

Mollie Davis

Q: One of one.

(break in audio)

Q: This is an interview with Mrs. Mollie Davis at 1319 Pitner Avenue, Evanston, Illinois, Apartment A. The date is July 23, 1997.

(break in audio)

Q: OK. Would you start by saying your full name?

MOLLIE DAVIS: Mollie Davis.

Q: And when did you come to Evanston?

MD: I came to Evanston in 1927.

Q: And how old were you when you came?

MD: I was nine years old.

Q: What -- where did you originally come from?

MD: South Carolina. Piedmont, South Carolina.

Q: OK. And why did your parents come north to Evanston?

MD: They -- well, we all came about -- just about the same time.

Q: But why did your parents come up?

MD: We had relatives here, and they just thought it was a good time to move away from South Carolina to come here. They were looking for better jobs, and -- that payed more money, and things like that, and education for the kids, and -- that was a big thing. We mainly came here, as I understand it, to be with the other relatives. There were more here than there were there.

Q: And what were your parents' names?

MD: My father's name was Graten. G-R-A-T-E-N. Graten Little. And my mother was Grace Austin. A-U-S-T-I-N. T-O-N.

Q: And your parents were born in South Carolina?

MD: So far as we know. We're working on a family history now.

Q: OK. Well as you were growing up in Evanston, did you go to Foster School?

MD: Yes, for a while, but I went to Central School. That's in South Evanston, Main and Elmwood. That was the first school I went to, and I went there until about the fifth, sixth grade, and then I went to Foster School. And then from there to Evanston Township. That was as far -- I didn't have any farther education. (inaudible) high school.

Q: When you went to Central School -- that's what you said, Central School, right?

MD: Uh-huh.

Q: Did you -- what area of Evanston did you live in?

MD: At --

Q: Or do you remember where you lived?

MD: Yeah, I lived at 1914 Jackson. That was out of the district. But we just -- when I came here, that's where my cousins went, and so we just went along with them.

Q: OK. And how was your experience at Central?

MD: Well, I had a lovely teacher. Her name was [Barker?]. Mary T. Barker. She was just a lovely human. And that was, I'd say, about the third grade, so I don't remember too, too much about it, but she was just an excellent teacher and all the kids loved her.

Q: What other things did -- what kind of things did you do, like, after school, or with your friends?

MD: After school we just came home. We were not allowed to run in the street, and there were lots of places we could not even go: sections of the city you just did not go into. You'd come home and do your homework. And there was always something in the house that we needed to do, and we would do that. Then it was -- would be time for bed, and we'd get up and repeat the process the next day.

Q: When you transferred over to Foster School, how was that experience?

MD: It was -- because I was so young, I guess it really -- it was just that there were different kids. Naturally they were -- there were more Afro-Americans in Foster than there was in Central. But I think, just when you're young, you're just happy with another kid. You have to be taught all this other difference, and of course I was just tickled to death to be with the kids that -- and they lived in the -- in my neighborhood. And it was just a nice adjustment. I didn't miss anything, or wonder what happened to this. And I had a friend who -- the Whites, they were politicians. The Sam White -- I don't know if you've heard of him -- they both died out since that time. [00:05:00] But Edna Summers, is -- who was the Township supervisor, that was one of the daughters. So that we were just great friends all through the years. Her oldest sister, who was Miriam, we were friends for 65 years. And then she passed away.

Q: What churches did you go to, or what church do you go to now?

MD: I belong to Ebenezer AME Church --

Q: Have you always belonged to --

MD: -- and I've always belonged there, since I was 13, I joined. I've been there ever since.

Q: How is that? How do you like -- how is that experience?

MD: Oh, that was a -- it was a great thing. I grew up in, sang in the gospel choir for a long, long time. And we had different ministers (inaudible) of course. My most favorite was Reverend Carlyle Stuart. He was there. And of course they had a lot of nice ministers. I'm not too familiar with the one that's there now, because I don't get around as much because of my seeing.

Q: What other activities did you do in church? Were you involved in any social groups, or...?

MD: No. I was -- I was a strange character. I never liked clubs. Not as such -- even when I sang in the choir, I always came after they read the minutes of the last meeting, because I didn't want to know what happened to the 25 cent that didn't balance with the treasury. All that was very boring to me, so I never joined any other clubs, as such. I just like people, and I don't like a certain little cli-- when I was younger, there were a lot of -- we called them cliques. But you know, this group were the South Evanston kids (inaudible). They didn't come to West Evanston, that was -- I guess that probably -- West Evanston -- I suppose started at Green Bay Road. I'm not really sure, but... And then there was the East Side group that lived on Garnett, and the -- that was another little clique, but... Over this way, that -- there were more of

them. And I just -- I don't know, we all just seemed to get along. I think there were a lot of them. They would do a lot of fighting and things like that. I never did find out what they were fighting about. But -- and also, I guess it's a thing that -- the thing that goes with schools. I worked at Sullivan High School as a teacher aide from 1968 to 1977. And they were mostly Jewish. In fact, I remember the first black boy that came there. But they were fighting too, every day. I don't know what the -- you see them all running out -- never found out what they were fighting about, but... I thought, "Well maybe it's something that just goes along with schools, kids getting together and fighting." Of course, I never was engaged in the fighting, because we were taught from the get-go: you, when school was out, that home is where you go. And that was what happened. We'd come home every single day. And we didn't leave home too early in the morning: just early enough to get to school on time, but not early enough to get into an argument on the corner, or anything like that. It was strictly business with us.

Q: Did you have -- do you have any other brothers and sisters? Did you have a -- when you came to Evanston, did you have other brothers and sisters?

MD: Yes, there were nine of us.

Q: Nine.

MD: Nine of us. And my father died when I was five, so my mother brought us all up, and the older ones looked after the young ones, and we turned out pretty good. Nobody was put in jail for anything, or caught stealing anything or doing anything, breaking windows, and things that kids usually do. We there was -- there was just certain places we could go, and that was the only place we went.

Q: Did you -- (inaudible) in the summertime, did you used to go out on, like, family outings, or bicycle riding, or did you go to the beach at all, or...?

MD: Oh yeah. We would go to the beach, and we would go, one -- I have one sister who lives in Chicago, in the su-- now when I was young, we didn't -- there was just the El. That was the transportation and we -- you just didn't know too much about going shopping along the something -- you were always with somebody, but... [00:10:00] After I grew up and I had my children -- I have a sister who lives in Chicago, Mrs. Ford, who was married to Bishop Ford -- and she would take the kids every summer and then we'd go to Washington Park, and the one here, the Worlds Fair was here, and we would do things like that. But always we were with the children, and the children were always with us. And then we'd go there in the he-- when they would have

their Sunday School picnic -- they usually had it in Petrifying Springs in Wisconsin -- and that was quite a day. We loved that. So we would do things like that. But things were much more quiet then, and there wasn't all the activities that's going on now. We just didn't have all of that stuff then. I don't know if it was good or bad, but it seemed to work out OK.

Q: When you went to the beaches, did you guys have beaches here in Evanston, or in Chicago?

MD: Yeah. We would go in Evanston, to (inaudible).

Q: To any of the beaches? You could go to any of the beaches? Were you able to go to any of the beaches?

MD: Yeah. See, but the time I -- I think -- now, I wasn't old enough to vote yet. There was something, and I did hear some noise being made about certain beaches, that they were not -- that the colored people were not welcome at certain beaches, and in the theaters, and stuff like that. Only they could sit in the balcony. Well, I was too young to vote at that time, so, but I used to hear about all that. But we never had that kind of problem. We would just go right there at the Davis Street Beach. And we just had a good time. Sometimes we would take lunch and things like that, and we'd come home. That was a -- it was a long

walk, but we enjoyed it because we were walking with friends. And that was fun.

Q: I guess -- from the period when you were nine to, let's say, the beginning of high school, what was your impression of Evanston?

MD: I loved Evanston. I -- it was fun, and then from -- it's not like now. When you see the young people, they just go everywhere. But even to go to Davis Street to shop -- that's where all the shopping was -- you really -- that was an event. You got your clothes on, and you went there looking like people, and it was just fun. But the -- you know -- and they started to remember when -- not when Wieboldt's was built on Davis Street, but I remember the one at Oak and Church. And it was just -- it was a one -- I guess, maybe what you would call a one-stop shop. You could get everything at Wieboldt's, and we loved that. But we were taught -- we could not go with a group of children shopping. And I taught my children the same way. You can just get one friend or two, and you can shop, but not a group of you. Don't go anywhere in a group like that. So...

Q: Were you ever told why you couldn't do that?

MD: Well, my mother had explained to us a long, long time ago that if you're in a group, and somebody in that group does

something that they shouldn't do, they would blame the whole group for it. Whatever it is, you'll all be so-- that's why she said, "Don't get a group -- don't go anywhere in a group. Maybe a couple of you can shop together, and that's enough." So we never -- I was never mixed up with anybody that did anything in the store, but we just went in there, and you bought what you wanted, and there was no one hanging around, unlike the kids now. They hang out at the mall. I didn't even know what that meant until a couple of months ago. I said to my daughter, "What does it mean, 'hanging out at the mall'?" And she said -- I said, "The kids, they don't have jobs. Why are they going to the mall?" She said, "They just go there and hang out." So I just figured that just meant you go there and clutter up the place, and make a lot of noise, and other -- we were not allowed to do that. And now that so many businesses have gone from Evanston, I don't even -- I don't even shop anymore, not really. Very, very seldom.

Q: When you started at Evanston Township, did some of your impressions about Evanston or about the way society worked as a whole change?

MD: Yes. It was -- it was different there. They -- some of the -- there again, some of the teachers were very nice.

[00:15:00] And then you would get another group that were

not so nice. I always -- I liked music, and the -- we had a music teacher there -- what was her name? I just saw it. I can't think of her name right now, but she was just the most -- she was the best. And I liked music, and we would sing at that -- then they had the -- I don't even know if they have the spring festivals anymore, but we would go to Dyche Stadium -- [Rafferty?], that was her name, Ms. Rafferty -- we'd go there, and practice for the spring festival, and it was quite an event. Everybody looked -- and I remember once Madam Schumann-Heink, who was a great, well-known soprano, she came to sing along with us, and that was very nice. I don't know if they still have that or not. I don't hear anything about it. And all the schools participated. It was very lovely.

Q: Your education at Evanston Township: how was that?

MD: Well, so far as I'm concerned, it was -- I didn't really have any complaints, because I only went to the third year. And then I married when I was 17. And then it was just -- I just didn't -- I would hear a lot of things, you know, about different things: prejudices, and all that sort of thing. And I imagine they were true. I don't think anybody would just make them up. But I was not involved in those.

Q: Some of the classes you took at Evanston Township, were they just of, you know, just straight vocational classes?

MD: Just -- yes, that's all. Just, nothing special. Just very good -- just the regular classes.

Q: What was your first job that you remember?

MD: My first job was -- at that time they ca-- I think now they call them -- they got another name for them. But anyway, it was, like, working after school for people, looking after their children.

Q: Mother's helper?

MD: And yeah, that -- yeah, mother's helper, that's it. That's what they (laughs) -- that's what they were called. So, I had a couple of those, and then that's it. Pretty soon I was 17, and so I was -- I didn't do any of that. Then my very next job was with this taxi service. The rest of the time between the mother's helpers and the taxicab service, I was home looking after the kids. When they came along, that was my very first job, and I've been at it all of my life, I think, (laughs) because that was -- started in 1949, and I was there. And I always feel like the grandmother of the company, because it was -- I always say it was born in my living room. There were eight men who went into Chicago, and I don't know how they got acquainted with these people, but they saw this operation in Chicago,

one of the black taxicabs companies, I can't think of the name of it now. But they were so elated about this, and when they came back to Evanston, then they -- Joseph, who was my husband -- they came right to him because he was -- well, he at that time, really had a lot more education than most of the fellas that were running around. So they thought they would discuss it with him. And it sounded so good, and it just went on and on from there. And we were acquainted with the -- that they got all -- well, this equipment -- somehow they got in touch with the Motorola company, and they were the ones who furnished the equipment, and the other taxicabs services in the Chicago, [00:20:00] at the American Flash. That was a white company, but they were more like brothers or something. They would have dances during the year and invite us, and we would go to the Aragon Ballroom -- I don't think it's there anymore, and -- it's on the north side -- and they were just so helpful in every way. They helped out so many times. And that's how -- then after a while it just grew, and there was so -- and then everybody had that -- see the -- Better Cab was the first -- the only two-way radio from the north here then were the policemen. They were the first two-way-radio anything. And then it just -- more and more people saw how beneficial it was, and they just kept

on going. And then there were other companies that came along, and it was just -- it was a just a miracle, really. Because I noticed, on one of our cards there, we guaranteed service from three to fifteen minutes, and you really could get a taxi from three to fifteen minutes. Before that, they had a -- maybe a storefront, or various places where you could only get an order -- wherever you were -- if you went into Chicago, you could not get another order until you come back to the Davis Street El, or wherever it was. If the phone was ringing, you answered it, and then you went on that one, and that might be another 20 minutes or a half hour before anybody else came back to answer it. So when they got the two-way radio, that was really a miracle. And I remember distinctly, one day after we'd been in business for a while, a lady called, and so she hung up the phone, and in a minute the phone rang, and she said, "This is Mrs. So-and-So," who was calling, she said, "I don't want that driver you sent here." She said, "If he's driving that fast, I don't want to go anywhere with him." But it just happened, that he was in the vicinity. You know, she thought he'd come from some long distance. "I don't want to ride with him." (laughs) So, but it -- it was just quite an event, I'll tell you. We had calls all over the city. We went everywhere. And the drivers -- it

was -- well, it was different then, like everything now is different. It's a different world. They were -- everybody was busy trying to get another customer. You know, "We'll serve this one well, and then we'll get another one." But now, the fellas -- I don't know -- they seem to have another kind of an attitude. "Call, and then we come, come on out." And (inaudible) -- nobody's too anxious about helping anybody: old people, or women with the babies, and -- you know, it's just not that way. But they were really -- they were really on the ball, I'll tell you. It was -- it really was a joy to have a driver come for you, because he would help you at the store. They'll help now a little bit, but it's not their main thing, generally. See, when the fellas would go, they would just get right out of the car and go to the store door, if the customer wasn't out, and help them with their groceries into the car. And then when they'd get them home, they'd help them in the house. And now it's just different. They just -- I'll see some sometimes -- they're just sitting in the car looking. And the lady's got a bag in one hand and a baby in the other hand, and he's just sitting. And that is terrible. And I remind them often too, when they go to the senior buildings, like the 1900 Sherman and the 1001 Emerson, the Georgian Hotel, the Homestead Hotel, I tell them, "These

are not daycare centers. These are places where old people live. So get out there, and get them in the car. You wouldn't want anybody to fall trying to get into your car. And when you take a person anywhere, be sure to get them on the right side of the street and let them off on that side of the street. Because you -- the insurance company is not going to pay if you let somebody off on the wrong side and they get hit by another car. That's not good." So I think they're pretty good at letting people off where they should be. Now, but they're -- they're just not as helpful. And then -- and the fella -- the funny thing about -- the drivers are so much younger now than they used to be. When I got going, I guess, well -- when I started, I was 30. All of the drivers were older. And now that I'm 100, I'm the oldest thing there. (laughs) And it's just funny. But I have a lot of experiences. [00:25:00] I've always had good relationships with the drivers and things. So they -- well, when we got going, it was more like a family thing. We had car inspection every morning at 9:30. They had to come to my house, where the office was on Hartrey, 1812 Hartrey, and I would go out and inspect every driver and every car, so that everything was just up to snuff. And I didn't even know I could do it -- one time, I even put a -- in the back seat I put a rubber -- I took the scissors and

put a rubber pad in the back of the seat. I thought, "Well maybe I got the wrong job. Maybe I should go into that." But it worked out. And so we try to keep them, remind them, "Get your car cleaned," and all that. But nowadays we really do have some lovely cars and better (inaudible) especially, beautiful cars.

Q: That's a wonderful story.

MD: So it just goes on and on. And then at the Christmas -- that's how I met most of the customers, because a lot of them [I already did?]. But at Christmas we would have an open house in the evening. So whoever was up with a customer that had time to come by, we would have like a buffet. And they would come in and bring the passengers, and whoever they happened to have in the car that had time to come by visit a little bit. And that's how I met lots of them. But most of them I don't even know, but I feel like I know them and they feel like they know me. They give me all kind of information. And then once -- oh, that was years ago -- I was a marriage counselor. If the fellas would do something they shouldn't do, the wives would feel free to call me and tell me, "He'd done so-and-so," and, "Well, you tell him to come here and we'll get that straightened out." And they would call if the babies were

sick, and it was just a -- as I said, it was just like a family there. It was lovely. Yeah, good time.

Q: Could you tell me a little bit about [Peaches?]?

MD: Yes. Well now, Peaches, of course, is (inaudible) my mother-in-law, and she was the first woman to apply for a taxicab license in the state of Illinois. And of course, she was really a hard worker. When we would get stuck, so after this batch of the various drivers maybe had gone home or out of the city or something like that, you could always call her. She would get up and put on her robe. Sometimes she would drive for 2 or 3 hours in her robe. She couldn't get back home to get her clothes changed. And the people just loved her, because she would help everybody with whatever it was. And then, when they did organize the cab company, well the men, they had the nerve to try to object to her being a member. They didn't really want to have a lady. But I guess that's like a man. They always want to be out in front. But somehow they got around to it, and they -- she did join the organization, and really was the most popular driver we had for a long, long time. Because everybody wanted Peaches. "Can Peaches come?" "She can't come for a half hour." "I'll wait." So they just -- they loved her.

Q: How long was Peaches driving?

MD: How her --

Q: How long did she drive for?

MD: Oh, see, she was driving before 19-- before the Better Cab started. I don't know exactly -- let's see. She was driving before Joseph and I were married. Back when the cab fare was, like, 25 cents. You did driving -- you just (inaudible) to get a load. And I believe it. One time, 10 cents. The Jitney cabs, they would go up and down and pick up a load of people and take them wherever they -- but they did not take them to their house at that time. They would take them to the nearest corner and drop them off. And then, after they got the two-way radios and the things like that, they could -- and I never did quite get the message. Somebody might know what it was. But only the black drivers c-- Jitney. They called it Jitney. They could -- you know, that -- you'd come to the Davis El, they would go there and wait until the train would come in, [00:30:00] and they would load up. The first cab that was there, he would get a load, and then if there were still more people, the next one would get a load, and take them wherever they wanted it to go, to their nearest stop. But the white drivers were only allowed to use the meter. I never did quite find out what that was about. But they could not do that jitneying.

Q: When did Peaches stop driving?

MD: Peaches must have stopped driving in, I would say -- in about -- maybe '57, or somewhere along -- in there, because she -- her health was bad. And I remember, she lived in the house right over there. We both moved in these houses in '59, and she lived in that apartment over there. But she wasn't driving at that time.

Q: So she -- how long had she been driving? For about, what, 20 years? 30 years?

MD: Oh, I would say maybe -- she -- I just really have no idea. In 1930 -- I know she was driving in 1935. And then, I didn't think -- I probably could have gotten these dates together a little better, but... I can't even think now, when she died, but she died after '59. She must have died in about 63'. Somewhere along in there. And that's about all I can think of.

Q: So, when you started with the cab company, you pretty much were the dispatcher?

MD: Yes. I was a --

Q: Or the (inaudible) manager?

MD: I was a dispatcher, yes. And my husband was the president, although they had -- though they had a treasurer who was Mr. [Filman?]. They had -- there were, on the -- on Wednesday. That was it. It was a real organization. He

would come to the office on Wednesday from 9 to 12, and then the other fellas would come. There were eight of them. Did I tell you there were eight fellas that started out? And then as -- they would all come in on Wednesday between 9 and 12 and pay their fee for the week, and that's how they paid their bills and things like that. We didn't charge a rent, because (inaudible) was a part of it too, so... It -- and then we had the one or maybe two fellas who would -- if complaints come in against them or whatever, then we had someone to look after that. And it was really a nice thing, because at that time naturally the salaries were not so high, but they always paid whatever the going salary was. At that time it was \$37.50 for office work. Well that didn't leave -- if they take out for the income tax, that didn't leave much money for the dispatchers, so the organization paid the income tax for them so they could have their full amount. And so it is a plus. And we had, oh, a lot of different people. We even had some -- we had a couple of schoolteachers. They liked the -- we were open 24 hours a day -- they liked the midnight shift, because then they could grade their papers and all that sort of thing, and leave, and go to school in the morning, there right from the office. And it was very, very nice.

Q: What was your husband's name?

MD: Joseph. J-O-S-E-P-H. Joseph Davis. [00:35:00]

Q: And so he, Joseph Davis, was pretty much the spearheader of the Better Cab?

MD: Right. That's right.

Q: And you said he and a group of his friends went down to Chicago and looked at other cab prices, came back with this idea, that --

MD: Yeah, he wasn't with the original -- with the original people. That was, let's see -- Grover Mac -- I believe that that driver's name was Grover Mac -- and someone else, maybe James [Eden?]. He may -- he's still alive. He's the only one of the originals that's still alive. The two of us. (laughs)

Q: OK so, you're one of the original -- you're the originals, though, of Better Cab?

MD: Huh?

Q: You're one of the original --

MD: Yeah, I was young when there -- when -- as I said, it was born right in my living room, and I was one of the first dispatchers, and... So, I worked there, like -- and of course, every time -- the company was so -- I suppose we -- the original thing was there for, it must have been about 12 or 15 years, I would say. Then it was sold to the West

Side -- there was a West Side cab company. And of course, each time I was the bargaining chip. The Clarks owned the West Side cab company, and they said, "Yeah, we'll buy it, if you let Ms. Davis come and dispatch." So I got sold to them. Then they -- there was a split. The Robinsons, that's Leon Robinson, that group -- they -- well, there was some confusion. Things usually split up after a while. So then, when the split came along, Mr. Clark -- they won the name. They went to court. They won the name of the company. So Mr. Clark decided he would use the "Best" that would appear before "Better" in the phone book. (laughs) So then, I worked there until -- with the Clarks -- until Junior [McKinley?] -- do you know him? He bought it from the Robinsons, and then he wanted it, you know, from the -- he bought it from the -- not the Robinsons, they were Better. He bought it from the Clarks, and then he said OK, he would buy it, if I would come and work for him. So I said, "OK, I'm not working for anybody else." So I went and worked with him for, it must have been about six or seven years. And then the Robinsons sold the Better Cab to the [Campbells?], who -- I guess they must have had it for maybe 10 years or so. I'm not really sure. But anyway, some of the drivers left Best and went to Better Cab, and then they came after me. "Come with us to Better Cab." So

then I went back to Better Cab again, just like a [crackpot?]. And (laughs) I worked with them for -- until they sold it. And then as -- they sold it to the -- to Mr. [Buey?], who owns it now. And of course, when he got it, he came, "Would you come and work just a day? If you could work a day, that would be a help." I said, "Well, Mr. Buey, I'm old, but I can work more than a day. Believe me when I tell you I can work more than a day." So then, I went with him. But before that, there was a Magic Cab, or Lake Cab, I think they were both the two -- the same things. And I even worked for them about six weeks. So every single company -- and then once there was a -- Edgar [Gary?] -- I don't know if you know the Garys or not, but -- he had just one cab, but he done pretty well with it. And the other fellas, I don't know why they didn't come to [Joe?] and him -- but I even worked for him about six months. He came and he said, "Well, there's just me, so I need somebody." And he had a sister. She would work -- we would -- he wasn't open at night, just in the daytime. So I worked for him too, about six months, I guess. So I think I've been with every single company -- the black ones [00:40:00] -- in Evanston.

Q: These were all black-owned cab -- taxi services?

MD: Those were all black-owned. Uh, but now that I think of it, there was one more. I think about three drivers went -- there used to be a Wing Cab. Now that's the only one that I never ever did work for. They were the first split off Better Cab. I think there were probably four or five of them. But Better Cab was just getting going then, and they couldn't afford me. I'll put it that way. (laughs) So I think that's the only one that I never did work for.

Q: OK. But for the original business, it was always called -- well what was the original name of the business?

MD: That's Better Cab Association. That was -- yeah, that was -- that's one of the original cards, as they had them.

Q: This is great. (laughs) As you're growing older and older in Evanston, what became some of your major concerns about Evanston? Did you get involved with any of the politics, or any of the social concerns, or...?

MD: Joseph was the politician, believe me. He was a politician. He loved it. So I never really got into it that much, although I used to work as a judge for the democrats. (laughs) But he was the one who just knew everybody -- knew all the -- the mayor and everybody else. But I never really got involved in it. And I guess one of the reasons why is because when we married, I was too young to vote or anything like that, so I wasn't worried about

it, you know. But when I was old enough, then I used to work as a judge on election day. That was fun. The candidates would come by, and they would always bring lunch or a box of candy or something like that, and I enjoyed that. But that was about the story of my life. I was really a very quiet kind of a stay-at-home person. Even until this day, when I'm out and somebody walks up and calls my by name, I'm just shocked, because I was never out into clubs or anything, you know, like that, or the dances, when they were -- they had all those clubs. They used to have a lot of popular clubs. I wasn't quite old enough for the clubs. And then when I was old enough I had the children to take care of, and I'd rather do that than to go to the dances. But Joseph was into everything. (laughs)

Q: Did you ever go to any of the clubs, at any point?

MD: Once in a while, I would go to a dance, but that wasn't my long suit.

Q: Where were the dances, at (inaudible)?

MD: They would have them in the Masonic Temple, and at the Y -- in the Y, sometimes. And then they would have quite a few things -- they used to do -- in Chicago. And I never did really go there too much. Because he and his mother, they used to go, because she wasn't too much older than he was.

He was born when she was really young, too. So I just mainly stay around home.

Q: Do you know -- when did Better Cab Association start?

MD: It started in 1949, March 5. We went on the air at midnight. March 5, 1949.

Q: And it still runs today?

MD: Huh?

Q: It still runs today?

MD: Still runs -- yeah. Still today.

Q: Different ownership, though --

MD: Different own-- uh-huh, but it keeps on going, that's right.

Q: Who are one of your major influence in Evanston? Someone you call your role model.

MD: Well that's -- that's something to think about. I don't think I ever thought of that. But I think one -- [00:45:00] maybe there were two. Mrs. Clark, that lady -- Mr. and Mrs. Clark, the people that owned the West Side Cab. She -- I just -- she was just different. She was really a hard worker. And the funny thing -- her heart was always in it. If a dispatcher or something couldn't come to work, that didn't bother -- she had a restaurant also. But that didn't bother her at all. If somebody called the last minute and couldn't come, she would be right there.

And I thought, "Well, this is marvelous." Because it was her business, and she knew she's the one that had to be there. That's how it was with me when someone could -- I used to work 12 hours a day, and -- because if somebody couldn't come, or whatever, you know, the business was yours, so get with it. It wasn't my business as such, but I felt like the mother. I had to take on everything that wasn't working right. I would do it. And Mrs. White, who is in it, it was -- who is the mother of Edna Summers, and she was quite a politician too. But she was a lovely person. Easygoing, easy to -- you could tell Ms. White anything, and she would take care of it. She always had a kind word for every situation. She was just a lovely lady. I thought -- of course I had known her since -- I said her oldest daughter and I were friends since we were in the sixth grade, and I had known her all that time. And she was always just the same, just a lovely person.

Q: Mrs. Clark, you said, had a restaurant. What was the name of her restaurant?

MD: The -- I guess it was called Clark's Restaurant. But I tell you where it was. You know where Walgreens is, right there at Simpson and Green Bay?

Q: Mm-hmm.

MD: It was right there. The -- and the cab -- when they bought the cab company, that's where they -- there was a house there. And the restaurant was right in there. We had -- the front room was the office, and on the other side was the restaurant. And I suppose that was (inaudible), but I don't remember any other name. It doesn't come to me right now. But that's where it was.

Q: What were your general likes about Evanston? What did you like about Evanston?

MD: Well, I think the thing I liked about Evanston, it was so -- oh, it was like living in another world then. Everything was just calm. I don't think we even had a key to the door. If you wanted to go anywhere, just go ahead. Nobody's going to do anything to go into your house, or -- I guess there were people stealing, but I just didn't know about them. That's all. And it was -- and everybody -- now that was one thing that kind of upset me. When they used to transfer the children, for instance, from Foster School to Haven, I was never anxious for my children to go to Haven school. The school was fine, but it was too far away from home. And I thought, "Well, if anything happens to them, who over there even knows them?" But as long as they're in the neighborhood, everybody knows them, and everybody looked after everybody else's kids. You just --

there's certain things you knew better than to do. But -- and it was just -- what is it -- like, everybody belonged to everybody else. Everybody was interested in -- this person was sick, or kind of down on their luck, or whatever -- people were willing to go and help to do things, and it really kept the kids straight. I think, back in that day, the biggest thing they ever really did was to get -- they loved to get in the fruit trees that -- you know, maybe there'd be a number of trees growing, and the kids would come from school, and they would go through there. I had an apple tree in my yard, and the lady next door, she had several trees, and I said to her -- every day it was the same thing. She was hollering at the kids, and, "Don't do this," and "You can't do that and this." I said, "Do you ever hear me hollering to the -- no." She said, "I don't know what's the matter with them." [00:50:00] I said, "All you have to do is make them know they can have that fruit. Then it doesn't taste good anymore. If they know that you've got an apple tree, you don't want them to have it, and then by the way, what can you do with a whole apple tree? You can't do -- tell them to bring a bag." I tell the kids, "Just the only thing I don't want you to do, don't break the rims. Bring the bag, or whatever -- I have a bag. I will give it to you. You just go -- one of you

go up the tree and get the apples for the others." And then I said, "Do you know him? Because then he can come in the yard." Very seldom -- they don't want those. They only want those when they can start some excitement, you know. They get the senior -- well, I guess people weren't really seniors then, because they were having -- there were some seniors, but these that were hollering were not the seniors. (laughs) They just didn't want the kids in the yard. But I never had that kind of a problem. They would go right through there. And I said, "You let them know they are welcome, because you cannot eat all of those apples. They won't come back." And it worked. They only went where people would, you know, fuss at them, and "I'm going to call your mother." And I don't know, they just -- I wasn't going to call anybody's mother, because I didn't have time. I was busy dispatching taxicabs. (laughs) But all in all, I just -- it was the best -- it was a -- it was a great little city. And even at night, you didn't have to worry if you had somewhere to go. You would just go. You never think -- like now, I wouldn't -- I don't know -- I would not walk from here now to (inaudible). Not after dark, because it's -- it's just different now. And -- but then, that was about the only time we really did get out, because -- by the time you put your children to bed, and

the other mothers put their kids to bed, we could not really get together until after dark. And we would walk anywhere we had to go. I used to walk from Grey Avenue all the way to Greenleaf Street. Greenleaf and Sherman. We had a friend there. We would go there and we just walked. That was before the days of the cab company or anything. It was just a friendly little town. And I remember when my mother was alive, and she used to work on the north shore. She would walk from 1937 Grey, which is at Grey and Foster -- they had a train then, they called the North Shore. It wasn't the El. It was another train. And she would walk all the way over there, like six o'clock in the morning, or something, because the train would go early, and there were a lot of people that would get to the train. There'd be a lot of people on the train, but you had to get over there. And then there were not the taxis then, and the buses were not running at that hour. She'd walk over there -- I don't know how many years she had that job -- but that's how she got there. Every -- and she was off on Thursday and Sunday, and every Monday she walked that distance, and every Friday, when she'd go back. But never did anybody -- sometimes there were maybe people on the street, and most of the time not. And whoever was not there was generally a man, that she would see. But she was never afraid.

Q: What are your dislikes about Evanston?

MD: I'll tell you, I don't really have any dislikes about Evanston. To, let's see -- I'm trying to think. Is there something that I really and truly dislike about it? The only thing that I dislike about Evanston now maybe, is when they started building the shopping malls, because they're probably taking the trade away anyhow. But the people would come from all over the north shore. They'd come to Evanston to shop. Then they -- we got so many cars to park, you couldn't get a parking space. If you did, by the time you get a clerk to wait on you, then you already had a ticket. And so it just -- I didn't like that for the people that would drive. And so they finally just about ran everything out of Evanston. Lytton's, and -- who else was around there? I can't even think, but there were a number of stores anyway, right there at Church and Sherman. There a number of men [00:55:00] -- let's see -- in front of -- I can't think of them, but Lytton's, that was one of them, and -- well, they just don't come to me right now. But there were lots of stores in Evanston, really nice stores. And Lord's, that was a lovely store. And so they just went out of business, and so did [Field's?] and Wieboldt's, and everybody else, so... It's just different now.

Q: Well --

MD: So I think that's just about all I know about Evanston.

(laughs)

Q: OK. Well, I guess we're done. (laughs) Thank you very much for [agreeing?] to meet with me, and --

MD: Oh, you're very welcome.

END OF AUDIO FILE