got the benefit of Eastside which is another part that's really important to here.

PS: Ann was employed at Luxton?

JP: Yeah. She was with Eastside Neighborhood Services and they elected to have their social agency and she lives in the neighborhood. See you haven't interviewed her. Okay—alright—this is all going to fit together. Ann and her entire employment—main—is social worker. And she knows how to go to court for the people over there. She just—would help the families. She's the go-to person. She's the bridge to here and Glendale in social terms. And Norma was like a bridge in other ways—sports programs, things like that were bridges in other ways.

PS: You've talked a lot about the importance of strong women in the neighborhood, and I'm wondering if there is anything else you want to say about that?

JP: I just remember my husband saying one time, it really doesn't matter what your political aspirations are around here—it's the women. It's the women who make the difference. That was—and then women would—how [unintelligible] tell him that. You know who lived here for a long time—Phyllis Kahn at the end of our block. And you have—not Cathy—you read me the names and now I can't pull her up, but she lives down here in 810 Thornton [Street]. I think she still lives there. She's—that's alright—it'll all come together. But yeah, heck, we lived down the—

PS: Esther Wattenberg?

JP: Esther Wattenberg is still alive and she had—yes, Esther was one of the people—the Women's Group was just huge. Don't worry—there are many more names that I could have added to that. But, when we first moved in and lived at 230 Bedford Street, we had the alderperson, that was Bob MacGregor. And he ended up being Dayton's—after he went for Mayor and was not elected in that Mayor thing, he ended up with a job at Dayton's doing their social programs, donations and—. Dayton's was—boy, Dayton was the store that, when I moved here, you'd just get a Dayton's card. They have a daisy sale. You order the big 60 pounds of washing machine stuff and you can go for everything at Dayton's. That was so—well he ended up going with Dayton's. And the Frank Lloyd Wright house at the end of the neighborhood. Well, it had a little of everything—just incredible.

PS: So I read that in 1995—

JP: Oh that's alright. I did say that I thought Norma's dedication to the people and what happened at Glendale was largely because of her thankfulness, her admiration for the family that she had come from—that we want to help these people end up being the—good thing to think about.

PS: I read that in 1995 you received the Minneapolis Award. What was the award for?

JP: I think it was for working hard to keep—to get Pratt open again. I'm never really sure, but you know how the—you said you can't—I don't think they do it anymore. It would be maybe six or eight people—maybe ten or twelve—that were chosen around the neighborhood in Minneapolis. It was in Minneapolis And so it's because of Bruce Graff as I understand it and the other person who helped hand-in-hand with Ann Munt is Jane Seeley. She's a neighborhood person who joined the board of Eastside Neighborhood Services. And, when those two women were working together, then we really had an avenue to Eastside that we never had before. And they decided that—we were so happy. We were so happy to have—we're going to have a kindergarten school again—just incredible. So they got together and you have to make a little story about the person and then it went to some group who decided—. And they were the ones I think who did the writing for that. And it was almost really embarrassing because it depended on so many things. Pratt depended on so many things.

And I was for a long-time chairperson because I don't think anybody else wanted to be a chairperson (laughter). Oh, it seemed like at times there was always something big on the horizon. It was the ice cream social—you've got to find someone who will do that. And we have gotten, in recent years, two neighborhood men, two Gregs, who for many years have said, we're going to do the—we'll chair. You get the group together. They have a list of who you need. And everything kind of written out—still a lot of work—all those volunteers. Just the fact that there are people willing, like two Gregs, to say we're doing the ice cream social and keep doing it, it's—without it, I don't think we could have managed. Then there's be the fund letter. There was always something that had to get moving, and you really have to depend on all these other people.

And who's here? Bruce is incredible. Next Wednesday I think—no, after Thanksgiving—the Wednesday after Thanksgiving is a JOY group meeting and Bruce Graff is going to be talking about how—what was going on at Pratt and how it was like this Boston lamplight. They were having things all over the country where school buildings were coming if you needed injections and—I mean, shots or medical help—open all the time—help the—not just school, but bring everybody and help. That has a name and I can't remember it right now. But he's going to be talking. And the fact that we had Bruce and Paul Boranian for those years and money somehow to keep Pratt open without having a school is remarkable. I don't think it can happen anymore—or maybe not.

But that was a fun evening. The JOY group came. They had probably some kind of snack hor d'oeuvres. I don't think it was a whole dinner thing. Put tables around and people from all the

different programs came and all I could think of was if it was just the lucky one who happened to be the chair person at that time and that was it.

PS: How did you feel about winning the award?

JP: It was kind of embarrassing because, you know, it wasn't—I wouldn't—I remember one time, we say at an ice cream social. We had to raise money. Yes, because we were going to start work on this arbor. That meant tearing up all the black top. And so it was determined that we were going to sell chunks of the black top and bricks or something like that. And someone was going to have a moment where they would hack out—well, we had pickaxes or something (laughter). It's not my best moment, but getting people excited about that—I don't think anybody wanted to buy bricks or hunks of blacktop, but you know, that's the kind of thing that some people can handle very well, and I thought, not my forte (laughter).

PS: Would you have wanted to live in any other neighborhood?

JP: No. I was so grateful when the end of the day came and Rick was going to be home in 15 minutes. [Interruption]

PS: So, sorry, I will go back and ask you that question again. Would you have wanted to live anywhere else?

JP: No. As I said, how every night I would—sometimes we would—my gosh—pack all the kids in the car. We didn't even have seat belts when I first—when the kids were little. Get them in their snowsuits, pack them in the car, go down and pick Rick up because it's rainy or cold—snowing, but I would be so glad when he would come home and do something with the kids after—I could do super and it was like a break. That he was close to where he worked was just wonderful. Yes—if the Green Line means more people can—. I have a kid now who has to—who is commuting to Chanhassen, and the Minneapolis roadways have been terrible through the Cities. Oh, that the summer has been no break. And now the construction doesn't stop for the winter time. And you know, an hour coming and going. And sometimes something happens and it's longer than that. It is such a thing for people to not have to have that long commute. He's not a linguistic type person, but he's been trying to listen to French (laughter) to try to make the—oh, dear—to think that you're not wasting time, but transportation is the big issue.

PS: Is there anything else that you want to tell us?

JP: That's the whole thing—when you talk about that Minneapolis thing, I think about all the different parts that come together. I don't mean not to mention the Catholic Church, [St. Francis] Cabrini, because they had for a while places where people could sleep at night. The people—when you live in the right—when you have the right balance and you're trying to do good things, everybody doesn't always agree, but there's enough that can come together that you can feel like you're doing something and you've got a completeness to your world.

[End of Interview]

Total Interview Time: 58:59