

**Oral History Forum, Shaker Historical Society, November 5, 2013.**  
**Transcribed by Meghan Hays**

**Keith Arian:** Thank you for coming, this is our first of three installments of oral history in the neighborhood. Just a brief explanation about the Historical Society: what I like to say is we're everything Shaker, whether it was the original North Union Shakers, the founding of Shaker Heights or modern-day Shaker Heights. We try to encompass everything that has to do with Shaker Heights.

You're in the rotating exhibit room which obviously changes, I think our next one comes within the next couple weeks which is a holiday theme on miniatures, the other side which used to be the living room of the house is our permanent exhibit on the Van Sweringens and the founding of Shaker Heights, beyond that in the porch is the early settlers room which has Shaker artifacts, up the stairs and on the landing is the Lissauer Gallery, currently showing the art of Michael Angelo Lovelace, a local artist, very good, we have the Shaker bedroom upstairs, we have a collections room, we have a library, so we have a lot to offer, if you're not a member I encourage you to join. One of the benefits of membership is you get 10% in the Spirit Tree right behind me, our gift shop, so check that out. Also... I think that's it.

So thank you again for coming, and I'm going to introduce Mayor Earl Leiken who's going to say a few words.

**Mayor Earl Leiken:** Okay, well, thank you very much, Keith, I'm just delighted that the Historical Society is doing this because it is so important to preserve the history of our neighborhoods.

There are two things about that that really make Shaker special. One is, our history is so rich and so wonderful that it really is something we constantly turn to as a source for where we are today and what we want to be in the future.

The other is that our neighborhoods are uniquely important to our community because they played such a vital role in our history and in shaping our community the way it is and in creating a wonderful spirit, wonderful community spirit, wonderful relationships among neighbors, our neighborhoods are unique. So both our history and our neighborhoods are very special to us.

And I do have to tell one very quick neighborhood history story. If I had to talk about the history since I've been the Mayor it would take several weeks of oral histories, but the one I want to tell is, very quickly, goes back to the time I was on the school board and we were trying to reorganize the neighborhood schools, and I know a number of people here remember this history, because we had too many schools for the numbers of children and it just wasn't working.

And the first time we tried to do it as a school board, we thought we would just leave it to a city-wide committee and we'd pick people from every neighborhood we served, and we thought that they could come up with a program for reorganizing the school system that would achieve a broad consensus that everybody would support. And the result of that process was, they came up with a program that about 50.5% of the community supported, the other 49.5% was bitterly opposed to it. And they ran around the community after the report came out undermining it.

And it took us another two years to get to the issue of reorganizing the neighborhood schools and we decided we might as well do it ourselves, I guess that's what we were elected to do, and it

may be jumping off a cliff, but let's go ahead, and we came up with our own program we brought it to the community, of course a lot of people didn't like it, but we went ahead and voted for it, implemented it, and it worked out very well. Property values starting going up right afterwards, and people accepted it and settled into it.

So that's a little piece of Shaker neighborhood history. But thank you to all the speakers, thank you to the Historical Society, I think it's wonderful that you're doing this, I have to leave early but I'll stay for as much as I can, and I think this is going to be of enormous benefit to our community, that we have these recorded histories that we have to look back on for generations to come.

<video: 4:37>

**Ware Petznick:** Thank you very much Mayor Leiken. Many people don't necessarily know what oral history is. And so I thought that I would go, and... Sorry for the speakers, you won't be able to see this very well, as it's right behind you, but... Bear with me just a moment.

Ok, so welcome to the Shaker Historical Society's first public oral history forum. The Shaker Historical Society's mission is to celebrate, or is to encourage people to celebrate and to engage in the story of Shaker Heights' past, present, and future. So to this end, us doing this forum where we have stories from people talking about Shaker Heights and their experiences past, present, and, perhaps we'll talk about how this might inform our future, it seemed very appropriate to have this event here.

So, the Oral History Association defines oral history as "a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving, and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events." The most important part of this quote I feel is this: "oral history is both the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940s and now using 20<sup>th</sup> century digital recording as well.

**Ginnie Dawson:** It's also the most unreliable.

<laughter>

**Ware Petznick:** And it's one of the most unreliable. Thank you, Ginnie Dawson. When people know that they're being recorded they do have a tendency, there were studies in the twenties and thirties where researchers would hang out underneath dorm room beds to hear what people talked about, hoping that by being hidden they would not realize and would actually get an accurate recording of what sort of things individuals would say. And most of the time they talked about themselves.

Okay! So what are we doing here? Over three nights, tonight, tomorrow night, and Thursday night, we will cover all nine neighborhoods. Please note that if you are attending the forum tomorrow night, part of South Park Boulevard will be closed, so access to the property will be via Shaker Boulevard, and we will exit on South Park.

And tomorrow night will be, I'll go back, Ludlow, Malvern, and Mercer, and then the last night will be Sussex, Onaway, and ... I'm missing one (**Keith Arian:** the ninth one.) Thank you Keith!

<laughter>

Ok, our title for this evening was “Shaker Heights: The Evolution of the Van Sweringen’s Utopian Vision.” Okay, who are these Van Sweringens? Oris Paxton and Mantis James. They are the ones who purchased the land that used to be the North Union Shakers and developed it into one of the first garden city suburbs in America. Urban planners look to us for many reasons and perhaps this oral history will be used by urban planners as they try and figure out what’s the best way to organize a city. I think they can learn a lot from Shaker, actually.

<video: 8:19>

Tonight, for Boulevard, we have Dolly and Steve Minter, thank you very much for being here. Fernway, we have Virginia Dawson, a local historian, and for Fernway and specifically Avalon we have Julie Konrad, I’m not sure you pronounce your middle name, how do you pronounce?

**Julie Karges Konrad:** Karges.

**Ware Petznick:** Karges Konrad. And for Lomond, bless Professor Isaac... Gerber?

**Isaac Greber:** Greber.

**Ware Petznick:** Greber! Did I? Oh I spelled it wrong. I’m so sorry.

**Isaac Greber:** My high school has it also, for the same kind of reason.

<laughter>

**Ware Petznick:** So Isaac Greber deserves a medal for stepping in at the last minute to make sure we had Lomond represented tonight. Wednesday: Sue Klarrich, Gwen Chapman, Nancy Cockley and Henry Ott-Hanson will be here, and on Thursday: Carmella Williams, Elizabeth Papp Taylor, Leon Bibb, and Peter and Sue Danford, so we’ve got quite a good representation of the city of Shaker Heights.

So, our topic: what did the Van Sweringen brothers envision for Shaker Heights, and how is it changed? And, is it for the better, is it for the worse? Hopefully through some of your stories we might get closer to an answer to that. Very briefly, and I know I’m rushing ‘cause I want them to speak more than me. The Van Sweringens designed a garden city suburb and publicized their definition of a utopia through their advertisements. And all around this room you see broadsheet advertisements from the *Plain Dealer*, where they clearly embrace the good opinion that the Shakers had in Cleveland, because the Shaker sister is repeated across the bottom on all of these. These were ads for the *Plain Dealer* from 1927.

So in their version of a utopia, the Van Sweringens defined it: assurances, deliverance from the modern city, exclusiveness. So, what would that mean to them at that time? Beautifully designed residences, excellent schools, community churches, recreation, including golf courses and bridle paths, and transportation, all of this was wrapped into their design for a utopia, which included, prospective buyers had to be approved as well. So we all know what this means. They would

never actually explicitly really state it. They'd skirt around the issue. But it meant white, Protestant,...am I missing something? No Catholic. White Protestant Christians.

**Audience member:** Well, there was Mr. **Vergat** (sp?), was their tame Catholic.

**Ware Petznick:** Yes. Their token.

**Audience member:** Who worked for them. So he was allowed to...

**Ware Petznick:** Yes. So that was...? Oh, Ginnie? Do you have...?

**Ginnie Dawson:** Well, Mayor Van Aken was also Catholic.

**Ware Petznick:** Yes, but that was not until the late forties and fifties. Van Aken? Wasn't he?

**Ginnie Dawson:** No, Van Aken? You know, the street, Van Aken, was named after? He was Catholic.

**Ware Petznick:** Interesting! So there are lots of exceptions to this rule as well. You dig deeper. But, their, largely, their vision was, they tried to make Shaker Heights a very specific community. Which included green spaces and beautiful residences, encouraging people to move here from the smog of the city. Great schools, both public and private. Private schools of course were encouraged to move here and they did, from downtown. And all of the names of our neighborhoods. They aren't named for something else, they're named for the schools. So the school was very important, central, to these communities.

And transportation of course was very important then. The Terminal Tower was central to getting residents out to downtown and to encouraging them to move here in the first place. And their development of the Shaker Rapid and how it's been maintained by residents through periods of when it was failing financially, one of the first places that had park and ride. The light rail transport was central to the development of this place. And it was maintained even when it wasn't making money.

And so transportation's very important. How do we go forward? Well, Bike Shaker is a Shaker Historical Society initiative, that a branch of it has gone to advocacy to try and make bicycle transportation easier and better for residents now. So the vision evolves and does not stay the same. We are still evolving. All of these various plans for Shaker Heights, how they're drawn, these lines are not set in stone, they do change, like the development for Van Aken, the new shopping, pedestrian shopping center.

So, what is your utopia? We are here to hear their story. And just a brief word, that this project was based on an idea from the Oral History Institute at Kenyon College and was generously supported by Mary Rayborn. And we will transcribe what is said here. If you in the audience wish to speak, I encourage you to do so after we've interviewed our panelists, I will just give you the mike.

<video: 13:50>

Okay! So now, without further ado, I will start by handing the mike. Yes! Now, talk into it, that's what we need. Okay! So we shall start here. I'm going to pull this up. We're very informal here. You don't need to get me, get them. Okay! Just forget the camera's here, audience's here, let's have a chat. I want to get to know Dolly and Steve Minter.

So, when did you move to Shaker Heights?

**Steve Minter:** 1963.

**Ware Petznick:** Did you move at the same time?

**Dolly Minter:** Yes, I mean we were married already.

<laughter>

**Ware Petznick:** Well, that helps!

**Dolly Minter:** We had been living in...

**Steve Minter:** Milverton... 149<sup>th</sup> near the Onaway Rapid Stop. Cleveland.

**Dolly Minter:** But I think one of the things I remembered is, that, we were so pleased. But we have a daughter, we have three daughters actually, we have three married daughters. But our youngest daughter, and her husband, when they were trying to, deciding where they should come back since they're both family-oriented, but Robin said, we have to come back to Shaker Heights. And so, Robin lives a five-minute walk on Leighton Road. And she...

**Steve Minter:** ...specified it had to be in one or two certain schools.

<laughter>

**Dolly Minter:** Because she had gone to school here in Shaker. And fortunately Robin prevailed. She always did. She and her husband decided they would come to Shaker Heights. Her husband had grown up in Pittsburgh, but she wanted to come back home because she had loved Shaker Heights.

**Steve Minter:** I guess we should probably point out that in 1962 and 1963 when I was finishing graduate school, the question was where we would live. And we seriously considered several nice neighborhoods in Cleveland, but specifically wanted to live in Shaker because it was about the schools. And we made the decision to do that before Michelle was born, our oldest daughter. And we like to say that we wanted Shaker so badly that we bought a house that we could afford, on either, depending on your opinion, the first street in Shaker Heights, or the last street in Shaker Heights.

<laughter>

**Ware Petznick:** So this is Boulevard, which some people say...

**Steve Minter:** Well actually we lived in Moreland...

**Dolly Minter:** We lived in Moreland first.

**Steve Minter:** on Menlo Road, when we first moved here, we were like four houses from the corner, which is somewhere deep in the service center, in Shaker Heights, when it got purchased. And then we moved in 1968, the city purchased our home. And we moved to Keswick in the Ludlow area. And then we left and went to Massachusetts. And when we decided to return to Cleveland, Dolly was very specific. We shall live in the Boulevard or Onaway school district, specified the size of the house, how many bedrooms, had to be a lavatory on the first floor, and all of those things.

**Ware Petznick:** And how old was your daughter when she made all of these demands?

**Steve Minter:** Well that comes much later. So we then have lived in the Boulevard area on Woodbury Road, for thirty-eight years. And our three daughters went to Boulevard, Woodbury, Shaker Heights High School. Which is true for a lot of people. And then it's about fifteen years later that Robin and Burt had this discussion about, it's time to start a family. And Burt said, you don't start a family unless you live in a suburb, with a yard and a fence. And they were living at 107<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway, in Manhattan. <laughter> So he came home one day and said let's take a few days off and she said that's wonderful, because we are on the first plane tomorrow morning, we're going to Cleveland, we're going to live in Shaker Heights, we're going to live close to our parents, my parents, so we'll have an emergency back up system.

<laughter>

**Dolly Minter:** yeah, they do!

**Ware Petznick:** Babysitting!...So I'm interested that you left, and went to Massachusetts, and then you came back. What brought you back to Cleveland and specifically to... okay, you said, Shaker?

**Steve Minter:** Well of course, you can't imagine, you'd have to remember, we first moved to Shaker in the very early sixties. We're an interracial couple.

**Ware Petznick:** Really?

<laughter>

**Steve Minter:** Yeah. And that was still a little unique still then. Quite unique. And we wanted to be someplace where you had quality of housing, quality of community, transportation, schools.

**Dolly Minter:** Yes, and the schools especially.

**Steve Minter:** And we made that, we made those decisions, and it was not hard, once I was deciding where to move from Massachusetts to where, she said, I would appreciate if you could go someplace and stay in one place, for twelve years, and see our children...

**Dolly Minter:** Yes...all the way through the schools.

**Steve Minter:** And what better place would that be than Shaker.

**Ware Petznick:** Okay, so I think we've covered the schools. What about work? What work did you do when you came back to Cleveland, and how did you get there from your house, wherever you lived here?

**Dolly Minter:** Well the thing is, I worked until I got pregnant, which is.... I was a teacher in the Cleveland public schools. And, but then, the question was, shall Steve get, um... drafted...no, that's the wrong work...

**Steve Minter:** No, that's good work. It's called Vietnam. Avoidance? <indistinct>

**Dolly Minter:** And therefore, I figured the way to keep Steve from going...he was a social worker. And he would have been sent to one of the southern places in the South, because that's where most of them were. And I said, well that's great, you know. If you go to the South, I can't come to the South with you, because in the South, they would be... the people in the south were in a different era, and they...so instead I suggested that Steve should, that I was going to get pregnant so we could stay here in Cleveland, which was a much better place. I didn't want to go south, and I couldn't go south with Steve. So, it was a different time.

But the one thing I did say when we came back from Massachusetts was we're going to ...we need to stay in one place, we can't be zipping around to this state and that place, because he had a lot of offers. And so, I said, well okay, wherever we go we're going to stay for twelve years, because our daughters...

**Steve Minter:** It's now thirty-eight.

<laughter>

**Ware Petznick:** Let me ask you this, if our choices define what makes us happy, your choices led you here. So how would you define your utopia? What about Shaker is a perfect place for you to live? Can you be more specific on that point?

**Steve Minter:** Well I think so, I think it's pretty easy. We lived in Cleveland close to the Shaker line. I rode the Rapid Transit. We became used to it at the beginning, that light rail, which was incredibly important. We weren't that far from Shaker Square, we could walk there.

**Dolly Minter:** We can still walk there.

**Steve Minter:** We still go to the same Heinen's, Chagrin hardware, same group of places, and so, while I'm very proud I've done my work in Cleveland, also I was very proud of Shaker Heights. So when you have an opportunity, and you're dreaming about where you might live, and the kind of place you'd like to live, we would walk over and walk on Chadbourne, and Warrington, and Huntington and say, maybe one day...

**Dolly Minter:** Someday. Those trees!

**Steve Minter:** ...we would have a home there. And so that's a dream which we've been able to realize. It's a wonderful neighborhood. Boulevard, where we live, in the broad circle around the

school, we have friends come here to visit us, and within hours they say, this is like the nineteen-fifties!

**Audience member:** in a good way!

**Steve Minter:** Absolutely in a good way! Open space, children walking, kids playing in the playground, Little League baseball, soccer team, the girls' soccer team practicing. And very very important for us, and especially for Dolly since she told me forget moving, our driveway connects to the house behind us, which is on Huntington. And the children in elementary school come through the back yard, down our driveway, to go to school. And parents. And that's been going on for thirty-eight years.

**Dolly Minter:** And I put a little sign up that says, This is for children at Boulevard School and their parents. Because the parents many times go with the children to the schools. And it's fine with me. But I can still remember a couple of days ago, one of the young girls was taking her bicycle and I stopped her in our driveway and I said you need to be very careful, because when it's snow, I don't want you to slide down, because our driveway has a slope, I didn't want somebody to get hurt, and by that time, she wouldn't realize, that she would go sailing down the street.

**Steve Minter:** Finally, we might put in...we should stop?

**Ware Petznick:** We could talk to you for hours!

**Steve Minter:** We should add, that since we've lived in that area for thirty-eight years, we've seen five or six families whose children grew up with our children, where their adult children have purchased a home on the circle and they're now living there, so our grandchildren, Thomas, is playing soccer with other grandchildren whose parents grew up on the circle. And I think that probably says a great deal about why people like Shaker, why we're very committed to it and supporting it.

**Ware Petznick:** Wow. Thank you so much!

**Dolly Minter:** It really is a wonderful place!

**Ware Petznick:** I don't have my watch, so is that about ten minutes? We probably should move on! But come back and we'll do a just one-on-one interview with you. I really don't want my backside to...

<video: 27:38>

**Keith Arian:** Ware, should we ask questions now or do you want to wait until the end?

**Ware Petznick:** I think wait until the end because I want to...<indistinct, moves to right side>. I think probably allowed enough...Do you prefer Ginnie?

**Ginnie Dawson:** Ginnie.

**Ware Petznick:** Okay Ginnie! Where do you live?



**Ginnie Dawson:** I live in Fernway on Glencairn Road.

**Ware Petznick:** And how long have you lived there?

**Ginnie Dawson:** I think we've lived there forty years. And actually, though, we first started off on Winslow Road, renting, renting a duplex. And, it was, we found Shaker Heights actually through *The New Republic*. My husband took a job and, uh, yeah, I think the Lomond Association was advertising in *The New Republic* and several other, you know, sort of national magazines, and they were advertising an integrated community, and my husband works for the Legal Aid Society, so we thought it would be a good place to move, and we liked it right away. Winslow Road was, we had one child then, he was a toddler, two years old, and he found friends on the street. And then when I got pregnant, we decided well, we needed a bigger house, so we bought someone in our playgroup's house.

Our children went through Fernway School and of course the high school.

**Ware Petznick:** So presumably the work, your work. And your husband's work, enabled you to stay in Shaker or stay in Northeastern Ohio.

**Ginnie Dawson:** Um, yeah. I have to say, I wasn't thrilled with Fernway. And the reason is, it was like a ghetto, in the sense of... It was all women during the day. And I was just so determined to go to graduate school, and I just couldn't stand, you know, I mean. Everybody wanted you to do the PTA and it was the League of Women Voters and wanted you to join a church, and that just took all your time. And so I was very rebellious I think, during those years. I think it wasn't ideal, frankly. But I thought the school was good, and our children were happy there, so that's that.

**Ware Petznick:** So conceivably you could have moved elsewhere, something must have made you stay.

**Ginnie Dawson:** Well you can't beat the convenience. What a location! It's...I was a graduate student at Case and so, I could get home, or, get down there in 25 minutes, go to classes, and get home again. And you know the darnedest thing was, our kids came home for lunch and I felt so irritated by that. Just, that was the worst! And you'd see, it was during the time of the Shaker Schools Plan, and so they were bussing kids from Moreland over to Fernway, and the Moreland kids got to stay for lunch! And our children had to come home.

So a lot of us in Fernway and other parts of Shaker, got together, and we picketed the School Board. And I remember walking around, it was the Onaway playground, with a sign in my hand, to have the School Board allow our children to not come home for lunch. And the answer of the School Board was, it was more healthy, for children to come home for lunch. And I thought about that, hey, you know, well, it was okay for the Moreland kids to stay, but it was more healthy for our children. Well, we won that battle, but it took several years.

And I think what was nice about Shaker is, it was a time when a lot of women thought the way I did and they were just as rebellious as I was, and so I had like a network of people, and I finally started to enjoy the place. So anyway, that's my story.

**Ware Petznick:** Were you raised, are you from Cleveland?

**Ginnie Dawson:** No, I'm from New Jersey.

**Ware Petznick:** So what brought you to Cleveland, your marriage?

**Ginnie Dawson:** Yeah, my husband is a legal aid lawyer, and he got a job at Cleveland Legal Aid. And it was a great job and he stayed there forty years. It was good for us, we loved Cleveland, and we loved Shaker Heights obviously, but, you know, it took a while. It wasn't a utopia for me.

**Ware Petznick:** So do your children, are they still in the area, have they gone away and come back?

**Ginnie Dawson:** No, we have a daughter in Florida, who works in stables, she manages a stable of racehorses, which she loves. And a son who works for the Federal Reserve Bank in Manhattan, and he lives with his wife and little girl in Brooklyn. So we have two great places to visit.

**Ware Petznick:** And did they go to, they went to Shaker Schools, from Fernway all the way through?

**Ginnie Dawson:** Oh yeah, and they're very pro, they love their school. Jeff would like to come back here, actually, the suburbs of New York are pretty awful. But you have to go where your job is.

**Ware Petznick:** So your definition of utopia in Fernway would be to have the kids not come home from school for lunch, anything else that would make your experience...?

**Ginnie Dawson:** Well, I love the house, the house is nice. The architecture is beautiful, I mean, it's breathtaking, beautiful, aesthetically, just beautiful. Who could knock it?

**Ware Petznick:** Well, is there anything else that you'd like to add?

**Ginnie Dawson:** No.

<video: 34:32>

**Ware Petznick:** Well, thank you. Thank you. Julie! What brought you to Fernway?

**Julie Karges Konrad:** Well I have to back up to, it's kind of a, I have deep roots here, my grandmother grew up on Stockholm in Fernway and actually went to Fernway probably shortly after it opened, which is really neat. And that I hadn't always known growing up, but I grew up in the Onaway area, on Chadbourne, so I know those trees that you're talking about. And we'd would wait and all the bark falls off the trees, and but just looking up into that canopy of trees, which was always so beautiful.

So I lived here until, from 1986-ish until junior high, and my dad got a job in Lake County so we had to live in Lake County, which is east of here. And um, fine experience, but it was one of the largest high schools in the state. I had a fine experience but we always missed Shaker. And I remember, this is an interesting point for this history, is that my mom, she would say, you know, with new neighbors, because we had a new cul-de-sac, one of the modern neighborhoods, she

said every time someone moves in I made them cake, that's just what we do! That's what my mom did, that's what I do, what we did in Shaker, that's how she met all her Shaker friends, and she said, you know what, I'm lucky if I even get my pan back! And she said she went to one house and the neighbor said, thank you, and took it and then she came back to return it and my mom invited her in for coffee and she said, Oh, I'm not one for chit-chat. And my mom was like, heartbroken and never ever settled into that community, and we were there for some years.

But then, so I came, when my husband and I met, we lived on Winslow and I always joke that it's a rite of passage, when you live in Shaker, that you lived on Winslow. Everybody lives on Winslow. <laughter> What house did you live in? We lived in this house.

So my husband and I before we were married, we lived on Winslow. And just desperately wanted this neighborhood, but we couldn't afford it. So we were living in South Euclid in a little bungalow, great little community, but it wasn't Shaker. So we would drive these neighborhoods, every season. And we would, same thing, drive up and down Fernway, because that where we wanted to be. We'd drive down Glencairn, we drive up and down, up and down. Any season. And we were like, oh, we love this, but we can't afford it. So we lived in South Euclid for nine years, had three baby girls, and a dog, in a bungalow, and we were busting at the seams out of the house. So we looked around and looked around and we bought a house on Avalon that aesthetically, wasn't beautiful, but it was HUGE! It had wooden handmade shutters on the windows, that were just <indistinct> and a knight in shining armor in the window, this huge armored thing, and there was aqua molding on the third floor and my husband's like, this is great, because he's a fixer-upper. And loves architecture and wanted to bring it back. So he got rid of all that aqua.

And we really wanted the schools, it was important to us, for any of the schools we felt would be great, but we wanted the Fernway neighborhood. Because the people would tell me, anywhere in Shaker, you walk to school and you take the kids on the sled to school. And I'm like what, the sled?? And sure enough, everyone's trudging down the street on their sled, and people are shoveling their driveways and they're like up the mound and down and up the mound and down, and yeah, people were like, there's walking school bus, and I'm like, what's walking school bus? And they said, if you lived farther down the street, some of the parents volunteer to walk the kids all the way to school, which is great when you have babies, because you don't want to be, you know...

And I personally was bummed that they didn't have going home for lunch, because that was a big part of my growing up. It wasn't mandatory. You could, it's optional, you could go home for lunch, And we used to do it, we used to cut through Huntington, or Warrington, to Onaway. And there was a house back there, and we'd go back and forth, cut through. And so when I moved back I was surprised at how close Onaway was to the school because it felt like miles, when you're a little kid. So that's how we landed.

**Ware Petznick:** So if we're talking about the evolution of the Van Sweringen vision, what do you they would recognize about Fernway, all the things that drew you to Fernway in the first place, do you think there are some of the same things that the Van Sweringens designed?

**Julie Karges Konrad:** Absolutely, absolutely. I think that the, I always...I have friends who just moved here from Queens, New York, and are not from here, and were here for one day and felt like: this is where I want to be, and all the reasons they said were exactly the same reasons that

we're there. But also that I could tell them, this meant a lot to them, that everything going on right now, three years ago it's the same thing! Bikes were still getting stolen out of garages, just lock your garage, it's not the end of the world! <laughter> And I was at the neighborhood meeting, and one of the girls, we actually went to school together and she said, you know, it was like a rite of passage to get your bike stolen! Everybody did! We had bicycle jungle! It was bicycle jungle, and now...that's Southerly Park. You couldn't see through that, it was scary, you wouldn't go in there unless you were like, you knew your business, because you would get, there were scary things happening in there. And now it's just beautiful, you can walk through it, you can see all the paths.

But I told them, they were worried about some of the crime, it's the same thing, it's like bikes and this and that, just lock your garage! And the same things have been happening, and all the, the schools, the integrated schools, and for me, and talking to a lot of my friends, it's exactly why we're here. That's one of the, when you talk about, when you came for the schools, what are we talking about. The education, hands down, it's exceptional. But we want a school that's like the real world. We want schools where there's kids from all different races, not just.... I mean, I came from a school where there was no integration and there was no tolerance either for lifestyle choices and any of those, it was just very closed-minded. And my husband and I both were, we did not want that.

And a neat little story was when I moved into my house now on Avalon, there was a box of photos left in the basement, and so I'm going through them, and I saw a yearbook and it was from 1992, and I graduated in '93. So I quickly pulled it out and I found all the kids that I knew when they were seven, eight, nine, that were seniors, and it just blew my mind. And that was this little extra surprise. And these people are still all around, they all moved back, most of them.

**Ware Petznick:** So I'm trying to get to the root of what makes Shaker Heights tick. We have a lot of people coming back, choosing to be here...

**Julie Karges Konrad:** I think the main thing is it's a true community. When you think of any area of homes, right, it's our community because we live in it, it makes it a community. But for example, where I used to...where I lived in high school, that community was window shades down, no one's...you don't go to your neighbors, you can't borrow eggs, you can't do that kind of thing. Whereas in Shaker is a true definition of community, meaning you are looking out for one another. Yeah the houses are close and that's a good thing. Right? You know your neighbors, you know the kids, you know the people that have lived there for years. And that it has, the definitions of what you said that the Sweringens wanted to have, it still exists.

And at the end of the regeneration, of people coming back, keeping it the way it was, because that's why they feel connected, because this was their home, and it's keeping in that tradition that it was well-planned. That there's shopping, there's easy transportation. You can walk here, you can walk to your friends' neighborhoods, you don't have to drive, you don't have to cross a freeway. And the fact that you can actually walk to school, without, you know...there's crossing guards! You know what I mean?

There's a lot of things that are important to people because that's the sense of what utopia is. Right? We can let our kids walk freely. You know? You can see the school. Someone told me, it's so weird to have your high school right in the middle of the neighborhood! That's so bizarre to me! And I thought, well, that's the way it is. That to me, when I went out and like, my high school,

was like, the world was around the high school but the high school maintained the major roads, and everything was around that. It wasn't the neighborhoods. So I think that it's the neighborhoods that are close to the schools that make everybody more connected. I think it's just an issue of feeling connected. Because that's what everybody looks for.

**Ware Petznick:** Is there anything else you'd like to add?

**Julie Karges Konrad:** No.

<video: 45:28>

**Ware Petznick:** Thank you, Julie! Okay, pass this down. Professor Greber. We've got it right here, professor. We've got your name right there. There was a typo. Well, welcome. And thank you for coming to talk about your perspective of Shaker Heights from Lomond. So, what first brought you to Shaker Heights?

**Isaac Greber:** Well, first of all I came to Cleveland because of Case Institute of Technology. I joined the Mechanical Engineering Department there but I was interested in the Aeronautics. I came here from MIT where I got my degree in Aeronautics. NASA was here. I knew that on leave, [Dr. T. Keith] Glennan, was the first director of NASA. I knew that there was a very fine mathematician in the Mechanical Engineering Department here whose reputation I had known before and I was delighted to meet him, who also turned out to be the father of a young pianist whom I'd heard of, so everything fit very well. So I came here because of the job.

Very quickly I decided to move to Shaker. The reason was we planned a family and the idea was the Shaker schools were the things we wanted to go to, so that of course was easy. We moved into a two-family house on Ashby Road, which in the middle of the street became 154<sup>th</sup> Street in Cleveland. And that was an interesting community. And... the...very quickly during the time we moved there the real estate agents decided, good move, because the African-Americans were coming in, and therefore they could get the white families to move out. And so we formed the Moreland Community Association. Things started there. Then we decided, our first daughter was born, and we wanted a house.

**Ware Petznick:** When was this?

**Isaac Greber:** She was born in 1962. And we decided that we should get a house. And we looked around. And we wanted a house that was not too expensive. That was one of the things, we looked around in Shaker Heights to find a less expensive house. And you can get a house where real estate agents were not selling to white families and the prices were going down. And then we found this wonderful house on Sherrington Road, at the end of the Lomond schoolyard. And we had visions of this wonderful hill where we could see, we still see the children coming down that hill, and our children could then walk. Great, everything worked out like a charm. Well, we've been there since. We moved in in December of 1963 so this will be our 50<sup>th</sup> year in that house, and we've been delighted.

Shaker Heights and particularly the Lomond Community is a much better place now than it was when we moved in. It was in turmoil at the time because of racial integration. We understood this. We understood that, what was going to happen. But it has grown up and as it's grown up I have felt the sense of community. I've been fortunate in being part of trying to help that sense of

community. So it's been just wonderfully transforming. I've been very active in the Lomond Community Association from its beginning. And it really does have this sense of it. Our daughters feel this. They live in Massachusetts. They talk about the differences there and here. And, very much an eye-opening thing.

I tend to be happy in many places. So I don't think in terms of utopia. I go someplace, I find a community to live in, I find a musical community, athletic community, and I wind up being happy with that community. I'm delighted with the community I'm in, and that's just fine. I'm delighted with our Mayor...

<laughter>

**Mayor Leiken:** Good man!

**Isaac Greber:** I like to see the kinds of developments that are occurring all the time. I'm very good friends with my neighbors. And that...<Indistinct> It's an easy thing to do. I would be happy at other places, I'm just very happy here. I'm very happy with my job, I'm very happy with the changes and big career that my wife has had in switching from mathematics to archeology. We've both had a wonderful combination of things happening to us.

We've had other happy things in other places, I've lived... on sabbaticals, I've lived elsewhere and been happy in those places. So, places where we've been happy have some of the same characteristics of community. When I've been in sabbatical in Massachusetts, we lived in Cambridge, but in a community within it that had this same kind of communal atmosphere. It doesn't only occur here, but it does occur here and we're happy about that and happy to be part of trying to help that develop.

**Ware Petznick:** It just makes me wonder if the Shakers of North Union, if their spirit is still here, that their belief in communal living has somehow extended to later residents, even though the Shakers are long gone. 'Cause that spirit, that communal spirit, the community spirit, looking after your neighbor, that's, obviously you didn't find that in Lake County, and it is something very special. Uh, I just, I wonder.

How do you think, is there anything that is particularly unique about Lomond compared to other parts of Shaker? Is there any...Do you think you have a different experience there than in the other neighborhoods?

**Isaac Greber:** I know my experience there, I don't know what my experience would be in the other ones. Guessing for both me and my wife, we'd probably be happy in quite a few places. So, I'm not thinking of Lomond as THE place that is absolutely unique. It's a place in which I'm happy, a place where my wife and I have been very happy and yes, we'd be happy someplace else also, but it does have that community. And as I said when we went to Cambridge we looked for a place that had a sense of community and we've done the same thing in other places and we've been very fortunate in finding places like that.

And we have found that in big cities, I grew up in New York City, lived in an apartment house, and we had a community. That community existed and it was a very poor community, but it had a sense of community. And therefore although it was poor and struggling, really struggling poor, there was this combination, this spirit of being a place where you had a sense of community

where parents didn't have to worry about children being alone because they could go into a friend's house, friend's apartment. It had that kind of feeling.

So it exists in different locations, it exists in different places, and we're delighted we have found a place where which we've been able to spend more than fifty years.

**Ware Petznick:** So how do you get to work? Do you take the Rapid?

**Isaac Greber:** Sometimes I bicycle, sometimes I take the Rapid, sometimes I drive.

**Ware Petznick:** You've got those options. And that's something that's very...

**Isaac Greber:** I wish there were a nice easy way of getting from our place directly to University Circle.

**Ware Petznick:** Well, the Shakers of North Union, that's where they did their buying, or their selling of their wares was where what's now University Circle, it was Doan's Corners, and it was a meeting of roads and of landscape. So, they sold their brooms and their milk and their things like that, that was their communication with Clevelanders. That was a good point for the people to know about it.

I had a question for you and now I can't think of it....Ok you mentioned utopia and you'd probably be happy anywhere, but if this were an ideal world and you could make anything happen for you and where you live or your community, what would that be, what would be your wish list?

**Isaac Greber:** I guess I don't have a wish list that way.

**Ware Petznick:** You're just too happy!

**Isaac Greber:** I have a set of activities for me ...<indistinct> One, I have a very good professional set of associates and for me an academic career just fits. Second, Cleveland is a tremendously musical place and it's easy to get in to doing things musically. You don't have to go very far to amateur, to play music, and listen to music. Much easier than in most places in the country. And that is unique, by the way. Cleveland is almost unique in that sense of having this tremendous musical activities but it's always accessible. I play in an orchestra, it's an easy thing to do here. I play with many different ones here.

**Ware Petznick:** What musical instrument do you play?

**Isaac Greber:** I play the cello. <indistinct> Symphony Orchestra, so that works out very well. So that combination is not, well, it is a unique combination. I guess that combination would not be easy in most places.

<video: 56:45>

**Ware Petznick:** Well, thank you panel, I think they deserve a round of applause. All right? Questions? Let me get them right to you, thank you very much. Do you have a question?

**Ann Lawrence:** I don't have a question, I just have a lot to say!

I have been here now for fifty-one years. I came in 1962 with my husband from Connecticut...  
<video 1 ends>

<video 2 begins>

... Shaker Heights. I was raised in West Hartford Connecticut in a neighborhood very much like Shaker, and what we have here in Shaker that nobody has mentioned is, the, when I came we had lots of little shops and you knew when you entered them they called you by name.

Central National Bank was the bank that my husband came to, and Central National actually opened a satellite office on Chagrin Boulevard. And at that time we didn't have any trees or flowers outside but the manager of that particular office, Marie Walzer, felt that we should beautify the community. Everybody in the community came over and we planted geraniums from the high school around all the trees.

We have so much available in Shaker. I was a member of the Cleveland International program with the Minters, knew them early on, went through the whole transition of Fernway School becoming integrated. The original school of Moreland when it started and people were queuing up to try to get their kids in Moreland because the very best teachers were all collared to come in to teach in Moreland.

I've had wonderful homes. We came in and rented on Scottsdale for exactly two months when the tornado came down what is Route 8 today, and it took down the electric wires that were in the back of my house I had, that we were renting. We had metal windows and I watched the wires actually fall off the telephone pole in the back yard, took my kids out, they were, I came in with two babies and had a third child here.

We have proximity, the reason I chose Shaker not only for the schools but for the proximity to University Circle and hospitals and of course I took the Rapid right down at the corner of Avalon; and my husband took the Rapid to work for many years, I took it to the airport all the time, we still had family back there.

I then switched and went to Boulevard because I needed a bigger house and my kids could now hit a baseball through the neighbor's window, so we went and bought a house on Sedgewick which was part of the original Shaker community, I think we were the orchard.

But I still have all my friends here. I knew one person when I came here, found another person through my college club where I went; my mother found me cousins who lived here, my family came to the State of Ohio in 1789 in the Cincinnati area.

But, dogs could run, we had a dog, you didn't have, no leash laws back in 1962. I was able to be a part of the community, they put me on the Fernway PTA Board before I had a child who went there <laughter>, because I lived on Ardmore Road which is right across from the school almost, and one of my children at age four climbed up on a slide, we didn't have a soft area around the play yard, we had one large slide, and my four-year-old fell off of it and somebody came running down the street to tell me that he was lying prone on the macadam and I was not happy with the



slide and so I went to the school and went to the PTA Board, which they immediately put me on <laughter> and my child started the next year.

But, I was, you could be active in anything. I probably would have gone to graduate school but I was too busy really to go to graduate school with three sons to raise, and I worked with the PTA. I knew **Jim Eicher** (sp?) who started to lead tours to what was the Shaker dump that turned into the property where the Shaker Lakes Nature Center is today. I was part of that from its beginning, I'm still part of that. You never have to give up anything when you stay here, everybody is around, people's parents, all my friends in Shaker, their parents lived maybe out in Chagrin Falls, they didn't move very far away, they stayed in the Cleveland area.

We had tree lawn planting which I'm sure the Van Sweringens would have loved, and we're taking care of that now again. I bought my first house in Shaker because I took my kids to Thornton Park. We had a swimming pool, a community pool, everybody joined it, everybody, it was very inexpensive, they had a coasting hill in front of it, so we all brought our slides, our sleds, and went down the coasting hill.

Shaker Square was, it bordered...I could find my way around, if I got to Shaker Square, I knew I had to turn around to get home, and if I got up to Warrensville, I knew, there were very distinct borders which after being in New York City where I was first after college, it was very welcome.

My kids in bicycle jungle played in Doan Brook all the time. And I'll never forget the day that my middle son came home and told me he'd had a wonderful coasting ride, we'd had one of our August rains, and he had gotten his float that he uses at the beach, and he'd ridden down the Doan Brook on this. <laughter> I was not terribly happy with that. But at Fernway....

**Steve Minter:** Maybe there's somebody else who wants to also say something.

**Ware Petznick:** For the sake of the recording would you state your name? Because I don't know who you are!

**Ann Lawrence:** Oh, I was Ann Lawrence when I was in Fernway and I'm Ann Lawrence Herbert now.

<video 2: 8:48>

**Ware Petznick:** Wonderful! Thank you, Ann. Ok, who's got a question?

**Keith Arian:** I've got one.

**Ware Petznick:** He's the boss! All right, Keith?

**Keith Arian:** I have a question of the Minters and also a couple comments, I'll go with my comments first.

When I moved to Shaker twenty-six years ago, one thing I noticed is no matter where someone lived in Shaker, they thought their elementary school was the best one, didn't matter, they all felt, and I think it's probably still true today.

Next point is, I spent a night or two at Cleveland Clinic couple, maybe ten years ago and the first question that everyone asks you who's an employee of Cleveland Clinic is where are you from, because everyone who goes in the Cleveland Clinic is not from Cleveland, or most people. I said, I'm from Shaker Heights, right up the hill and they said oh, you're so lucky to have world-class health care, whether it's the Clinic or UH, we're very fortunate to be that close.

Now for just a bit of advocacy. All of you and the theme of this program is the Van Sweringens. In the entire city of Shaker Heights, there's only one thing that refers to the Van Sweringens, and that is Paxton Road, named for O.P. Nothing else in the city has their moniker on it. They had a lot of warts, and they had a lot of issues, but, if it wasn't for their foresight, we wouldn't be here today. So I've been quietly advocating, I was hoping during the Centennial, that we could get something named for the Van Sweringens. My idea, Mayor, was the street right by Horseshoe Lake, which no one lives on, right off of Park, call that Van Sweringens' Way. It's kind of a double entendre, because they got their way, they always got their way, you know you had to be approved for the colors, and to move in, and all that. Anyways.

**Ginnie Dawson:** They still do.

**Keith Arian:** They still get their way.

Anyways my question for the Minters, as an interracial couple when you moved to Shaker, what was the reception like? That was early sixties, I think you said?

**Steve Minter:** Well, we obviously chose very carefully where we wanted to live. And I have to honestly say, that we've only had a great experience here. We've never ever had problems. And maybe to put it into some perspective, we would walk to Shaker Square. And every once in a while we'd look over and we'd see another interracial couple. We were as curious as everybody else.

<laughter>

**Dolly Minter:** We'd say Oh look! Look!

**Steve Minter:** And I think...But it's important to understand, that by 1960 and '61, there was a lot going on in this community, in terms of what was occurring in Ludlow and you know I could sit here and name off twenty names of people of our generation and others who would immediately identify, we know those persons. So it wasn't to say we weren't going through a lot of tension. But there were a lot of people who were determined that this was going to be a different community. And it was not only just about black and white. It was about the Jewish community. It was about a number of other persons moving in. It was about the change that said, maybe we're going to have a black congressman elected, or a black mayor of the city of Cleveland. And you know there's a part of the city of Cleveland where it's really Shaker. I had to tell some fantastic stories about that when I was coming back. So I think we basically had a wonderful experience. We made a selection, we had an expectation, and I think this community lived up to that expectation.

**Dolly Minter:** Oh yes, absolutely.

<video 2: 13:36>

**Mayor Leiken:** I don't have... I just wanted to make two observations that I think are important. One is that, we have grandchildren here in Shaker and the Shaker schools just like the Minters do. That is a great strength of the community...

**Ware Petznick:** That's okay!

**Mayor Leiken:** Whoops, sorry to knock that off...that people come back who've gone through the Shaker school, and then they bring their children, and then you have these multigenerations in Shaker.

The second, just a quick observation, and it connects to the story I told at the beginning about the school board, and the closing of the schools. What we kept hearing when we were talking about closing schools was, you will destroy Shaker Heights because these neighborhoods that have been such an integral part of the community, that were created by the Vans, will be destroyed, you're smushing everything together, the neighborhoods will lose their identity, and you will no longer have Shaker Heights as we knew it, and it's now twenty-six years later, and what are we having, a presentation before the Historical Society about the nine neighborhoods, nine original neighborhoods including the four where the schools were closed. So those people who said, you won't have the neighborhoods anymore, grossly underestimated the strength of people's feelings for their neighborhoods and the strength of those neighborhoods and their ability to survive even without the schools.

**Ware Petznick:** Carol? Carol McWilliams?

<video 2: 15:20>

**Carol McWilliams:** I've been here forty-one years in one house on one road, and I think they'll take me away in a pine box. But when I moved into this house, I knew only one thing about Shaker. My father had gone to school with a gentleman who was head of the, at that point it was the Western Reserve Law School and so, as a child we were on an east coast trip, we came through and we stayed with this man on Warrington Road and his wonderful family, it was the only time I'd been to Shaker, and I thought it was a kind of a pretty place. So when I got married, my husband was a professor at Kent, and I had taken a job as a professor at Cleveland State and we looked at four different areas and the best buy for our money was Shaker. It had the most potential houses and it was definitely the most economical for us, for two professors.

So we move into this house and pretty soon we had a little child. And the people next door, said, this gal called and she said, you know, could Jeremy come over and help you decorate your Christmas tree? So I said, well sure! So he comes to the back door, and he says I know Carter is Christian. And I thought, my son has no idea, he's only one and a half, he has no idea he's Christian, but you can certainly decorate our Christmas tree. <laughter> So that was one side.

The other side, we had an eighty-five-year-old lady, who traveled on every continent in the world, her feet were always out the door. And so we had some really big snows, I think it was maybe '76. Just horrible snows! Well we called her and invited her to dinner. And I think, my husband, we shoveled a path, and I think he carried her from her house to our house. And we had her, I mean the snow didn't make any difference, but we thought maybe she didn't get her groceries. So on one hand, we just had wonderful people next door to us and across the street.

The two sides of the street were actually divided for our children playing safely. There was a big huge rock. The street was Norwood Road and it was between Parkland and Van Aken. There was a huge big rock on either end of this street, so our children would meet at the rock but they didn't cross the street to play with the other kids, because we didn't want to worry about the kids crossing the street until they were much older. So we kind of had these unnamed rules.

And then they grew bigger, and they could cross-country ski on the golf course. And then my kids became athletes in high school, I mean real athletes, like Division I athletes. And they only reason that happened was, they ran through Shaker, they could run miles and miles. My husband was a discus thrower in college so he actually planned this three-mile route. And they still do it, they come back now with their families and their spouses and they do the three-mile course in Shaker. And eventually they would bike to Chagrin and run to Chagrin when they were doing marathons and Iron Men. But Shaker was so gorgeous and so easy to run... dark, six in the morning, or whatever. So it was a wonderful place, and the diversity was huge for us. And it was very natural.

Most of the people, I was on a number of different boards and early elementary stuff with **Jean Stylak** (sp?) <noises of recognition from the audience>. We were trying to set up the Young Things and PTA and Junior Great Books and active in Plymouth, but with all of that, the thing that amazed me was that, no one needed to wear on his sleeve 'I am so good, I am the best, this is the place to live,' it was very, very low-key. And I think a complement to that was the person who did our Centennial. I think she pulled a lot of things together and did it in a way that nobody needed to say I get the credit for this. And to me it's kind of a healthy way, to have a neighbor, and do your best, and compliment someone else. You don't have to be the 'I' up there.

But anyway the neighborhoods were wonderful, our street of course was the most special. So today we not only have block parties and we have done floats when we have the Memorial Day Parade. Our street did three floats. The first was Support Our Troops and we go down to our neighbor's garage, and we put all the little tissue paper in, and then we reworked for another one that was kind of the same vein, then we turned it into George Washington. Norwood Road I think was the only street that had a real float. And then the next year we had Abe Lincoln and George Washington and Betsy Ross. But Abe & George didn't show up, but Betsy did.

So we've just had a lot of fun and now we have a pink pig.

**Ware Petznick:** Which is in the corner.

**Carol McWilliams:** Which is in the corner. And the pink pig is, you have to come again. Always invite the Mayor because you want to make sure your streets are paved. So you always invite the mayor. You thought it was just because I've known you for forty years and I voted on the school board. But, from Chicago, someone came to Maynard Road, which is next to ours. And my friend on Maynard said Carol, we're having, we're doing pink flamingo and I said what in the world is that. Well you've got to come. So anyway, it came from Chicago to Maynard and it's like a Friday-night Happy Hour, and there are rules. The five rules. First of all, it's five to seven. Secondly, anyone comes on your street or if you have family visiting, they come, the kids. The third one is, you bring what you want to drink. The fourth one is, whoever hosts it needs to do it very simply because you want another neighbor to do the pink flamingo. So anyway, you have very easy treats, and it's just a terrific amount of fun but not a lot of work. So I said we have to do this on

Norwood because Norwood and Maynard are kind of brothers and sisters. So I said we can't be flamingos, so we just did a pink pig. My next door neighbor is a graphic designer, and there's a guy down the street who's a sculptor, so we cut out the pig and it's here and then we painted it. Yes, yes, there he is, the pink pig.

**Dolly Minter:** Shall I lift him up?

**Carol McWilliams:** So if you ever see that in Norwood when you're driving down the street you must come to our Friday night pink pig, but you must of course be gone by seven.

**Audience member:** And bring what you want to drink.

**Carol McWilliams:** And bring what you want to drink.

Anyway, I think the camaraderie of the neighborhoods I think several of you mentioned that. To me that is huge. At midnight you could borrow sugar, you could call somebody to watch your child because you have to go to the hospital five o'clock in the morning. People are just good and they don't need to wear things on their sleeves.

**Steve Minter:** And we still get our garbage picked up.

<laughter, various talking, indistinct>

**Ware Petznick:** Does anyone else have any questions because I think it's about eight o'clock? It's eight o'clock!

Thank you Mayor for being here <applause> and thank you everybody! Right, so we will transcribe this, it will be in our library, we'll share it with the library and the high school...

<video ends>