

Katie Fournier Oral History Interview
Southeast Seniors Neighborhood Stories & Memories Oral History Project
November 2, 2018



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Abstract

Katie grew up in Roseville, Minnesota. She attended the University of Minnesota where she studied German language and literature. She and her husband purchased a home in Southeast Minneapolis from her aunt that had been first owned by her grandmother. Early in her career, she was a teacher in North Saint Paul. Later, as a reporter and board member for a neighborhood paper originally named *Southeast*, she witnessed the many changes to the neighborhood that occurred during the 1980's-early 2000's. She also worked as the International Coordinator for both Mayor Fraser and Mayor Sayles-Belton's administrations. After her retirement in 2002, she returned to volunteering for neighborhood organizations, including the University District Alliance, and is focusing on housing and livability issues facing the neighborhood. Main topics covered in the Katie Fournier Oral History Project—history of her family home in Southeast Minneapolis; Katie's career in education, local newspaper and for the Minneapolis Mayor's office; the neighborhood's relationship to the University of Minnesota.

Southeast Seniors Neighborhood Stories Oral History Project

Interview with Katie Fournier

November 2, 2018

Jennifer Grilliot, Interviewer

Jennifer Grilliot: **JG**

Katie Fournier: **KF**

Track 1

00:00

JG: I'm Jennifer Grilliot and this is my interview with Katie Fournier on November 2, 2018 for the Neighborhood Stories & Memories Project for Southeast Seniors. So Katie, how did you come to live in Southeast Minneapolis?

KF: I live here because I live in a house that belonged to my aunt and uncle and, at some point, when I was in graduate school, I started renting it from them. My own home is only about ten minutes away in Roseville—my family home. And rented it then from 1969 until 1972 when I married and we wrote to my aunt and uncle who were living in Wisconsin asking if we did some maintenance on the house, painting it, particularly, if they would give us a reduction in the rent. And my aunt wrote back and said, "Well, if you want to do maintenance work on the house—if you want to paint the house—why don't you buy the house?" So we did, and we've been here ever since. So I've lived here since 1969, and with my husband since 1972. We're now the longest residents in this house which was built in 1921.

JG: And who owned—well, what was your aunt's name?

KF: My aunt and uncle were Dorothy and Fred Ackerson.

JG: Okay. And they bought the house from your—

KF: They bought the house from my grandmother who owned it I think from about 1927 to 1937.

JG: And what was your grandmother's name?

KF: My grandmother's name—I should have said actually my grandparents—I think of it as my grandmother because she actually lived here and my grandfather, except on weekends, stayed at their home in Black River Falls, Wisconsin. My grandmother's name was Esther Lund.

JG: And what drew her to moving to Southeast Minneapolis?

KF: When my mother's oldest brother graduated from high school, she brought the family up to—they rented first a home at 1000 University and said that she wanted to have her children live close enough to their college education that they could walk to it. And, of course, 1000 University is a very close walk to anywhere on campus. So they lived there from 1923 until 1927, and she bought this house on 18th Avenue Southeast, and they continued this pattern of she living here in the winter and travelling, and then moving back to Black River [Falls] in the summer time. And there was a lot of traffic by the whole family back and forth between Black River and Minneapolis. My mother had a scrapbook in which there were a lot of pages that were labeled, "My trip." About every ten pages, there would be a "My trip." And the trips were all accounts of driving from Black River—usually—from Black River to Minneapolis and the large—the number of flat tires that they would have to stop and fix along the way (laughter).

JG: Do you still have that scrapbook?

KF: No, my mother threw it away. She thought my sister and I were laughing at it and we weren't. We enjoyed it so much—it was one of the real tragedies.

JG: If I remember right from when we've talked before, they had a connection to the First Covenant Swedish Church as well.

KF: Well, my mother said just once, after we'd stopped at the rest home at Black River to visit my aunt and talked with a much older resident who had been a friend of my grandmothers—my mother volunteered after that that she thought the real reason that her mother wanted to move the family to Minneapolis was so that she could be close to and easily attend First Covenant Church in Downtown Minneapolis. Her father had been a preacher in this Swedish—the parent church I suppose we could call it called [unintelligible]. And actually made a couple preaching trips through the US in the 1890s. So it was important, I think, to my grandmother. I think my mother was probably right, even though she only mentioned it that once, that it had a lot to do with choosing Minneapolis as a place for her children to go to the University rather than Madison which was closer.

JG: Well, I think that church was one of the biggest churches in the turn of the century, actually, in Minneapolis.

KF: It's a very large building.

JG: It is.

KF: I don't know what the size of their congregation is today. The only time I ever went to a service there was—oh, no, I didn't even go—I just heard about it from my mother—my uncle's funeral. One of the five siblings stayed involved with the church, my mother's oldest brother.

JG: So you grew up in Roseville, and then you attended the University [of Minnesota]. And what did you study at the U?

KF: I studied German language and literature, and then added—then I went off to the University of Wisconsin for graduate school and got a master's degree there in German and added enough education credit to get a teaching certificate, and came back to Minnesota and got

a job teaching German in the North St. Paul schools. Actually, there was one year of graduate school here in Minnesota before I took that job in North St. Paul in education.

JG: After teaching, did you have a career change or what—did you have other interests?

KF: Well, it became obvious after 13 years of teaching high school that I wasn't very happy with it, and so I let it go in 1980 and did a lot of kind of small pick-up jobs of one sort or another for several years. And then I took a part-time job as the staff person to the board of directors and membership director for the West Bank Co-op over on Cedar Avenue. It no longer exists, but—. And it was a co-op that kind of puzzled people because its main purpose was to be a grocery store for a community that did not have a real grocery store. And there were a lot of people living in the high rises right across the street in the McKnight development. So, although we carried a lot of what you'd expect to find in a co-op grocery store, we also had egg racks of pop and—ordinary pop, not organic pop (laughter)—Coca-Cola. And we had a meat market and a lot of packaged goods, the kind that you'd expect in any grocery store.

JG: And when was that?

KF: Let's see—1984 to 1989 I worked for the Co-op.

JG: Going back just a little bit, since your family has been here for so long, are there any stories or experiences that you can think of that your aunt might have shared about the neighborhood, and when they first came, and maybe how it changed over the years?

KF: I think they were perhaps more tied into family than into neighborhood. She knew the neighbors up and down the street here, but probably not much further out than that. There were a couple of elderly—well, to me, they seemed elderly—I don't think they were, really—sister's-in-law who lived two doors over. And right next door here was a couple named Mr. and Mrs. Honeywell who had been there a long time. I don't know whether they had children. I remember them only—they were elderly. I remember them only as fairly elderly people.

JG: 'Cause she probably saw a lot of the business here on Como [Avenue]. I mean, Como probably changed a lot.

KF: There was more variety of small businesses at the corner of Como and 15th—there was a dime store, the name of which escapes me right at the moment, and a drug store—Customen's Drug Store—and a meat market, I think. Boy, that's a distant memory. And a small grocery store in the same place where it is today. It's gone through a lot of changes. And the barbershop. There were no restaurants over there at the corner as there are today. The drug store location is where the football pizza store is today.

JG: So that has been a commercial district for quite a while.

KF: It has. There's one building that's newer—it must have been built in the 50s—but most of them appear to me to have been built in the 1920s or even a little earlier. It's on a streetcar—what was a streetcar route—and that was probably a place where a lot of people got on and off the streetcar because it's in a big intersection.

JG: Did you ever visit when the streetcar was still—no you wouldn't have—

KF: Oh, sure. No—the streetcar—I used the streetcars as a child. It was the Como-Harriet Line that came along here—don't remember its number. We didn't call them by numbers—we called them by the name of the route. Como-Harriet started over at Eustis and Como and went all the way out to Lake Harriet through downtown. And we took it as teenagers. My sister and I—we would catch it down at Eustis and take it downtown to go shopping.

JG: Did it run year-round?

KF: Oh, yeah.

JG: Yeah, it did—okay (laughter).

KF: It was a streetcar. It was the transportation system for the city, and there was a change-over to buses that took quite a while in the 1950s.

JG: Since you've lived here in the late 60s—have you seen some big changes, or have they been just smaller changes in the neighborhood?

KF: Well, I suppose the most obvious change is the slow erosion of homeownership—owner-occupancy. As people have gotten older and pass away, often their heirs kind of don't have the same kind of investment in the neighborhood that the homeowner did, and sell to the first buyer who pays the best price. And that's too often a landlord. And, in recent years—not so recent—the last 20-plus years, there's a kind of consortium of six, seven, eight landlords who all work together—sell properties back and forth to each other—and keep an eye out for properties, so that has kind of accelerated what's happened.

JG: So it doesn't seem like there are those new families with younger kids moving in—a few—

KF: Well there are. Right next door to us is a family who purchased the home from the previous homeowner, and they've got three children. So there are families moving in, but they say home prices are driven up by landlords and it becomes too expensive for say people working in support staff positions at the University who might be likely buyers for homes around here to buy them. I don't know if that's true. We're probably above the median home price for the Twin Cities, or for Minneapolis, but I don't know that they're that expensive. I don't know what the truth of that is.

JG: Before we move on and kind of follow your career and all the work you've done in the neighborhood, is there anything else you want to mention about the house or your family's history here or any changes?

KF: Well, the house is—the house that you see on a lot of blocks in Minneapolis—it's square with a hip roof and, in fact, on this block alone there are three more houses that have the approximate footprint that this house has. But there's a lot of variety in how they were finished. So the front porches look different. In the case of this house, my grandmother added this two-story addition on the back of the house in 1930—maybe 1930, 1931—because apparently she

said a house needs a sleeping porch in the summer (laughter) when it's hot. And in Black River they had a sleeping porch. It was actually a screen porch. This one has windows or glass. So we have this very nice sunroom at the back of the house that faces east. My aunt made another kind of major change in the house. It had a very standard built-in buffet in the dining room with a smallish east window built in above the buffet. And my aunt pulled that all apart—pulled the chest that's always the middle of those dining room buffets—pulled that out and made it into a separate piece of furniture that stood in a different place (laughter)—I mean it was still a chest that stored table linens and things like that—and put in quite a large window that looks out to the back yard. And it really made a huge difference in the way the house looked. Then, also, she painted the very dark oak woodwork white. And I know people consider it a crime to paint over woodwork but, in this case, I understand why she did it. The finish—you can see it still in the living room—was so dark, it must have made the room really, really dark. And she did that in about 1949-1950. So people walk in and they say, oh, look at that window.

JG: That's nice with the morning light. It's really nice.

KF: Yeah, it's very nice, and it got actually more light before we added this screen porch that cuts the light somewhat. I was a little worried that we wouldn't be able to grow plants very well in the planter there, but it turned out to be okay.

JG: And the siding—is the shake siding—is that original?

KF: That was not original. You can see the original on the front porch in the interior of the front porch. It was lap siding painted gray and, so far as I know, it was always painted gray with white trim. And, when we needed painting, as you remember, we offered to paint it. It needed painting when we moved in—or when my husband moved in. But, once we owned it, we decided not to paint it. We decided to cover it with cedar shingles. And we did—the first time, we did it ourselves pretty much and with the help of a carpenter nephew of Rick's. And we used a combination of number two and number three shingles which made kind of an interesting pattern, but perhaps weren't the best for weathering sun. So in about—ten years ago, we had it re-shingled and the first job, the shingles had just been put over the lap siding. [Phone interruption]

End of Track 1

20:14

Track 2

00:00

JG: We took a short break there. We were just talking about the house.

KF: Oh, yes, the re-shingling. We really went all-out and we had that lap siding that had been left underneath the original shingling job or the first shingling job—had all of that torn off, better insulation applied to the exterior of the house and then a really professional shingling job that looks so much better than that job we did ourselves.

JG: Stand the test of time.

KF: Yes, that too, and it's got nice, decorative details that we had no idea how to do.

JG: So following along, after you left teaching and you did some work at the West Bank Co-op, then did that lead to any other work in the neighborhood?

KF: Well, not so much the Co-op. After I quit teaching, I joined the League of Women Voters local unit here, and somehow that put me in touch with the neighborhood newspaper called Southeast. And I guess I was asked to get the notices of the meetings into the paper and that led to conversation with the editor. [Phone interruption].

End of Track 2

01:39

Track 3

00:00

JG: Okay, after a little phone call break. So you were asked to write up minutes for the meetings for the—

KF: Well, get the notices that the meetings were going to happen into the newspaper so people would know. But that led to conversation with the editor, Ted Tucker. And I ended up writing a story—an interview with Judy Farmer, I think, was the first story I wrote who she was running for school board maybe for her second term and I interviewed her and wrote up this rather long story, but Ted published it. And that led to sort of ongoing assignments almost. It was a monthly paper and I wrote something almost every month for a long, long time, and eventually tried writing sort of a column that we called “Between the River and the Rails,” referring to the idea that Southeast Minneapolis is sort of enclosed by railroads on the north and the river on the west and south.

JG: And now this was a volunteer position or did you get paid?

KF: No, it was a volunteer activity.

JG: And what years were you at the newspaper?

KF: I became a board member shortly after I started writing for the paper. So I suppose I wrote for the paper from about 1982 almost until it ended. It went through a couple more changes of name and change of editor and publisher. I quit writing regularly after I went to work for the city—so sometime in the early 90s I quit writing regularly—but I was on the board and, off and on, I was president of the board. And by the end in, what, 2009, I was the longest-serving board member.

JG: How did the paper change over those years?

KF: I suppose the biggest change was when the board handed over the publishing of the paper from sort of managing it ourselves to triangle creative publishing run by Dan Nordley who also edited and published the newspaper for [the] Seward neighborhood. And his office was over on Franklin Avenue in [the] Seward neighborhood. And so Dan ran things in a little more professional way, and he did pay the people who wrote for the paper. When did that happen? About 1994, I think—about 1994. And I can't remember exactly, but a couple of years later he asked us to change the name of the paper. And our neighbor across the alley suggested the new name—Lloyd Whittstock—What was it? It had two name changes—maybe even three. Lloyd came up with a really good name, but not occurring to me right this minute.

JG: Were there issues that the neighborhood newspaper really covered well that the really big dailies weren't covering or is there anything that stands out about—

KF: Oh, they really focused on neighborhood news, what the parks might be proposing for Southeast Minneapolis: so what the neighborhood associations were doing, what Southeast people were doing, elections. Ted always published the election results precinct by precinct so you could see exactly what the voting patterns were in your precinct. He loved doing that. But it was very much focused on things that were happening and people who were doing things in Southeast Minneapolis.

JG: During that time frame, who were some of the notable people and events of things that were happening? Who stands out? Just local politicians and—

KF: Well, yeah, we interviewed—there were actually a lot of city-wide politicians who lived in Southeast Minneapolis; the mayor, Don Fraser lived in Southeast Minneapolis on 7th Street Southeast; Judy Farmer, longtime school board member; another school board member Jane Star—she only served one term. Did we have a councilmember who lived [in] Southeast? No, the councilmembers generally lived in other parts of their wards, not in Southeast. Kathy O'Brien had lived in Southeast Minneapolis but, by the time she was elected to the council, she did not. But we followed all that kind of stuff. Oh, if there were an interesting historic or—we had one writer, Penny Petersen, who about every third issue of the paper would write a historic article pursuing some either historic house or how were the street names chosen, and what had been the changes in street names for Southeast Minneapolis? Originally, in the what they now often call Old St. Anthony, the streets were named after trees, not numbered. I think the only street that's left of those is Oak Street over by the stadium. So historic stuff, you know, the kind of stuff that made people feel like they lived in a real community that had a history and had some continuity and—

JG: Do you think that has been lost since the newspaper—

KF: It's been very hard without a newspaper, now since 2009. Dan Nordley tried to keep the newspaper going as an electronic document, but he wasn't able to find advertising that supported it. Maybe today it would be different but, at that time, it didn't work.

JG: How would you describe—

KF: I was going to just say, so organizations in Southeast Minneapolis just had no good way—no unified way of reaching the whole Southeast Minneapolis community anymore. It's just really difficult.

JG: Do you think that new residents kind of know what they're missing or do they seek out things like with your new neighbors next-door. How do you think they learn about what's happening?

KF: I'm guessing that they're perhaps not very connected—their children do not go to the public schools. They don't appear to participate much at the activities over at the park.

JG: Which park is that?

KF: Van Cleve Park.

JG: Oh, Van Cleve Park.

KF: I think they go over there and use the play facilities, the pool in the summer and the—. But I don't think—for instance, there was always a Halloween Party over there. I don't think they participated in that, for instance. I should ask, but it didn't look like they did.

JG: Do you think you would describe the neighborhood differently now as opposed to when you first moved in, or how would you have described it back when you first moved in and how would you describe the neighborhood now?

KF: Well, of course, I was a single person when I first lived here, and actually I lived in other parts of Southeast Minneapolis too for a couple of years as a graduate student. It wasn't really until I got married that I started reaching out more to neighbors and getting to know them. My life was kind of focused in other directions. And I was teaching in the High School out at North St. Paul which took me away every day. But, once we were married and living here, then I really began to get to know the neighbors. I knew the neighbors on the north side pretty well by the time we were married, and most of the neighbors—the neighbors that we got to know well had children who were all about the same age. At that time they were fairly small children and they all grew up together—quite a large group of neighborhood children.

JG: But was there a flavor to the neighborhood or was there—

KF: Well, you know, it's people who like living close to the University [of Minnesota]. Some of them had had jobs at the University. They didn't always stay at the University. They moved on to other things. We had four anthropologists living within a block and a half for a while. Now

we're down to just two—oh, wait a minute—three—so maybe we had five anthropologists at one time. Two of them who are still here are married to each other.

JG: So the University is a strong pull.

KF: Yeah, the University certainly draws people.

JG: Well, that's what drew your family here was the University.

KF: Yeah, you don't necessarily work at the University, but it's a draw and I think another thing that attracts people is the central location of this part of the city. You can be anywhere in just a matter of minutes. It's like twelve minutes to Downtown St. Paul and ten minutes to Downtown Minneapolis by car and it's—using the bus—not much more—less than twenty minutes to Downtown Minneapolis by bus.

JG: When you were working at the newspaper, did that lead to you working in the mayor's office?

KF: Yeah, so let's say when I was volunteering for the newspaper, the newspaper didn't have an office. It was out of somebody's home and you just went there at first to type your story. They had this one small computer that actually belonged to the editor, not to the board. I think eventually we did buy a computer that was better and bigger and could do more for the editor, but I'm not sure about that. At some point, a fellow who lived up in Prospect Park, Rip Rapson, was appointed to be Deputy Mayor by Mayor [Donald] Fraser and the editor said—I had just written a story about Rip as a library board member—so the editor said, “Well, go interview Rip again and talk to him about being appointed Deputy Mayor.” It's not an elected position. So I did that. I interviewed him in his office, actually, at City Hall. He had just started and he said, “Would you like to work in the mayor's office? The mayor gave me a few hours to hire some assistance, and you could write things.” So I said, “Well, sure.” I could see my job at West Bank Co-op was petering out. They had some financial problems that made it unlikely that I was going to be able to stay. And I think they were relieved when I just left.

So I took the—it was a quarter-time to begin with—I took this quarter-time job in the mayor's office. And eventually it became a three-quarter-time job. And then, in the last year of Mayor Fraser's—I was only working there in his very last term—in the last year of Mayor Fraser's term as mayor, I also picked up the city's international connections which had been done by a separate person, and she moved on to a better job and somebody needed to do it and I'd been sort of her liaison person in the office, so I just did what—as much as possible of what she'd been doing. And then, after Mayor Fraser retired and Mayor [Sharon] Sayles-Belton was elected to office, this job of international coordinator was posted, and I applied for it, and got hired to do that—actually, it was a contractor position to start with—

JG: And what did you have to do for that job?

KF: Had a lot of variety of not super important things to do. The city got all kinds of international requests, usually of a sort of sidelight nature, I would say. A lot of it had to do with sister cities, of which we had six, I think, to start with—I can't remember exactly. Mayor Fraser

had been a congressman before he was mayor and he served on the Foreign Relations Committee in [United States] Congress, so he had a lot of foreign requests of one sort or another from people who had known him or known of his service in Congress. As long as he was in office, I handled those.

JG: Were there any notable events or people that stand out?

KF: I remember particularly that there was—I was in Mayor Sayles Belton’s office, one morning talking with one of her aides and noticed an envelope lying on his desk, or a letter lying on his desk, that said Cirque du Soleil on it. I said, “Cique du Soleil is corresponding with Minneapolis? What do they want?” Oh, he wasn’t too sure what they wanted since they were writing from Canada. He handed the letter over to me and it turned out they were contacting the city about bringing Cirque du Soleil to Minneapolis and would we help them find a place where they could perform? This was a—maybe we’d seen a TV show on Cirque du Soleil? It wasn’t well known then. This would have been about 1996 maybe. It wasn’t particularly well-known then. And I said, we don’t want to miss this. This is fantastic. Cirque du Soleil wants to come to Minneapolis? And so eventually I made the connection with somebody in the city’s economic development establishment and handed the finding of a place over to them—but they did come to Minneapolis.

JG: That’s great.

KF: So I felt like I had a little—by recognizing that it was something important—. Oh, and then there was the Stone Arch Bridge. This was when I was working in the Mayor’s office, not the international stuff. The county—one commissioner in particular owned the Stone Arch Bridge which had been shut off. It had fences at either end since the end of rail traffic in, what, 1978—something like that—‘82—long time it had been closed. And the commissioner really wanted to put a light rail line over the Stone Arch Bridge.

JG: Which commissioner?

KF: Commissioner John Derus. He represented the northwest corner of the county—North Minneapolis and further out. So the county was not doing much about this, but eventually they came up with a sort of a plan of how you could preserve the historic qualities of the bridge and run light rail across it, and it had to do with kind of a cantilevered track supported—I can’t remember whether the pedestrian way was supposed to be the cantilevered track or the rail line. Anyway, once this had been made known, it really stirred up a lot of historic preservation activity, saying you can’t do this to this historic bridge. But how to get the bridge out of the counties’ hands and somehow under city control—that was the real problem.

Well, one of my assignments was to look after things that had to do with the river. And I represented the mayor on meetings of the St. Anthony Falls Heritage Board or Historic—I can’t—it has a somewhat different name today than it did then. So lots of conversation about how to save the bridge, about how to get it—but not many good—the county was just impossible to deal with. And, at some point, I was talking to—maybe I even called him—to ask him if he had any ideas—the aide to one of the Northeast Minneapolis representatives in the State House.

The aide was Joe Biernat, and I said, “What can we do about this? How can we—well, I’ll talk to Jon about it—the legislator from [unintelligible], and now the legislator’s last name began with an “S” is escaping me—Sarneki. Well, the legislator introduced an act that took the bridge away from the county and put it in state hands and then I can’t remember exactly. Was it—is it still a state property or—there was a very small sum of money that exchanged hands between the state and the county, if I remember right—that handed over the bridge. So the bridge is now, if I remember right—I hope this is still the situation—governed by a joint powers act by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, City of Minneapolis, and probably the State Historical Society—State of Minnesota is also represented. And, after that, they were able to move ahead with renovating the bridge and opening it up for pedestrian use.

JG: It is a treasure.

KF: Yeah, it really is—there’s no question about it. And Fraser was very invested in getting that bridge away from the county and preserving it. He was also very invested in preserving the historic district along East Hennepin Avenue and did—really—it took a lot of—because the councilmembers didn’t want to preserve it for that area—Jackie Cherryhomes. But he prevailed and it was—it did—

JG: Are there any things about Mayor Fraser that you would want people to know about him?

KF: Well, he’s my hero. He was a very nice person to work for. He didn’t criticize much. You’d write a memo and hand it in, and get it back the next morning with maybe a note on it about something that you maybe should change or think about, but in general he just—and he’s not a talkative person, so he doesn’t have much in the way of small talk. And I never was very good at getting to real conversation with him. But one interesting—I was the keeper of his biography for the office, which was—. And one of the first things I did for the office was to write an article—and I didn’t write a lot of it—I just pieced it together, really—In Fraser’s voice about his childhood in Southeast Minneapolis for the Hennepin County History magazine. So Arvonne [Fraser, Don’s wife] wrote parts of it. Fraser said, “I tell Arvonne things, and she remembers them.” And Fraser—and I tried to interview him. That just didn’t work at all. He couldn’t remember. He finally said, “Why don’t you write out some questions and I’ll write out answers.” So we did that and [unintelligible] old text from what he had written, and sort of pieced it all together.

JG: And then you worked in Mayor Sayles Belton’s administration a little bit?

KF: Yeah, I was employed by the city all through her—as the international relations coordinator for the city all through her tenure—two terms.

JG: Is there anything you’d like to note about that administration?

KF: Well, she was a great—what’s the word I want—she could pick up information. A lot of what I did was some international dignitary, sometimes an ambassador, mostly counselor, officials or somebody—a mayor from a sister city or something like that. And you’d try to write a memo sort of introducing what the person wanted to talk about or see her about or ask her about, and it would become obvious—you’d go up to her office maybe 15 minutes before it

would happen—it would become obvious that she hadn't had time to read your memo. So, as you walked from her office into the meeting room, you'd be filling her in. She was perfect. She could pick up information [snaps finger] like that, and talk with the person about what they'd come to talk for and sound like she was fully versed on the topic. She was really—what is the expression for that—a quick—it's not coming to me.

JG: We have a few minutes left here to chat. Do you want to talk about your current work in the neighborhood with the Livability Committee and maybe say a little bit what it is and why it's important.

KF: Well, it's not just that. I also represent the neighborhood on the board of the University District Alliance. Each neighborhood has two representatives. Other members of the Alliance are the University itself and the City of Minneapolis, and then business associations and Augsburg College also has one representative—they call themselves Augsburg University now.

After I retired in 2002 I sort of turned more to neighborhood activities, including being on the board of the newspaper which by that time was called "The Bridge," and was also the newspaper for the Seward Neighborhood. And the idea was that the two neighborhoods were connected by the Franklin Avenue Bridge. And I joined this housing and livability committee and it was chaired by someone else, but she was doing a lot of other things—or he—maybe it was a fellow. At any rate, I picked it up, and turned it's focus more towards trying to solve livability problems, the kind of things that drive people crazy when their neighbors do them or drivers who don't stop for stop signs. I mean, we didn't actually ever do anything about that, but that sort of problem.

JG: So what are some of the most pressing problems for livability? What are the top couple—

KF: Well, trash.

JG: Trash?

KF: Yes.

JG: Either pick-up or litter or what part of trash?

KF: Trying to work with the University to alleviate some of the large trash that gets left on boulevards when students move at the end of the semester or beginning of the fall semester. I can't say that we've ever successfully solved that problem, but some aspects of it are better than they were.

JG: Like what parts?

KF: Well, the University has done a pretty good job of working with its own residence halls and large apartment buildings with corporate ownership around the University. But that has not really solved the problem that goes on in the neighborhoods and we're still meeting and talking and trying to figure out how—they've done a lot of things. They've organized the city's solid waste division to go through the neighborhood a day or two ahead of the garbage pick-up day looking for useable things that have been put out and bringing them back to the University's reuse center where they can be passed on to other students who are furnishing their—. But it still

doesn't really solve the problem, unfortunately. But the University's off-campus living office has really tried a lot of different things and we've tried to work with them and keep track of the problem, help them understand the volume of the problem.

JG: Is that the biggest issue with having this high concentration of University rental—

KF: Well, their behavior—

JG: And their behavior?

KF: —is another problem. The Alliance Livability Committee just heard a presentation by the University's Alcohol Policy and Prevention Group which is not just a University committee—they draw in participants from Minneapolis Police and I'm not sure who else—but trying to get a handle on ways of educating students about alcohol abuse and the problems—and other kinds of drug abuse. But actually, the biggest drug problem among students seems to be alcohol abuse and people don't understand how an arrest and conviction can dog you for a long, long time.

JG: Has the student behavior changed over the years, or do you think it's always been kind of the same.

KF: It hasn't really changed. This kind of behavior problem—particularly in the fall and sometimes in the spring when the weather's good and people celebrate outside or march through the neighborhood late at night carrying their drinks with them and shouting at each other—that part's gotten better, at least this fall. But the weather's been so bad this fall. When the weather's good, you get so you hope for rain on Homecoming weekend. When the weather is good, sometimes kind of noisy. There was a terrible problem of party houses that—between the Alliance, the University and the City of Minneapolis, especially the police department and regulatory services—the party house problem has almost disappeared, and that was a terrible problem. These known party houses where every weekend there would be terrible noise and trash and would go on late into the night, and not limited just to this neighborhood, but all over Southeast Minneapolis, perhaps a little less in Prospect Park, but over there too.

JG: Well, that's a good change to see.

KF: Yeah, that has been a really good evidence of how these three units—the University, the City and the neighborhoods can work together to improve things.

JG: Are there any other reflections or issues about the neighborhood and the city and the University you want to wrap up with? Anything that you hope for the future?

KF: I hope—the three neighborhoods, it seems to me, have gotten more separated from each other than they used to be without a school that—a public school that draws people together so that parents get to know other parents in other parts of the community.

JG: What was the previous school's that might have served that purpose?

KF: Well, the high school, of course, Marshall High School in Dinkytown at the corner of 5th and 14th was closed in 1982 and that, of course, drew everybody together from all of Southeast

Minneapolis. A few young people went to University High School, but it was combined with Marshall sometime in the early '70s.

JG: But having those common intersections of life [unintelligible].

KF: Yeah, really. And there were three elementary schools: Pratt and Prospect Park, Tuttle in this neighborhood, and Marcy [Open] School which became—yeah, Marcy School in the Marcy-Holmes neighborhood. There had been a Holmes School too, but separate where the current Marcy School is located. And I think the parents—we don't have any children—Rick has children who grew up in White Bear Lake. But I could see that, among those three schools, there was—people knew each other. There was, I think, more attendance of local churches than there is today, and I haven't ever done that either. And then the newspaper that gave the community an identity that it could understand and feel a part of. So those things have been lost, and about the only Southeast-wide institution—well, there are two of them left—Southeast Seniors and maybe the library, Southeast Library, which has been on life support for a lot of years, but I guess will finally get rebuilt next year.

JG: Well, thank you for sharing your stories and your reflections with me this morning. I will conclude our interview and thanks again.

KF: Thanks for your interest.

[End of Interview]

Total Interview Time: 1:01:42