

Laguna Woods History Center
Community Oral History Project
Transcript

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ABSTRACT: An interview with Lee Bevilacqua who shared about her early career in New York, New Jersey, and eventual move to California. She worked for Mobay, which was a Monsanto and Bayer company. As a resident of Leisure World, she became an active volunteer. She supported The New Owners' Orientation Program, World on Film, Channel 6, and the History Center. As a Board of Trustee of the History Center, she has been essential to the organization's newspaper digitization project that was completed in 2017. She will turn 100 this year. Lee shared her thoughts about this milestone.

00:00:00 JK: We're here at the Laguna Woods History Center. It's April 1st, 2017. Lee Bevilacqua is here with us. My first question for you is can you please share about being born in New York in 1917?

LB: Do I...?

JK: Would you please share about being born in New York in the year 1917?

LB: Oh! Yes, I love New York City. My parents really were from Italy. They were immigrants and they landed in New York City. And that's how I was born there, but I didn't live there very long. I moved...subsequently they moved to New Jersey.

JK: And what was New Jersey like those early years?

LB: Very nice. I lived there about, oh, 50, 60 years.

JK: And what was it like growing up in an Italian household during this era? Would you share about growing up in an Italian household during these years?

LB: Well, it was kind of exciting. My parents...my mother had a tutor to teach her English because she couldn't speak English. And she went into business at a fruit and vegetable store. And that's why I ate a lot of vegetables and fruits...but, was interesting, yeah.

JK: And your parents had a fruit and vegetable operation. So, you went to the city, correct, to buy produce?

LB: Exactly.

JK: Okay.

LB: And I used to go...before school. When I was in high school, I used to go to the market there and bring the produce back and put it in containers to make it look very nice in the windows, you know.

JK: Lovely. And you had other occupations in the city. Would you share a little bit more about maybe your high school years, your college years?

LB: Well, after high school, I worked in New York City for many years, yes, doing various jobs – secretary and so forth. Yeah, I worked in New York City many years. I love New York City!

JK: And then the war happens, of course, this is all during the war years.

LB: This was before the war.

JK: This is before the war. Okay.

LB: Well...went into war, I felt that I should contribute something. So, I decided to join the Marine Corps.

00:03:08

Marine Corps

It seemed like a smaller unit. That's why I joined it. And I worked with...in Quantico with the commandant there, doing various jobs. One of my last jobs I liked very much is when we were mustering out soldiers when they were coming back from the war from Iwo Jima and so forth, yes.

JK: And what was the feeling of the nation like at that time? What did the nation feel like during war? Was there a feeling it evoked?

LB: Well, we were on rationing and I think there was a feeling of cooperation. I think the women joined helping, you know, working in the industries. And I felt there was a quite [comradery], you know.

JK: And you certainly helped the war effort by serving your country. So, what was your unit like? What were some of the jobs that you were assigned?

LB: Oh, one of the jobs was working for the commandant there in the office there.

JK: Okay.

LB: And then the second job was mustering out the...yeah...that's all.

00:04:42

Career: Mobay, A Monsanto Bay Company

JK: Neat. And then eventually you worked for Mobay, a Monsanto Bay company in the 50s.

LB: Yes.

JK: So, would you share about your various positions in this company?

LB: Well, I...Mobay was a company that was...it was Monsanto and Bayer. They called it **Bayer Mobay**. I started typing there and then I went to be a secretary. And then I was transferred to their executive offices in Pittsburgh to be a buyer. So, I bought chemicals for making dyed stuff[s] and things like that, yeah.

JK: And you retired in 1982.

LB: Yes.

JK: And you received awards and honors for your contributions from what we've read. So...

LB: Here? Well, I volunteered in the Senior Center taking cash, being a cashier. I volunteered at the stables in the office doing the telephone and managing the summer picnics there. And I volunteered for many years for TV 6 during their programming.

JK: Yes. Before this, I'm going to take you back just before...we're gonna get to these questions. But, I wanted to ask you how you moved here. So, you knew Ted Martin from a purchasing agents' meeting. So, would you share about how you met and that's how you came to California. So, we will discuss your contributions.

LB: Oh, okay. Yes, well I was at a purchasing managers' meeting and there was a man there who said, a gentleman said, "Who'll volunteer to do this particular job?" And I said, "I will." So, we worked together and this man was from California. And I was a widow at the time and I decided when I retired from there to move out to California. And that's how I got here. Romance brought me here.

JK: And this is 1982...is your first visit to California, correct?

LB: No.

JK: Think it was around there? Your move in 1984...maybe a year...?

LB: About '84 or something, I think.

JK: '84, okay. So, you arrive at Leisure World at this time. What did you know about it prior to coming?

00:07:45

Leisure World

LB: I knew nothing about it. This gentleman and I decided to ride around and look at places to buy. And we decided to look at this place and we bought a place together here, yes.

JK: And where did you move first? Where did you move to? Which community in...?

LB: Right here.

JK: Just exactly...okay.

LB: Yes, it's the only place I lived in California.

JK: Okay. Great.

LB: I didn't live anywhere else.

JK: Okay. And did you, at the time, know about the founder, Ross Cortese, and the Rossmoor Corporation when you moved here? Were you aware of who he was as a founder about Ross?

LB: Oh, yes.

JK: You did know.

LB: Yes, because in New Jersey there was a similar place there.

JK: And did any of your relatives or friends know people who lived in New Jersey - the Rossmoor Corporation built there or you just heard about it?

LB: Well, I had a sister and a brother who lived in a Rossmoor, yes.

JK: In Jersey?

LB: In New Jersey.

JK: In New Jersey. And then your sister eventually moves here, correct?

LB: When I moved here, she moved here.

JK: Okay.

LB: Because she was also a widow, yeah.

JK: Okay. And about the same year in time?

LB: Yes.

JK: Okay.

LB: All the same time, yeah.

JK: Okay.

LB: 'Cause we had the one mover do us.

JK: It's easier together.

LB: Yeah.

JK: Yes. So, do you remember her thoughts because I know she's...you and your sister still are actively...

LB: Yes, oh, yes. She became very active, yes.

JK: Okay. Wonderful!

LB: Yeah, she...the only way to...if you're active you really enjoy what you're doing. And you get to know the place. I think I know this place very well.

JK: Sure.

LB: Yeah.

JK: You shared with us a little bit about some of your pastimes and some of the amenities through the club. But, specifically would you share with our listeners about some of the things that you do living here? You had mentioned Bridge and needlepoint. Would you share a little bit about that, your pastimes?

LB: Oh, well I used to do a lot of needlepoint when I was looking at TV. And I have a lot of it around the house also, very nice, like they're from...like a Degas *The Dancing Girls* and a Renoir. All in needlepoint and they're very nice. In fact, I have a needlepoint there. You saw that.

JK: Yes, you do. Lovely!

LB: Yeah.

JK: And you took lessons, Bridge lessons here? Is that correct?

LB: I took Bridge lessons.

JK: Okay.

LB: And I took the beginners twice. I was just...but I, but it...we made a lot of friends through that because we both took Bridge and we played Bridge a lot.

JK: Great.

LB: So, we made a lot of friends there.

JK: Do you enjoy the clubhouse and some of the activities surrounding them?

LB: Oh, we did a lot of...well, I did some [volunteering] at the Film Club. And we did...enjoyed a lot of the plays and the concerts and things like that. We really utilized this place a lot, I think.

JK: Sure. And then you became very involved as a volunteer. So, we want to shift into that session of your life of becoming very active. So, TV6, would you share about programming for them? What your role has been...?

00:11:50

TV 6 and Programming

LB: Well, it was really not very...

JK: 15 years.

LB: I'd go once a week and I would go Monday and I would find out who was going to be at...there on Tuesday, you know, and take all that. And then write, you know, how when you see these people on TV they have a sheet of paper in front of them. And that's what I did, I just typed that up. I enjoyed working there and then...

JK: And you knew Rob Merritt?

LB: Yes.

JK: Okay.

LB: Yes.

JK: And your relationship with him?

LB: Yes. Mostly was Bob Merritt, that's right. And then now Paul. You know Paul?

JK: Yes.

LB: He's great isn't he?

JK: Yes.

LB: Yeah.

JK: And you saw the channel change, I'm sure. So, what changes did you see at Channel 6 having worked there for 15 years, volunteered for that organization? Any significant changes?

LB: Well, I think, yeah. It's hard to say. They're trying to...they're really...I notice the changes now is that they seem to have more movies. We used to have movies once a week on Monday. And now I noticed they have it quite often. That's the change that I've noticed, movies.

JK: Sure. And you also were the cashier at the Senior Center?

LB: Yes.

JK: So, would you share for our listeners what that is?

LB: I just used to sit at the desk and collect the money. That's all.

JK: For the meals...

LB: Yes, for the meals. Yes.

JK: Okay. And you also were involved with the Saddle Club and you did...it said office work and reservation chair for that organization.

LB: Yes, and I used to do the...in summer they had picnics. And we used to buy, people used to bring their own meat to put on the coals, you know. But, they had to bring their own vegetables and things like that, yeah.

JK: And this is at the Equestrian Club, is that correct?

LB: Yes.

JK: They met at the Center?

LB: Yes.

JK: The Equestrian Center? Okay.

LB: Yes.

JK: Were you ever active with those...with The Equestrian Center itself? Did you ever like to do horseback riding?

LB: Yes, we did.

JK: Okay.

LB: My sister and I took horseback riding lessons. We never drove in our life and here we were about 65 or whatever and we get on a horse and it seemed monumental. We did...we succeeded.

JK: Absolutely.

LB: We went around the place a little bit.

JK: What was the feeling like?

LB: It was great!

JK: Yeah.

LB: Yeah, I loved it, yeah!

JK: And it must have been natural to do that given that they...

LB: Yes. Have you ever been on a horse?

JK: Yes, it's magnificent.

LB: You ride? Yeah.

JK: Yeah, such a feeling. And then it says here that you've done work cashiering with Kiwanis Club and other organizations such as Meals on Wheels.

LB: Yes.

00:15:31 **World on Film picture**

JK: Ebell, membership chair for World on Film. So, a lot of different groups and then New Owners' Orientation Program. Would you share about your contributions to the New Owners' Program?

LB: What?

JK: The New Owners' Orientation Program. Would you share about what your contributions were there?

LB: Really I don't think I contributed there, no.

JK: No, just maybe some things here and there. Okay. The most significant thing, of course, has been your work here at The History Center. So, would you share about your involvement joining as a trustee and your role here at The History Center?

00:16:11

Laguna Woods History Center

LB: Well, I started here at...taking telephone messages and so forth. And then I got involved with doing the clubs' storage which was each year sending out bills to the various clubs. We had about, I think about 200 clubs here. And we would sell...I would send out invoices for them to pay up. And it was quite, it was a job because a lot of them didn't pay up quickly. And you had to make calls and things like that. So, that took up a lot of time, yes. I'd start in the end of January, be about 4 months before you'd get it all done. But, we would get...

JK: Would you share about what you provide to these clubs? So, they rent space, correct, in the archive to store their club materials. Is that...that's the partnership?

LB: Yes, that's the clubs' storage out there. Yeah.

JK: So, they store club minutes and photos from events. What do they typically give to you to store? What kind of things are the clubs giving to you to hold onto?

LB: Oh, what kind of things would they store?

JK: Uh-huh. What are they giving?

LB: Well, I noticed that they stored a lot of information about events that they presented. For instance, if they had a dance, they would store that and the photos. And whatever activities the clubs had, they would store here. And most clubs at that time had an historian. And the historian would bring that stuff into the place here and...yeah. They don't seem to have historians any more.

JK: No.

LB: No.

JK: Not as much.

LB: Yeah.

JK: And, of course, you are the essential part of the digitization project.

00:18:38

Digitization Project

LB: The digitizing that we're doing now?

JK: Can you share about that?

LB: Yes, we're doing that. I do it twice a week and I understand that we only have about two years left to do, which is great.

JK: And this is primary newspapers?

LB: It's...we take *The Globe* and we put it on a machine and transfer it to the computer. And that's what it is, yeah. And we've done many years of it. So, now we're, as I said, we only have about two more years.

JK: Amazing!

LB: Yeah!

JK: Myra Neben just interviewed with us.

LB: Yes.

JK: So, that's wonderful because that's protecting her contribution for years of writing with her team.

LB: Yes!

JK: So...

LB: Yes.

JK: That's amazing!

LB: Yes, I don't know which year, about year 2003, or something like that, I was Leisure Worlder of the Month.

JK: Yes!

LB: I think you knew that, yeah.

00:19:56

Leisure Worlder of the Month

JK: Will you share about that honor? So, of course, you were...that's a remarkable accomplishment. So, March 1st, 2006 we found that you were the...

LB: Oh, was it March 1st, 2006?

JK: Uh-huh, Leisure Worlder of the Month. What was that like? What was it like being named?

LB: It was an honor, really. I never expected to be honored with...someone brought me roses that day, you know, a nice bouquet of red roses. And, I don't know, what else can you say?

JK: They took a formal picture. You had a ceremony from what I understand.

LB: Yes!

JK: They presented you...

LB: Various people spoke in my behalf. I'm trying to think. Bob Ring spoke for me and that's when he called me a Worker Bee.

00:20:54

TV 6 Photo

And the one on T.V. You just...what's his name?

JK: Rob Merritt?

LB: Rob Merritt spoke for me, Bob Ring, Bob Merritt.

JK: Wow!

LB: Who else? And some other person I don't remember.

JK: How nice!

LB: Yeah.

JK: And then of course they gather artifacts on your life.

LB: Yes.

00:21:20

Leisure Worlder of the Month Photo

JK: So, articles written about you throughout your lifetime.

LB: Yes.

JK: And those are stored in the archive as well.

LB: Yes.

JK: So, you made history and you've become part of history. So, that's wonderful. So, of course, that's quite the honor to be acknowledged. Former Golden Rain director, Earl Donaldson, and fellow California club member said that the organization frequently benefited from her care and concern. Her direct quote is, "She's always so reliable. Anything she says she'll do, she'll do. And does even more than her heart."

LB: Wasn't that nice?

JK: Yeah!

LB: Yeah!

JK: That's quite a statement.

LB: Yes.

JK: And...

LB: Yes, I remember Earl.

JK: How lovely. So, you also did volunteer work from what I understand for Assembly[man] DeVore. Would you share about how you did this?

LB: Oh, yes. I forgot all about him, yes.

JK: Would you share a bit?

LB: Yeah, I was on the second floor of the Community Building there. And DeVore, yes, I forgot what I did...mostly take calls for him and relay the messages to him. That's all.

JK: Neat. That's the essential part of servicing the community.

LB: Yes.

JK: He needs to be in tune. So, was that your first time becoming active with politics in particular?

LB: Yes.

JK: Okay.

LB: I was never active in politics.

JK: Okay.

LB: Yes.

JK: And then of course when Bob Ring is pursuing cityhood, you took an active role in calling residents...so, share about that?

00:23:07

Cityhood

LB: Yes. We...a group of us got together and we made calls during the evening because that was the time that you could get people at home, 6 and 7, 8 o'clock. And we would call and...telling them about...

JK: Like maybe El Toro Base a bit...about El Toro Base and the airport issue. Is it about this or...?

LB: No, nothing to do with El Toro Base, no.

JK: No, okay.

LB: It was everything to promote cityhood.

JK: Cityhood. Okay.

LB: We were just...there was a group of us calling to promote cityhood.

JK: Okay. And what was the tone of the community? What were they telling you as you called them?

LB: Well, I was surprised there were a few descending people that I was shocked at. As a whole, they all agreed to go into cityhood. We had a vote for that, you know that.

JK: What do you remember about the vote? Were you at city hall at the time or watching live on T.V.? Where were you when the vote was being...?

LB: I don't remember.

JK: No.

LB: It was the year 2000.

JK: Okay.

LB: Yeah, I should remember.

JK: Sure.

LB: Yeah.

JK: What was the feeling? So, of course, it happened. What did the area do to celebrate?

LB: Well, most people were very happy about it. We had enough talented people here really to run this place because most of the retirees here are very talented. They come from various backgrounds and...

JK: Excellent. And then it's incorporated and then it's renamed Laguna Woods Village in 2005.

LB: Yeah.

JK: So, do you remember that happening and just the change in name? What did that feel like?

LB: There was a poll out for that and that was a predominant name.

JK: And were you involved with any other political pursuits?

LB: No.

JK: So, after cityhood more involvement, maybe at The History Center?

LB: No.

JK: Or did you...

LB: At city hall I wouldn't say it was political. You just did your work.

JK: Sure.

LB: I did some...I'm trying to think of what work I did there, but I can't.

JK: Okay. And then the 50th anniversary just happened in 2014.

00:25:51 **50th Anniversary**

LB: Yeah.

JK: And The History Center had the book issued and celebrations followed. How did you celebrate this with your community for the 50th anniversary?

LB: I know.

JK: Yeah.

LB: I don't know how I said...

JK: Did you do maybe the book signing events? Were you present for those when...with Bob Ring and others?

LB: Well, when I sat at the desk there, I would promote the book. And try to sell as many as I could, you know.

JK: Sure. So, these are just at the celebration or other community events you're representing, The History Center selling the book or...so its many events you would go to, to tell people about The History Center? Like maybe fairs and maybe other places? So, maybe other clubs? Did you present...?

LB: Well, most...we had someone. I think that one of the presidents went to various clubs and tried to promote it there. Yes, I remember that part. Yeah.

JK: Okay. And as a trustee, you certainly played a [role] on this board. So, you've seen different presidents run this organization. So, who have you worked with over the years? So, of course...

LB: Here?

JK: Yes, would you share about them?

LB: Mostly, well, mostly with Bob Ring. Most of the time it was with Bob Ring.

JK: Sure.

LB: And now with Dean.

JK: With Dean.

LB: So, it's the only two people I worked with, yeah.

JK: Okay. Great! And what do you hope The History Center accomplishes in the future?

00:27:39

The Future of the History Center

LB: I think they've gone a long way, really. They're really on top of everything. I don't know how to say this, but I've gone to other History Centers and they were in very poor condition. Not as up-to-date as this is. And Dean has done a lot more to bring this up-to-date.

JK: And you have sponsors now and it sounds like other ways to promote.

LB: We did for a while. And I don't know whether we have any more now.

JK: Sure.

LB: Yeah.

JK: So, the Center is evolving like any organization. So, do you have any goals for them for the future? Is there anything you hope they can do as an

organization?

LB: No.

JK: Just kind of maybe do as they do.

LB: They have a nice place here, don't they?

JK: Sure.

LB: Very nice.

JK: Their archive...

LB: I don't know if you've ever been to any other History Centers, have you?

JK: Yes!

LB: Did you see...

JK: It's really an impressive scale how they operate.

LB: Isn't it? Did you see that?

JK: Uh-huh.

LB: Yes.

JK: Especially the archive.

LB: Exactly.

JK: Having a temperature controlled environment, reaching to the community I think the clubs certainly benefit from that.

LB: Sure.

JK: But, what I'm always amazed is the digitization of your artifacts. So, why... especially why you're here is to reflect upon your contributions because that's usually the last stage for people's programs is to digitize. And the fact that you're involved with that, that's remarkable!

LB: Good!

JK: So, good work being done.

LB: Good! Yes!

JK: So, maybe it will teach other organizations, you know, so.

LB: Yes. I thought we've gone a long way since I've been here, too.

JK: It's great! And then of course you have social activities here. So, is there any highlight of special events that you've had during your meetings and general events? Is there anything...

LB: Well, like for instance, when Bob Ring left we had a party for him or [Myra] Neben. So, when anyone who was active here would have a little party, was a celebration.

JK: Sure.

LB: The last one was Bob Ring's.

JK: That's neat.

LB: Yeah.

JK: I want to ask you more about being a resident here. So, would you have lived anywhere else during your last series of years that you've lived here? Would you think about...you've done some traveling...so, I do want to ask you about that. So, of course in your retirement you've traveled a lot of places.

LB: Yes!

JK: So, let's start there. Would you tell us where you've gone since you retired?

LB: Well, when we lived here, we felt that we didn't have to take care of a house or grounds. Each year we would take a trip. One year we would go to Italy, Europe and then another year we went to Asia. And then we went to Africa, another year South America and so forth. So, each year we took a trip. In addition to that, we both participated in a lot of activities here. So, we just loved it here, you know. What is there not to like, you know?

JK: Sure. Have you ever imagined yourself living anywhere else that you've been? Is there...or you feel this has been the perfect place for you?

LB: No, I think this is the perfect place for us.

JK: Yeah.

LB: Good climate, California, you know.

JK: Yeah, share about your coastal shift. So, you had mentioned that from New Jersey coastline to California, you live in a beach community.

LB: They're similar...

JK: Right.

LB: ...because they're both long. New Jersey has the mountains. California has the mountains. New Jersey has beautiful beaches and California has beaches. So, I...whenever I look at them both I think how similar they are, you know.

JK: How neat.

LB: Isn't it surprising?

JK: Sure. And then I would expect family from back there had visited you here. So, what did they think about Leisure World at the time? What did they say when

they came to visit you?

LB: Oh, they all like it. Yes.

JK: Sure. Neat.

LB: Have you ever...you've been around here, haven't you?

JK: Yes.

LB: What do you think of it?

JK: It's lovely. It's well maintained.

LB: Isn't it?

JK: Yeah, amazing. Well planned.

LB: Yes!

JK: Master planned community.

LB: Yeah.

JK: Yeah. Anything about the history of this community that strikes you as interesting? So, of course, Ross Cortese had such a great plan. And of course you're aware of the history, so.

LB: He really took care...thought of everything, really did.

JK: Yeah.

LB: I never...imagine - we have five swimming pools. Who would think of that, you know. And now I understand that they...they have pinball playing or something like that. I don't know.

JK: Like an arcade or something like...to gather?

LB: Yeah.

JK: Okay.

LB: Yeah, they have...

JK: Wow! And then bowling, I understand.

LB: Bowling and they have table tennis, regular tennis.

JK: Golf.

LB: Golfing.

JK: Yeah.

LB: They have tournaments. And what is there they don't have? I don't know.

JK: And all your clubs. So, if you don't have one from what I understand, the community can create its own, correct? So, a resident can organize a new group or

an activity?

LB: Yes!

JK: So, okay.

LB: Yes.

JK: Do you think there are more clubs today than there were at the beginning? So, you've seen all the archive side of things.

00:33:40

Clubs

LB: Yes.

JK: Do you know if there's any change with that?

LB: No, I don't think there's more...there's some of the going by the wayside because the younger people come in and not interested in some of those other clubs. I was trying to think, we had a Women's Club and that went by the wayside. No, I don't think it's...they're changing because now that we're having young boomers come in, they've changed a lot which is good. Then we have the Computer Club which is great. So, it really changes with...yeah.

JK: And then The History Center has worked with the Video Club. Have you been involved with that project at all, with the Video Club?

LB: No.

JK: No. And then you mentioned the Women's Club. Were you active in that?

LB: No.

JK: No.

LB: No, I was not too much of a joiner with clubs.

JK: Sure.

LB: Because I was volunteering and then traveling. So, I was never a club person.

JK: Sure.

LB: Yeah.

JK: I did want to ask you, a lot of the community gardens...is that something that you do yourself, a lot of gardening?

LB: No.

JK: No. Okay.

LB: I don't do any gardening.

JK: Or the arts and craft rooms. I know you do art, but I was wondering if you made use of those rooms on site?

LB: No.

JK: Okay. All independent. Okay.

LB: I'm not artistic.

JK: Okay. So, they did a...the third Leisure World community survey in November 2004 looking at all the programs and wanting to know demographics. So, is there any changes in demographics that you see right now with people moving in? And...

LB: I think they're younger people moving in. And I think that they seem to want to do different things which is fine.

JK: What are their interests do you think that are different?

LB: Well, they have a club called Boomers. Yeah, you know that. And then I understand they do this pickle bowling and Tennis Clubs and, you know, things like that. Yeah, they're quite active.

JK: And they're starting to attend your functions, I understand, here? They're starting to get involved with The History Center, is that correct?

LB: I have...no.

JK: No.

LB: We're trying to get people involved in The History Center, but that's difficult because everyone seems to want to be busy. And they choose their clubs as they choose this...like we used to go swimming every day or, you know. And I think The History Club is last in their...

JK: So, are you...I...from what I hear, you're doing engagement with Channel 6 News has a local feature. So, of course, recently The History Center was featured on that. So, you're using some of the tools to get the message out into the community, correct?

LB: Yes.

JK: Okay. So, do you find that those things are starting to work with...?

LB: I think so.

JK: Yeah.

LB: I think they will eventually. Yes.

JK: Okay.

LB: I think so.

JK: Sure.

LB: And are there any other tools that you use, like newsletters to the community or maybe through the newspaper do you advertise that you know of?

LB: No.

JK: Okay.

LB: Although, Dean said he was going to advertise. I didn't follow that up.

JK: Okay. And then with new residents, their orientation, correct, is coming here with the tour.

LB: Yes. I see that every Thursday.

JK: Every Thursday, okay.

LB: Yes, I noticed them.

JK: Anything you notice about the people who are looking to move here? Any changes that...with the people themselves or...?

LB: Tell you the truth, I don't notice. I'm so absorbed to what I'm doing.

JK: Sure, which is probably for the best...right, with your projects.

LB: Yes.

JK: Okay. Any other projects you do with The History Center? So, you of course work in the archive. Do you do any other special assignments?

LB: No.

JK: No. Okay.

LB: It's going smoothly.

JK: It is, very much so. We want to acknowledge your age. Of course you are 99 right now. And you'll be turning 100 in three months. You shared with us. So, can you share about how you feel?

00:38:31

Turning 100

LB: Well, I'm just shocked! I've lived a very busy life. I went to high school and worked after school as an usherette in a theater and just seemed to be busy all the time. And I think that's contributing to my age because I never thought about age at all. And suddenly I'm 99 and I'm shocked! Well, when I look back I really think it's...has to do with a lot of keeping your mind busy. I do puzzles every day, crossword puzzles. So, I think that helps a lot. And then...oh, I know a thing that helped a lot here is that I used to walk everywhere I went. I'm not an exercise buff, but I try to walk all the time. I think walking is a great thing.

JK: Absolutely!

LB: But if you're in other exercise that's great, too. But I was chicken, the easy thing for me to do was to just walk. So, I'd walk to the mall from home and I'd walk most places, yeah. But I really do think that keeping your mind active is the...helping old age. It's the only thing I can think of, you know. My parents died at 76 or 75, so, there's no longevity in the family.

JK: What about your health practice with maybe your eating as a child? Do you think there's something you contributed there?

LB: Well, coming from Italian immigrants, I always was on a diet because I wanted to have a nice figure, you know, when I was younger. But, yes, I always ate lots of fruits and vegetables and pasta. I'm a pasta fiend. Do you like pasta?

JK: Love it.

LB: Me, too. And Italians cook a lot of vegetables. I remember as a kid, one dish I remember my mother always made was pasta with broccoli. I used to love it! Did you ever have pasta with broccoli?

JK: Yes, delicious. Do you still make these dishes yourself or do your kids or anybody in your family still make these dishes you're mentioning? Anybody in your family?

LB: Yes.

JK: Yes. Did you tell them how to, some of the Italian dishes, you train them how to make them?

LB: Yes.

JK: Okay.

LB: We used to...I used to make ravioli with my mother. My mother used to make a lot of things, you know, Italian cakes and so forth.

JK: Are there cultural clubs here that celebrate heritage such as being Italian or is there anything you're aware of as...maybe?

LB: I don't...never thought about that.

JK: Yeah.

LB: Never thought about that, really.

JK: Sure. No, it's...

LB: It's just that like in high school at the time that I went, all ethics groups were ostracized. Like my name was Angelina at the...and we were called names, you know, like mafia and things like that. So, I Anglicized it to...I tried to be a little more American which...and I changed my name after high school to Lee, L-E-E. And now of course I'm sorry because I didn't realize that I come from good heritage, you know. What background do you have?

JK: We have...very diverse.

LB: What?

JK: As Americans, we represent that global experience of German, British, and onward, so.

LB: Yes, yeah. German. Yes.

JK: Primarily with the last name.

LB: Yeah, I worked with this German company for years. Yeah.

JK: Yes, that's right.

LB: Yeah.

JK: I have to ask because given the context of the time you were born in, the feeling of the Italian community in New York, was there ever a feeling because of war that was just part of the challenge?

LB: No.

JK: It was never about that?

LB: But we were segregated...

JK: Okay.

LB: ...like most people were like the Germans and the Italians. We were segregated and in high school I think we all had problems like that because the United States is a, I don't know the word, is a combination of every nationality.

JK: And coming out west, do you think there's a different mindset about those kind of things? Is that anything that you've considered? Is it the same or different or...in your opinion?

LB: I think the east coast is more segregated and I think they have more problems in the west coast. I don't see that problem in the west coast here. You know the denigrating of different nationalities. I don't see that, I didn't see that here.

JK: Yeah. Wow! Well, you certainly have seen so much change in your lifetime from as a young girl in New York City to today.

LB: Yes.

JK: And so reflecting on that, is there something you'd like to share about all those experiences, anything that we've missed over your almost hundred years of experience? Is there something that you'd like to mention for...?

LB: I don't know. I think I've been so busy that it's suddenly it's...a hundred. I didn't realize that the age was there, you know. I've been blessed with good health, you know.

JK: Certainly! Maybe your thoughts on technology. Would you share because you are actively using a high-tech German-made scanner from what I understand from Bob Ring, so.

LB: Well, I took a class in the high school, local high school here to learn how to use the internet. Yes, I did that...high school down the block.

JK: Sure.

LB: Yes.

JK: And what are your thoughts of having seen the evolution of technology? What do you think about all of that?

LB: I just...it's mindboggling. It certainly is, really. The only problem is that just too much information out there, just too much. And I don't know where this technology is going, but I don't have a computer now because I was hacked. I think I told you that. It feels terrible for everybody to know what you're doing every minute. Are you on...do you use your phone?

JK: Sure. Yeah, it's a...it can feel like you're vulnerable. I think that's how it feels.

LB: Exactly! Doesn't it make you feel that somebody's there? Yeah. When my old phone was hacked and I found out it was from people from Vietnam I thought to myself, "Gee! I was scared in the house a little bit."

JK: Right.

LB: Yeah. You have to be careful.

JK: You do.

LB: I wonder where we're going now.

JK: That's the big question and so they, you know, I think it's always good to see progress and ask these kind of questions.

LB: Sure.

JK: And keep people accountable for the technology.

LB: And they have little kids using...

JK: Right.

LB: Little...they're cute. I saw a little kid using one the other day, I think 6 or 7, and I was shocked! And I thought to myself, "Gee! And I'm scared of that! Oh!"

JK: They're almost born with it.

LB: Yes!

JK: With an iPad in hand so it's a shift, for sure. I've seen the change myself.

LB: Sure.

JK: So, but you are embracing it here, the technology, that's certain.

LB: Sure. Oh, yes!

JK: We commend your work.

LB: Sure.

JK: For all your efforts.

LB: Sure.

JK: That's great! Any parting thoughts with just the community or just anything to reflect upon what you've experienced as a resident? Is there anything we've missed in this?

LB: Well, I don't...haven't had any problems 'cause the residents. I don't know, I think the people that I associate with love it here. So, we haven't...we don't have any derogatory comments to make about it. They're continually changing, of course, which is good. And we're up-to-date on a lot of...

JK: I hear it's becoming more diverse, too.

LB: Yes!

JK: The population.

LB: Sure.

JK: So, you have a more...

LB: It is.

JK: ...ethnic backgrounds and I think that's certainly enriches a community. So, and I'm sure it's been documented with The History Center, all the change.

LB: Dean is great!

JK: Yes, he is!

LB: Yeah. We're lucky to have him here.

JK: Yes.

LB: Yes.

JK: He's a strong leader.

LB: Yes.

JK: So, of course, you work with other trustees and might anybody you want to recognize that you've worked with over the years?

LB: No, I better not say. No.

JK: Nothing in particular. Okay. Just want to give you an opportunity.

LB: Yes, yes. No, no.

JK: Sure. Well, we...that concludes our set of formal questions with you. And so...and we appreciate your time. So, if there's anything else you'd like to mention...?

LB: No.

JK: ...want to keep it open. Okay. So, that concludes our interview with you today. And thank you so much for your time!

LB: Good, I'm so glad!

JK: We appreciate that.