

Laguna Woods History Center
Community Oral History Project
Transcript

NARRATOR: Maxine McIntosh

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ABSTRACT: Maxine McIntosh was born in Orange, California. She attended university at Chapman University with her husband. She became a 4th grade teacher. In her 50s, the McIntoshs moved to Laguna Woods. That was in the 1990s. Maxine is a thirty-year resident. She has served on the GRF Board and has helped with elections.

JLK: We are here at the Laguna Woods History Center on July 24th, 2023 to conduct this oral history with Maxine McIntosh. My first question for you is what brought you to California?

MM: Well, I was born in California.... I was born in Orange.

JLK: What was your first perspective of Leisure World? Who told you about it?

MM: Even though I drove with my father for his errands in this area a lot while I was growing up. Her husband and she invited us to dinner. And lucky for us, they were way back in the corner from gate seven. So when we went that evening, it was still light out. We really saw a lot of the community. And right away, you know, "Boy, this is beautiful. That was the first thought we had. Isn't this beautiful? Drove back to her house, had a wonderful evening there, and we left at 9:00pm. And I was so impressed because two different times we passed women alone at 9:00 at night after dark, feeling safe out, walking little tiny dogs. And I said, Don, we need to look into this village. And that's what turned us on to asking all the right questions.

JLK: Who showed you your property? How did you find your home in Laguna Woods?

MM: We interviewed with three different real estate agents because we knew this would probably be the last move of our lives We hoped it would. And so we chose the one that we thought was very willing to show us anything and everything and very understanding of what we were interested in. Took good notes. Each home she showed us really accommodated what we had said was on our list of needs quite nicely. So after we had selected her, we went around looking at The Cordova. The Cordova is the largest in United Mutual of the one story manors, and we knew we'd need the

space. And then found out what a Maltese cross is. And I guess it's only about eleven of those in the village because Cortese found out very quickly it eats up too much land. You're putting buildings that otherwise are always like four in a row, side by side, and occasionally there's a six-unit building. But these you're like an A plus sign and it's in the shape of a Maltese cross. So we just we were very lucky. Two women were moving out and we found one that had my daughter hadn't had her children yet, and I knew she would and she lived close. So this one has a beautiful big lawn out front and so forth. Everything appealed to us that we needed.

JLK: Would you please share your knowledge about the founder, Ross Cortese, and the creation of the Rossmoor Corporation?

MM: Yes. And I feel sorry for new people moving in. We used to have statues of him and tributes paid to him, which he never expected and never asked anything like that to be done. But people did it because he really was thinking about seniors. I hadn't met any I hadn't viewed any other senior communities that we and we had probably visited about 4 or 6 by the time we chose here. That seemed to address so many needs of people starting to age. And I thought, "Boy, this is this is for us." And I was tired of taking care of big lawns. And he had carefully planned all that out. And the fact that he had to stop by the time he got to Gate One, he could only finish the unit that was going across the street into the co-operative structure because the I believe it was it's called FHA was covering his construction loans and they just really didn't understand cooperatives. And they said, "We're not sure, Mr. Cortese, that you're going to make a go of all this, so we're not going to loan you any more money if you keep building cooperatives. And that's why he shifted to condominiums for the rest of the village. So when people come here, they have three choices, really. They have a choice of buying a cooperative, which we just love it. The whole community really lives up to that name. Cooperative, Ah. A choice of a condominium which many people are already familiar with. The cooperative. You have a stock certificate? No problem selling it at all. With a condominium, you have a deed. And then there's the towers known as Mutual 50, where you have really nice hotel living. So I thought that was wonderful, too. And we have I've met quite a few people who have moved here when they were quite young, and then they decided they didn't want to leave when they couldn't handle the house anymore and so forth, and they just moved right into the towers and loved it. But Cortese had, he really had a view for himself of where he was going, what he was aiming for, and he really followed that. He promised that, after I forget whether it's one swimming pool or two, had been finished, he said, "But I promise you I will build at least two more. I promise you we'll have, what do you call them? Bowling greens." And he kept all those promises. It wasn't just something to help him get everything sold. And he was selling a lot of property before the buildings were even finished. People had heard about it, wanted to move in and trusted how it was being handled. So he really he just really he came into what I call the wilderness area of Orange County. And I remember one time thinking when I was driving by and seeing the equipment going hard at work, I was thinking, "Why would anybody want to move here when they could live in Costa Mesa or Newport Beach, you know?" And of course, it's been beautiful ever since it opened. And that's the comment I've heard the most through the thirty years we've lived here is from I always like to meet new neighbors and find out what enticed them to come. And they nearly always say it's so beautifully, beautifully kept up. So some people complain. I like to have teas in my living room and when I'm not real busy with

something else, I'll have one every month or two and invite maybe 16-20 women. And I always invite one or two board members to help new, especially new members of the community get acquainted. And I'll ask them, what were the three things that made you decide to move here? And nearly all of them say, it's so beautifully kept up. I feel like I can walk, walk [with] my friends. A lot of them are walkers. I was a walker for most of those years. They just they see it the same way we did, just a beautifully kept place. And in talking about the people that will write a letter to the editor in our paper and complain that the flowers aren't right by their front door or some plants aren't looking good, we figured they'd probably, you know, we kind of analyze it. They probably were accustomed to a full time gardener or at least one that came often enough. He made everything the way they wanted it, and we know we're not paying for that. We're paying for overall excellent maintenance. And another thing that was wonderful to discover and part of Cortese's plan was how staff would be taking care of things. For instance, we have all these different departments open to the residents. They can call, they can go in and talk to people and so forth. They all serve directly to the boards. The boards make the decisions for our property. But all these different divisions of, I think we have about 800 employees here because our village is so large. We are at approximately 17,000 residents now living here and over half of them are women. And the census was just released, but I haven't read it yet to see if they brought down our average age based on the census. Previously, the average age of a resident here was 78. But now I think it may have come down a year or two. So the staff were always indoctrinated as to what kind of people they're serving, people who have more time, people who may have all kinds of questions they can answer for them. And you look at our list of departments in the front of our phone book, and if you're planning a party, there's a department to call for that and they'll help you. They'll help you set the date. They'll give you lists of caterers, if you need it. You know, all kinds of things that you might not think of in most retirement communities.

JLK: What do you find is one of your favorite amenities in the community?

MM: Swimming, yeah. My husband and I used to swim in all the senior swim meets and in fact, one year we qualified to go to England for the finals over there for the seniors. Neither one of us won in our category. We were up against people that were really practiced and we practiced like retirees, you know. But swimming is one. Walking, definitely being able to walk anytime before dark in the light in the morning after dark at night, walk anywhere. And all the walks are lovely to look at. You have nice things to view. Those are two. And then I like I've joined the one club twice because it was interrupted by board service and that's the Daughters of the British Empire. We lived in England a year and just fell in love with the country. So I really enjoy that club and that that's part of what enticed us was at that time. I think there were 200 clubs. There's many more than that now. And I thought, "Oh my gosh." And these are open to everybody. Oh, yes, anybody can go in and join. And I just I thought, "Boy, we're going to have plenty to do when we retire." You know, we're not going to have to drive all over Southern California. We'll be able to have it right here in our community. And after we had lived here about two years because we had some remodeling to do and oh, we'd moved too much stuff trying to figure out what to do with it. So we finally felt we had time to test the waves. And so we took several months and went around to all these different organizations meetings. And I remember one club was having a money maker on a Sunday at Clubhouse Three and they were having a Bingo game. And I had we hadn't

played Bingo since we were children. And I thought, "Oh, that ought to be fun!" And we went to the Bingo game. Oh my gosh, these people, you know, rent ten cards and watch all of them. I could only keep an eye on two and. And they people that play bingo a lot and of course they can do that. You can have one card or you can have ten. But I never dreamed that I'd see anybody with more than one card. But people love that game. And so quite a few other groups have Bingo games. We went to something at Clubhouse Five where they were having a dinner and we soon found out that the things advertised in our newspaper, our village newspaper, *The Globe*. Trips that different clubs say they all invite you to join them when they're advertising in that paper, they want to fill the bus. And so that's how we got to, the I told you, we love museums. Now, I don't want to say Norton Simon the new. We have one down at Malibu and now we have this one on the Getty. The newer Getty. And we didn't have to drive through that traffic. That was all arranged here by the recreation department. And we all met by clubhouse three and left our cars there. And then I always would start a conversation with other people. I wanted to hear why they moved and what they were enjoying. And I was talking to a man at Clubhouse one shortly after we moved here and asking him what he enjoyed and what he really liked. And he said, "You know, there's something maybe not everyone thinks about. He said, "But I really don't like to drive after dark anymore." He says, "I'm 90 years old and of course I'm 90." I wouldn't have guessed that he looks so young. But he said, "Yeah, it's 90 years old." So when they have an activity, which they did, they had a church service each week and then they had a military group meeting there of which he was with, which he was acting. And he said if it usually ran after dark, then he would take the bus because somebody had arranged for a bus to come. He would take the village bus home. And then the next morning, when it was bright outside and sunny again, he'd get on the bus and come get his car. He could leave it all night in the parking lot. And he just he felt it was as safe as in his own driveway. And I thought that's something I wouldn't have thought of, at least not until I was older. That's neat that the organization was there for excursions and trips to places as a group. So and if [you] can't find the club you need, they'll help you form a line. Right. I remember we used to have a China painting club and I haven't heard about it lately, but I went in to see what they were doing. Painting, beautiful, serving dishes and all, and they were really just very, very artistic people. Only about eight in the group, but they used one of the smallest. We had two really tiny meeting rooms at that time over at over at Clubhouse two, and they used one of the tiny ones. And that's another thing. Every clubhouse has rooms where you can meet and you can have parties, you can have boutique sales, you can have your meetings, you can take lessons. Look at Clubhouse three, also known as the Performing Arts Center. There's dance classes there. There are all kinds of clubs that meet, but some of them are orchestras, orchestral clubs, and they're using their music. They're folk dancing. I've seen folk dancing classes over there. And then enough of the churches seemed to come aboard and have services here that it helps the people who are really not driving anymore. And they'd rather not go outside the village. They just love it that they can go to a church service. The selection is such that you can find one close to what your church was before you moved here, if not exactly the same. You know, just it goes on and on. When when we moved here after comparing to other places, we had examined my husband sit down and he figured out what it would cost to live here and what it was costing to live at home in this empty house with the big empty yards that need all the work. And he said, I figure we'll save \$650 a month if we moved to the village. And he showed me, you know, and of course we won't be paying. We had a landscape fellow in twice a month. We won't be paying him.

And we had a pool because we had a disabled son at the time. And we don't have to pay for all the extra treatment of the water. It just went on and on. You know, you have the nice big house, but I didn't want to get down on my hands and knees and wax the kitchen floors anymore. And we were hiring all these people to keep our home going for just the two of us. So we moved and we realized that saving I'm sure we still would today if we had a current rate, you know, to compare it to. But that was an extra point for us, was that we were we were going to pocket some money that we weren't used to doing once we moved here. Everything was one story. One little step. And our oldest son was still alive. Todd He had a condition called cerebral palsy, and he was really in good health, extremely involved with his muscles, very bright, found good ways to communicate with us. He was he just fell in love with it because everywhere he looked, we could take his wheelchair and we liked to bring him home, you know, 1 or 2 weekends a month. And that was another factor for us. And we have a lot of other disabled children living in the community that parents find. It's quite easy to accommodate them along with their own style of life. But to have. To save money and then have all these options of things we could do. It was just. In fact, I remember when we finally moved in, it took us about a year to get the big house ready and empty and and to finish looking around and everything. So we'd been thinking about it for a year, and I began to worry, what if. What if something happened? What if there was a big fire and we didn't get to move? I thought it was almost too really too good to be true that we were going to move into this environment. See, I was ready for it. And I remember when we first moved in and we came through the gate with the moving truck and I just felt it wash over me. Oh, we're finally here. We belong here. And, you know, I've talked when I was on the board of directors, I used to enjoy doing my walks in the morning, I take paper and pencil and I do an informal survey, you know, and I tell them I was just doing this for the board just to give us some information. This wasn't formal, blah, blah, blah. You know what? What was the most motivating factor for them moving here and so forth? And about 20% of them are a little more would always mention the golf course, but most of them mentioned the broad things. There's so many choices. We like the way it's landscaped and so forth. They were really so content and it was wonderful to hear that because we had made this our choice. And then since then, as the years have gone by now three times, I would say in the last month, I've talked to someone who said, you know, when my husband and I, they were traveling quite a bit in the States, when my husband and I get home after we'd been gone a week or so, we come in that gate and we just feel, oh, we're safe again. We're home safe. We're home. Just that wonderful feeling of you're back where you belong and what a safe place it is. And we we feel that any time we go away. We really do. We're just always having a good time traveling. But we're just so glad when we get home. It's home. It's really home.

JLK: What changes have you witnessed with thirty years of residency here?

MM: What changes have I seen? All right. One is we did not have a Clubhouse Seven that was built about. Oh. I'm trying. See, I've been here too long now, and I can't equate the years with history, but it was built probably while I was on the GRF board and GRF being in charge of our amenities and our security and the bus. I always would go to the meetings whenever anybody was talking about We're spending too much money on bus service and I would go to stick up because all these bus riders would come to any of us who had served on the board and say, "Please be there for us."

And I and I always would say, "You know, if we live long enough, most of us will want to use that bus because we'll give up driving, if we live long enough. Give up driving. We're going to be really glad." And now my husband doesn't like to drive anymore because he's old enough to stop. I do the driving for us, but like today, he wanted to go to the senior center. He's learned to use the busses and he takes the village bus. It's wonderful. And so that gone from the great big busses, which are more expensive. The bus committee has made good references to the boards about how to save money, and one was getting these smaller busses that you see in service now because it's not very often they're full, they're just needed frequently all over the village. And that's one thing I'm really pleased about. Two of the smaller buses, Clubhouse Seven we were worried about how much it would be used. It's used a lot. We needed a place for the card game. They all play or like all of a sudden, goodness. [What] I was saying flew out of my mind. Poker. Well, anyhow, they have a big club and so they were given a room there. The room they were using next to the pool was inadequate and they were given a big room there. Another thing is the community center used to be right right here. And it was actually a storage building when Cortese was first constructing this part of the village. It was it wasn't built to really last forever. And we needed one that would and one that offered more space for all the offices and our own village television station. So they bought the air hotel. The owner of the Air Hotel was selling and so GRF worked through that and managed to buy that. And that's where our new community center is. I call it the new one, and I do miss that. It's not inside the gates anymore, but other than that, it really provides all the room needed to run a village this big. Let's see other changes. We've we've had about five different general managers. And the the one we have now, Saban, I think, is terrific. I think she'll be remembered as one of the very best we've ever had. She she's so busy, but she keeps her hand in everything where it should be. And she's really knowledgeable. She's really educated herself because it's different working here. And it's hard on a CEO, a village manager, because he has to accommodate three different boards of directors and what they want to do, and they're not the same thing. Oftentimes it's not an easy task. But our first managers, except maybe for the very first one, came up through the ranks. But now we have real professionals, the last three, including Saban. "I like that. I like that," she said, every board meeting. So, the board meetings are televised on our Village television. People can watch them there replayed several times and they have an easy time to get to know her. Now, let's see what else. They were practically doing everything when we moved here. There's a lot more clubs and the clubs all started. We have an archery club now because there was a need for it and they go to the board of directors who's in charge of that? And they plead their case. And if the board feels they can afford it, sometimes, now, people raise their own money to get a new club going because the one thing true that we have to be careful of is we're now as old as a lot of these big family homes that people are rattling around in. And they're going to have the same needs. They're going to have to have a new roof, going to have to have a new driveway out front, etcetera. So now, when I first moved here, things were still new enough. You didn't worry, the boards weren't talking, or at least our board wasn't talking too much about replacing, remodeling, building and so forth. And as time went by, I've seen that increase and we just have to be sure that we plan and we have had a fund for the future needs of all these structures since I was on the board the first time. Golly, that's been about 15 years. So we have had a special fund for that that we do not use for anything else. I think the community around us has changed. When the village opened. This was kind of way out in the boondocks, and that's why they had a close connection with the hospital just developing

and doctors' offices, which eventually became Saddleback Community Hospital and separated from the maintenance and the authority here with the village. But that's Ross Cortese again, knowing we're going to be pretty far away from all these doctors in Santa Ana and the hospital, the big hospitals, "So I better provide something to get older people willing to come." And he did. That's another part of his. Vision that he had of what was important and making sure it became a reality. What else have I seen changes in? Oh, when we when I first moved here, nobody was remodeling their manors. Not here, at least not in the Cooperative Mutual United. But bit by bit, the boards were being approached by residents and they listened to the residents. All the board members live in the village, too, and they live in the area that they're responsible for maintaining and and covering the costs for and so forth. So they listened to the residents and the residents were saying, But I would sure like to change my atrium. So many of the homes in the first part of the development had an atrium in the middle of the house or on one side of a bedroom. And what it did in the summer was allow too much heat in because the homes weren't air-conditioned. And so they started getting permission to put in air conditioning, although my husband had still never wanted in this lovely climate. But some people do, you know, they can put in air conditioning and they are allowed now to go through the correct committee here, get their permits at our business office, and they can remodel quite extensively. They can get a lot of the inside of their manors. It's harder to change the outside, and that's important to protect all of us. We want to be sure that all the buildings in one area harmonize in architecture and they've been that's something new. Having see having to set up committees to review all these things is new and they're doing a pretty good job of it. We had a couple of pancakes that fell flat on their face years ago and it showed the board immediately. We needed an architectural control committee, which we have now for condos. Don't worry about that. They don't do they. They don't have. Well, they can still get they're still getting permission though to change their buildings quite a bit. So there's more freedom to make the home more like your own. Of course, a nice thing about the cooperatives is if you have an original, most of it is maintained for you. But once you start tearing into the walls or the lights or the adding structure where there was an atrium, then you become responsible for that part of the building. Only the cooperatives were covering that. Most of us are kitchen appliances are still covered. When I need a new dishwasher, I call up and they'll say, okay, it should be repaired. It's too old. We'll send out a new one. And we're never charged extra for that because we have kept the original appliances in our kitchen.

JLK: Would you please share about serving as a director of GRF and your years of service?

MM: Well, I soon learned we were here about three years, and every once in a while someone new I'd meet would say, "Well, in which mutual do you live?" I didn't know. I'm just like a lot of the other new people that move in, they shouldn't be embarrassed. We were so busy with all the things going with the new move and I'd say, "I don't even know." And so someone said, "We just go to a board meeting. They're open to everybody and they're so interested and you can leave any time you want. You can go in any time you want." And so I did. And I was fascinated and I was fascinated by some of the people. I thought they were such responsible directors and others I felt were not not really studying, not really preparing carefully for the meeting. So I saw different kinds of people involved in leadership. And then I found out about all the committees and it makes sense. You have one board of directors for each of the three mutuals, but they can't make

all the decisions in a meeting a month. So they have all these support committees. They have a maintenance and construction committee. They have a recreation committee, they have a landscape committee, etcetera, etcetera. When something new comes up that's going to expand like we did with architectural control, they make a committee for that. So the committees have staff help them get the research they need, they look into it. Now, a committee cannot spend any of the money that we all pay each month into our mutual. Only the board of directors can approve that. So the committees are support for the board and they try to give them as much information as they can to help them in their decisions and. I joined different committees. I let it be known. I started commenting. I started asking other people things and sharing them. And so I was asked to serve on a landscape committee and I was asked to serve on a traffic committee. Etcetera. And I learned a lot being on the committees. And then eventually I ran for the board. I was running against a lot of the at that time, it was very competitive to get elected to the board. And you had to make all these fliers. Then you had to get people to help you distribute the fliers and so forth. And I, I didn't make it to the board the first time. And one of the board members that wanted me to said, When you come to the board meetings, get up and speak about some of these issues you've brought up at a committee. So people out there voting know who you are and what you look like. So I did that for a year and I got elected the next year. That was my first term on the board. So I was on for three years. And then after a few years I took the place of Lenny Ross, who had to leave the board before his term was up. So I finished his term, which was a little less than a year, let's see, 7 or 8 months I believe. And then GRF. That was so interesting because GRF has no money of its own to spend. You know, if you notice Oh, I'm sorry, you don't live here. Anyone who lives here who looks at their annual charges that are mailed out to everyone toward the end of the year, you see that a portion of your monthly assessments goes to GRF. It'll be maybe \$225, \$250. I'm not sure what it is now. I look at it once and forget it, I'm afraid. But that's the money they operate on is what the board send them, so to speak. Therefore, the boards are responsible for oversight on GRF. If GRF wants to do something costly like Clubhouse Seven, was anything big like that, they have to get the approval of the other board members from the other boards. Those board members are all called corporate members and they have to have their approval. It's all part of the good government structure that's followed here. And so that interested me. And so I joined GRF and. You know, went through. We had a group that didn't like something we were doing and would come the day of our meetings and they called up *The Register* to bring out their reporters and their photographers, you know, and they would have their signs just like they do in Washington D.C., and they would carry them. And we ended up all being good friends because a lot of what they were protesting, most of us began to realize was was a problem, a monetary problem that needed to be solved. So, accessibility is wonderful here, but the best way to learn what's really going on where you live is to go to some board meetings and then join a committee. Anyone in whatever area you like. I found them all interesting. And I once I was on a board, I would go to all their committee meetings the first year because I continued to learn just being in a chair at the meeting.

JLK: What committee do you find was most interesting that you think about the most often? What committee do you think you were you the most vested in?

MM: Golly, I really liked the traffic committee because we never called ourselves judges. I ended up

being chairman of that one year and that's what I was. I wasn't a judge. I was a chairman. And our officers would give citations when they felt they needed to. But anybody could come and protest at one of these meetings who had received a citation. But we got cameras put on all of our security cars and trucks. And boy, what a difference that made. I've time and again so many times I don't think I've heard any other statement repeated so often as the one I know I stopped. Oh, I know. I stopped it. I always stop at that stop sign. And then I'd say, "Well, we have a video of it." Let's look at the video. And an officer would show the video and there you'd see the wheels just kept going, you know, no, the person hadn't stopped and usually they were big enough. They would say something like, "Well, I thought I stopped. I really thought I did. I'm sorry, but no traffic was coming. Isn't that okay? Isn't it okay to go through a stop sign if you don't see any other traffic?" So I really learned a lot there. And I loved the way it was organized. It's part it kind of shows you part of the overall atmosphere here that nobody's here to be caught and dumped and picked on or anything like that. If you're doing something you shouldn't be, you're given so many kind opportunities to rectify it. You know, if there's a fuss between two neighbors and they haven't been able to resolve it so many times, it would happen over dogs. And you have steps that the community has, steps that people go through to try to reconcile that before they're given the threat. You know that has gone too far. You're not cooperating so that the final step on any of this is very seldom reached and when it is, we've have been severely ignoring. I'm trying to remember. We had a woman that had. Four citations here in the village. And at that time, this was the second time I was on the board at that time. And you couldn't drive in the village anymore for a year. So she was warned, you know, if you get another one, I mean, if you get a fourth one, you're not going to be able to drive. You can't just keep paying these citations. She would pay. And of course, our fees are quite low. She would just keep paying the fee. You've got to practice safe driving. You may injure someone and "Okay, I will. Okay, I will." Then she got her fourth one so she couldn't drive in the village anymore. Then she got a couple more driving in the village and you know it. She should have got stopped driving probably way before that. So that took some finally some legal motion there. Usually things don't have to get to the legal stage. Problems are usually resolved because the board has foreseen what the need is and addresses it before it occurs. And that means a lot living here, too, because you when you move into I know my son says when you move into a condo now he has his own home, but he lived in condos while he was saving to buy that home. He says when you move into a condo, so much of your life really is governed by how everybody's behaving around you and you can't control that. And I never feel that way here. There's not enough. Everything going on around me is 99% good all the time..

JLK: What years did you serve as a Golden Rain Foundation director? Would you please share what years you were serving on the board?

MM: Well, we had a really good year. You know, we were people were coming in and saying the doorknobs, the they weren't a pure brass and the finish, the paint is worn off. Okay. And we'd have staff take care. We were able to handle the things quite nicely. And then we got into a negative situation. We had someone, a new president, who wanted to really change our village. She and four other four other five other members. There's 11 on the board. So that was a quorum. She and five others had gone out and looked at a brand new condominiums or senior. Well, they were condominium senior complexes that had opened all different kinds, and they wanted to

modernize our village. And so they said what we want to do is move the clubhouse and the meeting rooms and everything from clubhouse. One, we want to move the close that gym and open everything by Clubhouse Seven, We should have all the activities in the same area. That's what they're doing now with these new communities. And you know, and. For others and myself, we would say to those communities housed almost 18,000 people. Well, I don't know how many. You know, when you have a lot of people, you want to move some of your amenities out where people can get to them more easily, which we had done. We had a small gym over in Clubhouse Five, which is several miles from Clubhouse One, etcetera. The village had been planned that way by Courtese and it was nicely spread out and there were enough there was enough extra space. You could add things like a fitness center at clubhouse five when you when people said we have a need for it. So this group just kept voting to they borrowed, took a big loan from the bank, you know, voting for things. And we couldn't stop them because we were the minority. There were only five of us. But eventually the board changed. You know, there's an election every year and eventually two of those board members went off. And then the people that were being conservative spenders and I consider myself a conservative spender, were able to take over and stop that before it got any further down the line. Nothing. Nothing was moved over by clubhouse seven. And. These people had beautiful ideas for maybe a brand new development somewhere. But, you know, I keep thinking about a lovely development in Whittier, a small one around a park in Uptown, the uptown Whittier, the city of Whittier, not all that many miles from here. And they had people had loved this park and had built years ago, over 100 years ago, these beautiful Victorian houses all the way around. So the city, of course, finally realized they needed to protect that. And those are the most expensive homes, at least the last time I looked there that you could buy anywhere, anywhere, kind of close to downtown. And it's because they didn't want to modernize it. They wanted to preserve its character and beauty. And I feel that way here. And a lot of other people feel that way, that we don't need to modernize our house on the outside. We don't need to change this structure and this because we are a 60s village and we want to look like a 60s village. Part of my time on GRF, I was fighting a negative impact and I felt so good when other people came on the board and we were able to reverse that. That really, really felt wonderful. We really straightened that out. We'd already had worried that we wouldn't get it straightened out because it comes down to the voting. So I was so happy.

JLK: What other milestones did you have on the board that you'd like to share?

MM: What other milestones? Oh, my. Let me think. Of course, when I ran for sheriff and was lucky to be elected, I wanted to find out about their closed session meetings. Every board is legally entitled to a closed session meeting for several reasons. If you're discussing a problem with a resident, if you have a dispute with an employee, if you're in court over something. There's 4 or 5 reasons you can only only 4 or 5 that you can legally have a closed session meeting. And unless you're on the board, you never knew what went on. Well, at the end of a board meeting, they might say something was decided that people were worried about that had been decided. You know, that. Well, we decided we wouldn't put a second story on Clubhouse Seven. In closed session or something. But that I wanted especially to find out what was going on in closed session. And it was really important because you cannot have secret meetings anywhere in the village by six or more board members. If you have six people together and they just happen to go

out to dinner together, that's a board meeting and they're supposed to invite the whole community. So we learned, we learned a milestone for me was learning the laws that we follow and finding out we really weren't following all of them yet because nothing had occurred to stir the pot. And as things were getting older, then some of these things were coming up and can we do this? And we had a good attorney and the attorney would say, Oh, no, right here in state law, 3 to 5. And it states you cannot do that. And he was the first one that I heard say, remember, if you have six people together for a baby shower, it's becomes a board meeting because that's a quorum. And we just hadn't thought about that. We just weren't having six member parties.. That I wanted to learn everything that was in the auspices of the Golden Rain Foundation. And I wanted to be sure I was correct on helping some people that came to me with questions. For instance, when we pay a bill here, we have our own broadband TV here, and I had ordered some extra things and I was paying the bill. You always make out your check to GRF, even though it may, the money may go to your mutual. You don't make it out to Mutual One or The Towers or anything like that. You make it out to GRF and then the bookkeeping department separates them as they go. But that confused a lot of people and they kept thinking they weren't being credited correctly or they were being charged incorrectly. And so I quickly got correct answers to that. Of course, a lot, a lot of the things I learned, I could have gotten answers just calling people up probably, and trying to get together with them or talk to them, you know, that were on the board. But they were so busy. So I just ran for the board. What else did we pass? Good rules for neighbor to neighbor agreements and satisfactions. You have to have rules about dogs. You can't have people that still work and leave their barking dog in the front in the living room all day long to bark at everybody. Things like that. We determine needs and we made good rules to cover them. I think you'd have to go a long ways to find. A system of rules that is so well-balanced for a retirement community. You know, you have. We all have to be ready to concede some things. Yeah, that's only fair. I shouldn't have done that or whatever. You know, if you get a citation for speeding. Yeah, I know. That whole village is 25 miles an hour. There's nothing faster anywhere. I had no business driving 35. You know, you need to concede some things and it's very fair. And yet there's rules there that protect your livelihood, your life. Maybe you know what's going on. You turn your dog loose after dark to run around all he wants and do his business and so forth. And that's only fair. So. Yeah.

JLK: Would you please share about moderating the 2023 United Board Meet the Candidates?

MM: Yes, I did that for a couple of boards through the years. What years are you asking?

JK: I was thinking this year in particular, 2023. I saw the announcement on online, so I was wondering about your most recent experience hosting.

MM: I did it a few years ago. Yes, that's really enjoyable. Um, that one was a little hard. I didn't have someone sitting next to me to help me keep track of the last person I'd called on to speak because I try to rotate all good moderators. Do they rotate? Who's gets the next question first instead of always in the same order? But when you're moderating that meeting, you're you're in control to see that the rules and there are rules that everyone can get and gets a copy of for proceeding with that, that you wait until you're called on. You never talk out of turn. And when there's a chance to speak, raise your hand, you know, etcetera, etcetera. And but one year. I was moderating and I

had a person running for office who kept trying to turn it into a personal meeting, talking directly to the people in the audience because we had a pretty good audience. Instead of going through the moderator and talking like a moderator, and I had to bring that under control. But I talked to that person later and there were no hard feelings, so I must have done it. Okay. But you have to be prepared for that. You have to. You have to a moderator has to be strong, not just a good presenter, but strong. So you can stop something if it happens. And we've had a couple of people through the years run that have no idea of what it takes to be a cooperative member of a board. They know how to put forth their own ideas, but they don't know how to work cooperatively with others or they haven't learned yet. And you can run into that when you're a moderator, but as a moderator, I was given the questions to ask, but then after those questions were asked, then I turned to the audience and they had filled out recipe cards with their questions. And I would read those questions and then call on people to answer. We run a good whoever's. We had good moderators since I've been here and whoever is running it, it's really well-done. The all the people that are running for office have understood what's expected of them by the moderator. They understand well all but the occasional one. They understand how they must follow the protocol. And it goes very well. It's very nice.

JLK: Would you share about Leisure World being incorporated into the city of Laguna Woods in 1999 from your perspective?

MM: And we're still one of the newest cities in California. In 1999, a dear old friend of mine, George Argyros and his wife... He and my husband and I, we'd gone to Chapman [University] together and had been good friends. He was doing very well in real estate development. And he looked at the El Toro base closing and he thought, that's a good place for a new international air base. And as soon as he started applying for different kinds of permits, just the planning stage, of course. It became public and we heard about it and the members of our boards at that time, I wish I could name them, were really, really good. They'd been carefully chosen by the voters and they were good, and they had to assure everybody they would fight that because when the Marine Corps was still there and the Marine pilots were learning to fly in, they would fly over our golf course to go into their landing. And we had a couple of bad accidents that ignited buildings over there. And they were from planes crashing. The driver, the driver, the pilot wasn't quite handling it right. Something went wrong and we just didn't want. And then that was just the Marine Corps pilots. What about if you have an international airport and of course, when people bought their homes here, the homes were the homes were all sold out. You know what, maybe 8 to 12 years after the last one, after the first one was built. And so there was no more land to develop for more homes. So these people were here to stay or whoever bought it from them was here to stay. And they never counted on being under an airport. It also created interference, I guess, on the television sets at that time. So, people running for the board that year and the year before had to promise they would fight that airport. And they did. And we really got the community together and we got we knew we needed city hood that we would be stronger being just county property didn't give us the the strength that being a city would in voting on things and sending people to sit on decision-making committees and so forth. And that's why we decided to become a city. The community had considered that a couple of years earlier, or I don't remember exactly how many, but I don't think we had moved here yet. And we would have been part of we would have had

Lake Forest with us, but or no, Laguna Hills excuse me, Laguna Hills would have been part of our city. And but the people voted down. You know, you have to put it to a vote of the people. They didn't want it. Well, nobody had talked about a big airport like George. Arduous did. Bless his heart. And oh, gosh, George is trying to push this plot. Oh, my word. I mustn't tell anybody that. We went to school together and I know him for about five years, I guess. So we really. Those board members really got people organized and they had people on every radio station, TV station they could, working with other cities, fighting the airport. And we were able to stop it, thank goodness. We got enough new homes that I've done some teaching over there. When I went to started substitute teaching, I really miss my teaching. So after a while I went into some substitute teaching and they have beautiful, beautiful schools built over there now where it used to be available for International Airport. So I was real happy to see the schools go in then the homes around them. The City hood argument is a lasting legacy of, of many residents of organizing and presenting their case.

JLK: Was the was it Saddleback City was the combination of Laguna Hills is that the motion and initially that was offered to residents the Saddleback City option of a global or a larger do you recall that's what it was?

MM: Okay. I don't know that. I was told that it would have included Laguna Hills?

JLK: Right.

MM: I think Laguna Hills wanted to keep their name and I hadn't heard after that. I'd heard that point. I see to Hills. And I presume that our board members probably would have given in if it was the only way they could get together. But it's been proven time and again what a benefit it is to be our own, to have our own city. And we're the biggest part of it. And of course we have other assisted living buildings and homes and so forth outside of our village. We live in the city of Laguna Woods, and then we are in Laguna Woods Village. Yeah, you have to keep those two separate.

JLK: Would you please share about the renaming in 2005 about the village with that motion as well? Would you share your recollections of the Laguna Woods village?

MM: One popular guy on the radio that everybody... You know how we say that? Like to listen to when they were on a long drive in the mornings he would talk about here and he'd call it Seizure World. And oh, did we hate that Seizure World. He said, "Have you heard about seizure world? You have to be 55 to move there." And oh, I heard yesterday that a man moved into seizure world and he had four dogs and he was told he could only have two. And, you know, and he was always and then he'd make jokes about it. But it was never Leisure World, he always called it. And he would say, you know, I got a letter correcting me, but I like seizure world. I think that suits after all, nobody really young can buy in there. And he was so antagonistic. That was part of it. And so we thought just to avoid other problems with the Ross Cortese family, who named the original name, we'll make we'll make our own name. And we had a contest and people turned in their we had a lot of good ideas for names and finally decided we'd keep the leisure, but we'd make it Leisure World. And we used to have a beautiful big globe out front here that was really well, right up

against where the freeway is now. And it was a big glow and it was a toupee. What would you say? It was a frame. It was the body of a globe in detail of the world. But you can see through it to the other side and what was going on. And because of the Cortese family wanted income every month. If we continue to use the name in any way, we had to take the globe down. We moved it for a while, but then we had to take it down.

JLK: Would you share about the 50th anniversary of the community in 2014.

MM: That was exciting. [Everyone] was very happy and we parties at several of the clubhouses. You know, I'm trying to remember there was probably a banquet at two No. Five, because it holds more people. Five is our largest. And everybody. The golf carts were all I believe that's when they first I first saw them all decorated like in a parade. And people were really celebrating.

JLK: Would you reside anywhere else? Would you consider residing anywhere else then?

MM: Would I imagine residing [anywhere else but] here? Oh, no. Nor my husband. Nor most of my friends. I have four women friends who took care of their husbands with Alzheimer's until they just couldn't take. Well, one of them was still able to keep hers at home. And but this was some years ago before they had the medicines they do now. And several of the husbands became dangerous to their spouses. But I thought that was very interesting. There's Alzheimer's in my mother's family. And I thought, "Boy, I'm going to ask all the questions I can and I go for tests every two years because I want to know the minute, the minute somebody official sees symptoms of Alzheimer's because, you know, you've you've had it for years before most people notice the symptoms." So I go every two years for a recheck on that. See, I've been three times now at the UCI mental health program. Yeah. To just just to be reassured. But when anything, when anything like that comes along and especially you couldn't be in a safer place. Our community is gated and fenced in and any gate that's open has an ambassador there controlling the traffic and so forth with emergency phones, connections to security and. It was easy for the boards pass the rules when the Covid started getting really heavy and it was easy to make whatever changes they finally. I never asked about those made at the gates to keep the amount of traffic going in and out, down to the essential people that you really had wanted to come in and see you that day. And things tightened up that way. And then the boards were able to make rules because they are in charge of that. And I know in our mutual we could not have a gathering of more than eight people till we got over the hump of that. And, and we know that was for our own good. And we were reminded on our village television daily many times, "Wear a mask, keep your distance, wear a mask, keep your distance." Such simple things to do that might prevent you having, you know, the disease. And that's probably why we were among the lowest of the cities in the county of Orange. Things like that are often compared in *The Register* by your zip code number. And we have our own zip code, so. And another thing, people have often moved here from the east and they don't know what they don't know what it is about the stock certificate. They're familiar with the deed. And I've had them ask me. They call before they move here sometimes, you know, what about this stock certificate? And I say, Well, let me tell you this. For many years we had a real estate company here that took a two page ad in our paper every month, every week. And they once a month would show how many homes had sold under each circumstance, how many homes

had sold that have the deeds to the property and how many homes had sold that have stock certificates. And I said many months more homes sold that had the stock certificates other times. And in some months it would be the condos. But always the cooperatives have sold just as well as the condos. People learn what it is and that it's so easy to resell. Then they appreciate it. They are more likely to want to be a part of that. I'm just so glad as I've gotten older. I'm so glad that I don't have to get out the yellow pages of the phone book every time I need something done on the house. I'm so glad somebody comes to the door wearing the logo. Laguna Woods Village, you know, And we were very young. We were in our 50s when we moved here. And so I wasn't really quite thinking of that. But that's the way it's worked out, that if you're going to live here the rest of your life, well, any part, any part of the village is wonderful. A lot of people from both housing mutuals like to move to the towers on a regular on a regular basis. You'll hear about somebody moving from one of the cooperatives here in the village. I mean, one of the mutuals here in the village. Did I lose track of that question?

JLK: That's exactly why you choose to live here. So now that we're here at the History Center, what are your thoughts about history and preservation in terms of your community?

MM: The history center is, as very glad this really, should have been built the minute anything else was.

My husband and I are both retired teachers and I love history and I love to be able, when something comes up that I might never think would go to a source and get the information. And this has always been so well run. People are just invited all the time. Come in and look around, see what we do. Come look at our I'm trying to remember the word for that beautiful, big diorama, three-dimensional diorama. Am I saying it right? I've used that word in a long time. Three-dimensional diorama out in the front there. And you can look at that like you're looking down from a helicopter and see where your home is in perception to everything else. And how much of the village is greenery, hills and so forth, and how much is under rooftops. I think you have to keep history about everything worthwhile. And this history is this history building and all and how wonderful to have it right next to the library. The two go hand in hand so many times. I like history. I like being able to get the answers when I'm especially when I was on the board, you know, I would need answers and the history establishment here would. Then the CDs came out, everything was on videotapes. They would tape our board meetings, and if I wanted to go back, somebody was challenging our board on something. "Well, that's what you people said two months ago." I want to go back and look at that. And I hadn't taped it myself. And I could come down here and borrow the tape. They kept all those for us as long as people were using the tapes. I'm sure they do other things like that since then that they know somebody's going to want and need, but that a number of us board members for a while they were in the library and I guess they got too numerous and then they moved them over here, which was really better because there aren't as many things going on here at one time. And you could sit and watch it here if you wanted. Maybe you just wanted to watch part of the meeting and I'd make my notes and then be on my way or I'd take it home with me and watch it later.

JLK: What do you hope the History Center preserves for the future along with that idea? For what? The future. What is your hope for the history center and what they preserve?

MM: All right. I hope a continued legacy of always being accurate. So many people who sometimes have what they feel are big complaints. They start getting a group together to complain together. Haven't really found their facts. Haven't really. Some of them have, and they end up changing the minds of board members. As I said, I had that experience and the woman in charge of that group that called out the photographers and so forth in the register ended up becoming a very good friend to many of us on the board. So once there's understanding, you know, things can go so much better. What was your question?

JLK: What is your hope for the history center in the future?

MM: To continue right in the same location and to continue speaking about what they do, going to board members, board meetings and maybe seeing some new activity they've been involved in. Maybe they were called on by the Irvine City Council to come and tell them how they managed such and such, which Irvine has a lot of retirement complexes available to people, but they're mostly all small compared to us. And anything new they're involved in. I think the, you know, all of a sudden, I can't think of it. We have the Laguna Woods Foundation and a lot of us well, a lot of people donate to that every year because you're donating back into your own community. 100%. It's all it's another volunteer like this, a volunteer organization. And they send someone to the board meeting every month to make a comment. And, you know, it doesn't have to be long. It can be a minute 30s But I think getting. And Katherine's been doing some, but getting more publicity that way is good, too. I want people to know this is here. What worries me is you never know when something really going well is going to be criticized and then come up for debate by different people and you want to be well-informed so you know what you're talking about with it..

JK: What would you like your community to accomplish in the future.

MM: The historical or the entire community?

JK: What are your hopes for the future? What would you like them to accomplish in the future?

MM: Getting getting more people to watch or come to the board meetings. It used to-we used to have a lot of meetings where the room was packed and now we get very few. And maybe we need to send out a survey and find out how many people are watching some other way electronically. And we're not aware of that because when we used to have the big crowds, we didn't have all these people were just starting to get their first cell phones. So we didn't have all these electronics available to us. But I want to see how any way possible to encourage more, more participation. People move here. So many of them are tired and they say, "Oh, I moved here to relax, not to go back to work. And it's hard for a lot. And I've run into this personally. It's hard for a number of people to accept that you can never stop showing an interest in what's going on around your home. That you never know where you're going to be asked to vote on something like when they had to vote on being a city or not, or if we change one of our laws of incorporation for our mutual. It takes a community vote. Are you are you ready to make that vote? We know there are some people have their caregiver vote for them because it overwhelms them. You know, but some

way to, stimulate people to take a few hours a year maybe, and go to a board meeting and stay for an hour and leave if you like, or whatever, but become aware of these are the people making the life and death decisions for us just about. It's not quite life and death, but it's close to that. You know, if we had anybody living here who was really hard on everybody else, if we had a really cantankerous misfit that just wouldn't take any of the warnings, wouldn't need any of the help offered help and so forth, that person would have to be denied. Living here, in other words, would have to be asked to move. So don't, know how that fits in.

JLK: What are your final thoughts that you'd like to share about your experiences here in Laguna Woods?

MM: There is an overall feeling. You have to be here to get that feeling. You head out in the morning and so many people walking by with their dogs out for the morning walk. We'll say, "Isn't it a beautiful day?" And you've thought that maybe all your life. A lot of mornings. But so many people are thinking it and enjoying it. Isn't it a nice day to be out? And I see a great day to walk the puppy. And I love animals, so I love it when they're friendly ones. You can pet, you know, and we'll be talking over the dog and and I just think the feeling of being. "This is where I belong. I'm in the right place for this point in my life, and I'm so happy to be here. I'm so glad I made it here." I might not have found it if that friend hadn't invited us for dinner. You know, I might not have ever been invited by somebody else when we were looking when we were out, because we were getting ready to make a decision within a year. And this is just the best. We would have just moved into a condo somewhere so we wouldn't have to take care of yard and and things like that and might not have been very happy. But there's a wonderful feeling here that you're where you belong. It's safe. It's full of people ready to help with anything you need help with. You can call on your neighbors, you call on staff, you call security, call anybody. And of course, if you directly call the police because somebody fainted in front of you, security gets the call, too. And they're coming to it's just a wonderful feeling, a feeling of being very, very safe. And to a lot of people who have moved out of L.A., that means even more than we realize. You know, when I was growing up in Orange, we'd never heard of dope. When we were in elementary school, we never heard of people taking dope. And by the time i was in junior high, we heard about the gangs in L.A. And my first year at Chapman. Chapman was still in Los Angeles, right next to Hollywood areas, and a bunch of us on a Friday night to save money because it was a private college and a lot of us were working part for part of the expenses. And a lot of us would get together, maybe eight of us, maybe 20, and get on an old We'd wait for the old rickety streetcar that came down the middle of the street and go as far as we could on transfers and then just get out and walk around for a new adventure. And by then maybe it'd be nine, 10:00 at night. We never felt it wasn't safe. We never worried about a gang coming up or people coming to rob us or something in that big city. And by the time, you know, Chapman had been in Orange a few years, I realized how lucky we were that Chapman got out of L.A. For a lot of people, it's scary living there. And so those people, some of those people have moved here and they say, "I feel very safe all the time," and safety is a big factor. Appearance is a big factor. And then when it comes to the amenities, most people are just amazed at how much is offered. You know, I was sure I was going to learn to play golf. I still have. I never found time. I've been so busy I hadn't found time. I did a lot of other things, but I just didn't get around to the golf. But I'm still glad we had the course. I

know it attracts, you know, a nice chunk of people and I heard a lot of comments about our stables. I've never been in a community that included the stables. And, you know, I can board my horse here for about a third of what it would cost at a private stables. And I took oh. Now, another thing that was important to me was the grand babies started coming after we moved here. And my daughter only lives a mile from gate three. And so as they got first of all, I took care of them two days a week when the last she always planned her babies close to summer. So those last few months I would help with the babysitting and when they got old enough, I gave each took each one of them to the stables. And because I lived here, I could get lessons for them, like \$10 each, really reasonable. And they loved it. And it made them love the village. And the oldest one, Sierra especially, you know, learned all the names and. No, his name is Thomas Grandma, not Tommy Thomas. You know, And, and when you start getting acquainted with some of these other activities, like the art group, the stable, you find out what's great. Social lives, they social activities, they plan and they invite everybody. Most of the time I went to some wonderful barbecues over at the stables, and I think that is just such a marvelous thing that we have that here and the early amenities I would never want to lose. And of course, we've enlarged pickleball. That was a new development after I moved here and people really enjoyed the pickleball. I noticed when I was substituting over in Irvine, one of the junior highs, they've installed pickleball courts for their junior high students in P.E. And I thought, "Boy, this must be growing. They're putting in the school." So it's a feeling of safety. It's a feeling of warmth. I belong here. Whatever goes wrong with your equipment or your house, there's somebody there to turn to right away. And even if you turn to someone who has to say, "Well, you know, that was if you look at your list, that was a remodel and you're responsible for that." Now, we're not supposed to recommend anybody in particular, but you might call these people who offered their names and see who they used and how they felt. And they there is they get to as close to that law they operate under as possible. You know that you don't get recommended for outside the village, but they want to be the staff really wants to be helpful. They're selected because they get along well with people in our age category.

JLK: Thank you very much for your memories of sharing so many roles with the committees and service as a board member. So this is a great perspective that you've offered. So is there any other comment or thing you'd any sort of perspective you'd like to share? Otherwise, that concludes our formal interview.

MM: Once people move here is really strong. If you, you join a club and you're using a clubhouse that closes at 10:00, but you want to have a special event, that's the additional flexibility in scheduling. You know, staff will try to work around you and let you have your extra time for your special party and so forth, and they'll help you. You know, I did my daughter's two weddings through clubhouses here. It was easier then. I think they had to put a stop to some of that by now because there's so many requests. But at that time we didn't have as many clubhouses and so it worked out. But um, is the way everyone tries to accommodate you your next door neighbor.

JLK: Lovely.

MM: Thank you very much, Jennifer. It is a privilege to talk about the place I love.

Laguna Woods Newspaper

MM: One thing I highly recommend, and nobody paid me to say this. I just highly recommend it is if you're thinking of moving here. But it's going to be a while. Contact the newspaper, the *Village Globe* and get a subscription that you can buy mailed to you until you move here. You learn so much going through that paper. My husband knew I was excited about moving here and we couldn't move for almost a year after we first came to dinner and found out what it was about. And so he went to the at that time it had a different name, but he went to the Village newspaper and *Leisure World News*. That was the name of it. And he talked to the office personnel and bought a year subscription for me and it was mailed to me. And boy, I read it cover to cover. And I was amazed at all these clubs and only and only some of them advertised in the paper, you know, list what they're planning to do. And of course, if anybody is welcome to come and join, it's a small number, but it's still amazed me that so many were written up and that and that's how I started finding out so many things that I found, you know, answered my questions that I would have had otherwise when we finally moved in. It is a great source of information and a good recommendation for good [resources]. It really is.

JK: Thank you. And I know the archive here has digitized the entire series of the whole volume. So they have an incredible digital collection here.

MM: A lot of history there.