Interview with Norman Neiss
conducted by Sue Kovach Shuman for the
Providence District History Project Providence Perspective

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Sue: This is Norman Neiss spelled N-e-i-s-s and its July 17, 2010, and I'm Sue Shuman and this is Linda Byrne and we are talking about a look back at Providence District for the Providence District History Project. Norm welcome, I would like to tell you that I know you personally know your neighborhood watch prowess and I also know you've done a lot of other things in this area a lot of community contributions. I wonder if you could start by telling us where were you born and what brought you to this area.

Norm: Okay. I was born in McHenry, Illinois which is about 25 miles northwest of Chicago, northern Illinois. A little town was about 1,600 and when I graduated from high school in my senior year I tried to get into the Navy at that time into the flight training program and I found I had a deviated septum so I couldn't pass the physical; that was in November of 1943. I graduated in the 4th of June in 1944. The class my senior class in high school was 44 pupils. And the whole school, the community school was 400 population - about. This took in the Irish Prairie which was to the south and the German Prairie which was to the North.

Sue: When you say German Prairie, Irish Prairie what do you mean?

Norm: The ethnic population, the Irish was primarily to the south.

Sue: Okay.

Norm: The Germans were primarily to the north. And my father and mother, ah well let's see - my father was born in Madison, Wisconsin and his father came down to McHenry, Illinois in the late, early 1900's and he was a house painter. My dad was a finished carpenter and, my wife was I mean, my mother was a regular farm girl. It turned out that their homes, ah, their ancestor's homes were in Germany; the eastern providences of Germany about eight miles from each other but they didn't know each other until they got to McHenry, Illinois.

Sue: And they were both born in the U.S.?

Norm: Pardon.

Sue: Your father and mother were both born in the United States.

Norm: Yes, they were both born in the United States.

When I was turned down for the Aviation Cadet Program in the Navy in 1943, I got home and I told my father about it and he contacted one of the people in the American Legion and he had contacts with the University of Illinois, the hospital in Chicago and got me in there. We didn't have any money. My father had been drafted in the World War I and was discharged in the fluenza the influenza era

Sue: The outbreak.

Norm: and had a $3.00 a month pension at that time. Well in December of 1943, I had a deviated septum done, operation done in the hospital in Chicago. They split my nose and took out the bone, and rebuilt the nose; and I had a tape across the nose. Well I was playing football and basketball at that time and we were in the county tournament in Woodstock, Illinois and I got hit in the nose in the tournament game and I was writhing on the floor. The only spot that they could of hurt me was because I had a tape across my nose an x, two x tapes. And I was writhing on the floor and I finally came to okay and finished the game. We lost but that was okay.

When I graduated from high school in the 4th of June 44 I reported for active duty on the last, let's see, first of July of 1944. And the Navy at that time they were calling it the V-5 program. They were using the V-12 program as a reserve for the Aviation Cadet Program. So the first thing I did was report to Northwest Missouri State Teachers College as a one year student in pre-engineering. So I got one year of schooling right then. And then I went into the flight training program and then that followed on.

The War was over in 1945 and I was in ah pre-flight school at that time and they lengthened out the program so that actually it took me three years to get through flight training. I had a desire to fly fighters all the time and so I was going basically

Marine. I flew multi engine Land which was the twin engine Cessna Beach Craft at that time and a twin engine Sea which was the PBY's at that time.

Sue: What's a PBY?

Norm: That was a patrol plane sea plane, twin engine sea plane high cantilevered flying boat and I went through that at Pensacola and then went down to Corpus Christi in SNJ's the Texan T-6 Trainers. And then I came back to Pensacola in formation flying and the like and finally qualified in the F6Fs on the - I think it was the Cabot it was a CVL anyway.

Sue: Now the War was ending, World War II so you did participate in the Korean War, am I right?

Norman: Well, when I finished in 1947 I got my wings in June of 1947, June 27th as a matter of fact. I went to a squadron up in Quonset Point, Rhode Island. And they had just shifted from F6Fs the Hellcats to Bearcats F8F Bearcat which was another Grumman aircraft. Ah, I spent three years there, let's see ah, 48, 49, 50 well 47, half of 47, 48, 49, half of 50 at Pensacola, I mean at Quonset Point, Rhode Island. And made three tours in the Mediterranean at that time flying the F8F Bearcats - the ones, one bakers, which had shifted from 50 caliber guns to 20 millimeter guns and then the F8F-2 which had a bigger engine in it. This was all on straight deck carriers, nothing but daylight flying.

Linda: How long was a tour?

Norm: It was six to seven months as a matter of a fact I was a bachelor at that time and met my wife at a party in 1948. I came back from a cruise in 1949 on which we called the Israeli Flag Ship at that time it was in the Philippine Sea, Philistine Sea is what we called it. And we got married – I got back on the 4th of June and we got married on the 18th of June and took a honeymoon at that time. And then I came back to the squadron and then went down to, we got orders to Pensacola. I took the family to Pensacola and went over to Jacksonville to Ordnance Officers School at that time.

And then I spent the early part of Korea 1950 part of 50, 51, 52 early part of – well let's see 52 at Pensacola I was a flight instructor in Basic Training out at North Whiting Field; and flying again the N-2S which was the Navy version of the Texan Trainer.

Sue: Okay so that was when – so your wife came back and lived in this area while you were?

Norm: No, no my wife was down in Pensacola the complete time and then I got orders to from Pensacola from Whiting Field really. We lived in, now what the heck was the name of the place, Chula Vista was the area down in Pensacola. We lived in a little wooden two bedroom house that the wind blew through.

Sue: Well that's good it was Florida.

Norm: Yeah, and this was in 1951, 52 and then we went to San Diego. I was assigned to COMNAVAIRPAC.

Sue and Linda: What is that?

Norm: It was Commander Naval Air Forces Pacific.

Sue: Okay, that's military jargon that needs to be explained for those of us who don't - okay.

Norm: And then when I got out there I found out that the guy who was a Lieutenant in the Squadron in Quonset Point VF-72 that I was in there was the Assignment Officer out there and he said "what do you want Norm", and I said Jet Fighters and he says okay we've got a squadron forming out at Miramar, (CA) VF-142. They're flying Grumman Aircraft again F9F-6's. It's a strictly a fighter there are no bomb racks on it whatsoever, there's one on the center line but that is only for special occasions and it's strictly guns - so 20 millimeter guns - and I flew the F9F-6's for three years until the middle of May of 1956 really.

Sue: How long were you in the military? How long?

Norm: Basically 30 years, I was 29 years 8 months and 15 days or something l like that. But I retired here in March of 1974 but in that time Air Group 14 was

deployed to the East Coast so I went on another Mediterranean Cruise on the Randolph at that time, another straight deck carrier in 1954.

Linda: What was that like landing on a carrier?

Norm: In the daytime it was hazardous, either you trapped or you got an accident. There were twelve wires on the carrier at that time and you had an LSO at the back waving you in

Sue: LSO?

Norm: Landing Signal Officer.

Sue: Okay.

Norm: giving you a vertical and a lineup - if he kicked his left leg you were too far to the right and you had to go over to the left and if the paddles were down, in other words he had signal paddles in his hand and if they were down you had to raise your altitude and if they were up you had to lower your altitude. And either you caught a wire, one of the twelve or you got into the barrier or you had an accident. It isn't like the ones now that you have an angled deck and you have only four wires but you can do a boulder.

Linda: What is a boulder?

Norm: A boulder is a go around again, you don't catch a wire and it's a mirror set up on it where you have a series of mirrors across to give you a reference line and a light towards the aft end of the carrier that gives you a reference light and it depends on the type of aircraft you are flying. When I finally got to the point that I was flying on angle deck carriers I was flying multi engine A-3's out of Whidbey Island and that's another story.

Sue: I was just going to say though if you had a military career of nearly 30 years how long of that was actually flying, until you came here to this area maybe?

Norm: Well let's see the first three years, the first ten years was actually flying off of straight deck carriers and then I got orders from the Squadron from VF-142 to go to a five term program. In other words I had come in from high school and had

very little college and they were trying to upgrade everyone to college degrees. So I was ordered to Milwaukee to what was the school, engineering school. But I was ordered in June so I was a short term summer course and then I took two other courses or two other sessions for a full year of college; this was at - yeah what is the Milwaukee school?

Linda: I can think of the beer but not the school.

Norm: I can't think of it.

Sue: Was it a university or a technical school?

Norm: It was a university and I took engineering again - I had two electrical courses. Electrical course one was preceding the electrical course two so the last two sessions I had I took electrical courses.

Sue: So you went for one year then and then went back?

Norm: I went to one year right then and that was in 1956 to the middle of 1957. And then I got orders to a Reserve Outfit at NAS (Naval Air Station) Minneapolis.

Sue: Nationally or NAS

Norm: It was a Naval Air Station Minneapolis but it was a reserve unit and I was ordered in as Aviation Procurement Officer. And I had two colleges, well a junior college and a senior college in every state that they covered. That was Wisconsin, Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Minnesota, North and South Dakota. So I was on the road continually at that time - and we had let's see - my wife was pregnant with our fourth child right then and ah

Sue: I bet she was happy you were on the road.

Norm: I was home often enough to sire.

Linda: And these were colleges that you were responsible for providing

Norm: Yes any aviation cadet, any procurement aviation officer's candidates to go to Pensacola to get into flight training. So I was responsible for, well let's see

one of the schools in Wisconsin was La Crosse it was La Crosse College, the University of Wisconsin and the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, St. Paul. I really had problems with the students in the iron country in the Northern part of Minnesota because they were mostly color blind.

Sue and Linda: Wow!

Norman: I don't know if they – I think it was because of growing up in the iron country that affected their vision. And I finally started in taking, any time I was up in Northern Minnesota I would take a corpsman along with me so he could give them an eye test to them to see if they did qualify or disqualified immediately before I started in really talking to um. It was a salesman job.

Sue: It sounds like - yes it was you were selling your military career.

Norm: It was yeah it was selling aviation to the students there. And I was there for let's see, two years I guess because it was 1957, 58, 59.

I flew one of their Jet Trainers out to California, to Monterey, California; I got orders to General Align School which was part of the post graduate school at the Monterey Post graduate school.

I flew out there and the Captain who was in charge of the engineering school, the post graduate school out there had quarters on the base at Monterey but he had he and his wife had just purchased a brand new home out in Del Monte Forest which was to the south of Monterey. They couldn't get clearance to move into this new house so I had dinner with them and even with four children and another one on the way, a fifth they agreed to rent me the house.

So we moved in there in oh it must have been in January of 1959.

Sue: Okay.

Norm: Yeah, and this is a funny story. They decided that they wanted to do some work on the house and the yard and the like and so they came out and worked in the yard. And there was poison ivy all over the place out there and they burned it and he got into the fire and he was stark naked on his bed and she was putting

calamine lotion all over him. He had broken out in welts from being in the smoke of the poison ivy.

Sue: And this is funny to you?

Norm: Yeah it was funny to me but it wasn't funny to him.

Sue: (laughing) No I wouldn't think so. Okay so

Linda: Just one question, there was a movie 15 years ago called Top Gun, so the era in which you served you would have been considered one of those?

Norm: No this was before the Top Gun item. As a matter of a fact the F-4's the Phantom which the Navy developed was a Grumman Aircraft I mean a McDonald Aircraft out of St. Louis and sold it both to the Navy and the Air Force and they used it in Viet Nam like crazy but this was all before then. As a matter of a fact, well let's see after I got finished with the General Line Course in 1960, I was ordered to as Ordnance Officer on the USS Hornet. At that time it was a CD-12. I had that duty for just over a year and all of a sudden I got orders to A-4's to the replacement Air Group at Lemoore. I had that about two weeks and ah somebody back here at the Washington in the assignment officer office wanted those orders. So they had my orders cancelled and I all of a sudden found I had orders with the A-4's. The Douglas Sky Hawk was cancelled and I had orders to the Douglas Sky Warrior which was a twin engine swept wing aircraft up in Whidbey Island, Washington, North of Seattle. So all of a sudden I was sent up there.

And I had purchased a house in Long Beach, CA when we got orders from Line School down to the Hornet which was out of Long Beach, California. And I purchased that house there and had it just a little over a year and all of a sudden we got orders up to Whidbey Island. So I moved the family up to Whidbey Island and sold the house down there.

I went through the replacement Air Group in A-4's ah A-3's the twin engine swept wing aircraft. What they were doing at first since it was multi engine aircraft they were putting patrol plane pilots into the aircraft into the swept wing but in dirty

condition. In other words with the flaps down and the gear down in the approach it wobbled. It had a normal tendency to just sit there and wobble. And this was a swept wing tendency on an aircraft and these people would fight it and it just kept making it worse. So they finally decided they wanted people with - fighter pilots with swept wing aircraft, jet aircraft experience to fly the airplanes because we just let them wobbled – they'd come back and they would wobble around a central point and come in for a landing and so there was no problem on that.

Linda: And this is landing on a …

Norm: On a field.

Linda: Oh.

Norm: And it's the same way on the ship.

This is a funny story on the qualification for the Replacement Air Group. I went down to Alameda and got on the ship. We were loaded aboard wharf side, in other words the F-4's, the A-4's and the A-3's and I was the only A-3 pilot plane aboard.

We were loaded on the ship and sent out to sea. This is the first time I'd been on a Canada carrier towards the Farallon Islands and it was supposed to be raining that day so they sent the F-4's and the A-4's back to Alameda and I was the only one aboard ship. Okay, they said all weather take off and fly so I made my two carrier landings in the day time and then at night it was raining like crazy. The visibility coming around into the groove which is the line up with the landing part of the ship was an eighth of a mile and they didn't tell me that they only had one wire out of the four available and that was the number one wire. So I came in and the bombardier navigator called the ball, I go onto the mechanical guidance for the landing and come on down and land on number three – boulder. Five times and I was getting to the point where I had enough fuel to get to Alameda again to land on the land and I finally found out that they only had one wire. This time I'd get aboard. So I fudged the ball on a low ball and picked up number one wire - the very last chance and they shut down everything. I went to sleep on the steel

deck in the ready room about 2:30 in the morning; I was just completely out of it. A steel deck - I got a good night's sleep.

Linda: Oh my gosh.

Norm: No problem on that.

Sue: Good.

Norm: But that was the qualification on that.

Sue: That was tough. So a few years, let's go just a few years more when you what brought you here to Washington now in 65?

Norm: Okay from Whidbey Island I had orders down to come to the Air War College down at Montgomery, Alabama at Maxwell Air Force Base. That was a one year course. That was in 64.

Second of July of 65 which was my youngest daughter's birthday we moved up here to Washington, DC. And I was assigned as a Navy Representative to the Standardization Group out in Silver Spring. My job out there wasn't really a job; I went to school.

Since I had gone to colleges intermittently and just finished the Air War College down at Maxwell Air Force Base I was able to get into the Pentagon into a post graduate school and at George Washington University in a post graduate school. So I was doing my work at the Standardization Group homework for the courses that I was taking and I finally said that is enough of this.

When I first got orders up here one of my friends was living in the area and so I brought the family up here except my oldest son who was in high school down in Montgomery, Alabama. I brought them up to Annandale. And when I got up here I started looking around for places in Maryland and the taxes were too high for the amount of space I needed. So I kept on looking and looking and my wife and her friend, the wife of my friend spotted this house at 9106 well it was 1918, at that time, Glenbrook Road - for sale by owner. It had been built in late 59s or early 60's they class it as 1960 as being built. And it had two owners, a General in the Army who had left and a Marine Lt. Colonel who had retired out of the

Marines and was flying for Eastern Airlines and they hadn't taken any money out of it. So I bought the house and put the people in there, my family in there.

Sue: Do you mind my asking what the house cost at that time?

Norm: $43,900.

Sue: $43,900 in what year?

Norm: That was 1965.

Sue: Okay.

Norm: And now it's classed as $690 I think - something of that nature. We paid off the mortgage right away and so haven't had a mortgage since then.

Sue: Wow! That's unusual.

Norm: And so it's nothing but profit in the house. The payments right now on real estate tax is more than anything I paid - its fifty eight hundred dollars now I think.

Sue: So 44 years you've had the house.

Norm: Yeah.

Sue: Okay, and you raised

Norm: Well 45 years.

Sue: 45 years and you raised your children there in the Mantua Hills area.

Norm: As a matter of a fact my three daughters, my oldest son was in high school so he went to Woodson right away. But my three daughters went through Luther Jackson the first year that it was an integrated school. It was not a black high school, my oldest daughter went to school there and the other two daughters went to elementary school at Mantua. And then as they went to middle school both of them went to Luther Jackson.

Sue: Okay. What was it like what was the neighborhood like then? Luther Jackson you said that Luther Jackson that was the first year for the integrated school, but what was the atmosphere like then?

Norm: It was very laid back as a matter of fact the Mantua wasn't – it was a residential area but it wasn't developed as a citizens association at that time. And there wasn't a bridge across the creek on Prince William. So you had to go - in order to go out to (route) 236 you had to go down to Convento Terrace turn to the right on Acosta (Rd.) go down to Okla (Dr.) go back onto Prince William bypass the creek and then go up onto 236.

Sue: That's a busy Barkley Drive.

Norm: Pardon?

Sue: That the busy Barkley Drive bridge right now.

Norm: Yes.

Sue: Wow and your house is not far from up there.

Norm: No, no, no it wasn't the Barkley Drive it was on Prince William where the creek is going across there, you know, where Leamington Court.

Sue: Oh yes, the other part of the neighborhood.

Norm: I was out on the ship on the USS Hornet again in 1967 and 1968 when the flood came through and took the bridge out in Barkley. And that time the only way to get in and out was either at Southwick going over to Prosperity or taking Acosta to Okla to bypass not having the bridge on Prince William.

Sue: So it was very rural.

Norm: It was.

Sue: Describe the neighborhood a little if you don't mind.

Norm: I mentioned that I was at the Standardization Group up in Silver Spring. I griped about the not having a duty. Anybody could have done the job out there

they really didn't need military people in the positions; the Army, Air Force and Navy as sitting positions on the Standardization Group. And I finally got orders to BuWeps, to RAAD which was the procurement end of the aircraft in the Bureau of Naval Weapons, Aeronautical Naval Weapons. And I got orders there after about a year out at the Standardization Group so it would have been 66. And I spent about a year there and then in 1967 I got orders to sea again as Weapons Officer on the USS Hornet which was now a CVS-12.

Linda What does CVS mean?

Norm: Antisubmarine, it was a carrier – CV, S standing for antisubmarine. And they were flying twin engine high wing tracker aircraft, which had a radar on it and you had a radar operator hunting for submarines and the like at periscope depth.

Sue: Sounds like your life was very exciting and it was interesting to go to work but, your neighborhood was kind of sleepy at the time.

Norm: Well the neighborhood ah the wife and five children were here the total time and still in the same house. I came back here in late 69 early 70's, I'm not quite sure about the date, and went back to what then had gone from Bureau of Naval Weapons to Naval Air Systems Command.

And so I was assigned to a specialty group and was given the assignment of developing a light weight gun pod for the helicopters in Viet Nam - that was in 1971. I went through the weapons course at Wright Patterson Air Force Base with one Navy, two Air Force, one Army individual; so we went through that course.

And then I got back and the 246 PME (Professional Military Education) 246 was a project management administration. I was released from there, I got orders to the old Commanding Officer of RAAD who was now back in the Air Systems Command as the head of the engine development - RAAM which was procurement of the engines - mechanical. And I was the Division Officer in the electrical and set up the test facility down at Pax River at the Patuxent River Air Station.

In the meantime I was getting to the point where okay I wasn't going to fly anymore. I was put onto four hours a month flying out of Andrews Air Force Base, the Naval Reserve Unit out there. And interesting story on that; Dulles Airport didn't have anybody flying out of there at that time and so every time we got airborne - call them and they'd say "thank God somebody calls us". And we'd go out and do touch and go landings over there.

In the meantime the Mantua itself developed into let's see 1959 I think it finally started developing into a citizens association and it was getting organized.

Sue: Did you have a rolling citizen's association organization yet?

Norm: Not that I remember at that time; I was still on active duty until 74 and I don't know whether they - I know Sally Ormsby had moved in to the area about the same time I did and she was active in it. In 1978 I think is when I was President following Eleanor Gatenby.

Sue: Tell me what it was like to be president of the association at that time, what were the main concerns?

Norm: Very low key, very low key. You didn't have any of the problems with the tank farm or anything of that nature. The dues were $5.00 I think at that time and ah we started in developing a neighborhood watch about that time.

Sue: So you have been involved with in the neighborhood watch for a while.

Norm: No, as president and then when I retired in 74, let's see in 78 yeah I was president in I think 77, in 78, 79. The neighborhood watch was started up by, two houses down, Gail something or other, her husband was a heart specialist at INOVA Hospital and when they moved out I took over as AARC at that point.

Sue: Architectural Review Board?

Norm: I had joined the neighborhood watch after I was, let's see Ed Hardy when was he, he started the neighborhood watch.

Sue: So - but you've been involved about three decades with neighborhood watch.

Norm: Yes.

Sue: Okay, and now you are neighborhood watch coordinator again.

Norm: Yes. I was fired as AARC Chairman.

Sue: Why?

Norm: I have no idea, the whim of the president and the Board at that time in 2002.

Sue: And you have no idea why you were thrown out of a Community Association job?

Norm: I have no idea. I was told by email to turn over all the records I had to P.J. Bolger over on Chantelle Lane and he was AARC Chairman. I turned everything over to him, briefed him on everything and told him I was available to help him. He never contacted me, he never did anything and all of a sudden at the end of the year somebody else was AARC Chairman and I have no idea what happened.

Sue: But you have been busy over the years doing things in Supervisor Smyth's office and other things it sounds like you made a lot of contributions.

Norm: Right, yes I came over here and contacted Linda, well it was

Sue: Gerry Connolly perhaps?

Norm: No, it was before him.

Sue: Oh, Kate Handley.

Norm: Kate Handley.

Sue: Okay.

Norm: Kate Handley worked with her and then Gerry Connolly and then Linda (Smyth) so I've been active over here all the time. As a matter of a fact when I was Chairman of the Providence District Council, God only knows when that was I have no idea when that was let's see.

Sue: What exactly did that job involve?

Norm: I was trying to organize all the units, like the unit right next door here.

Linda: The Civic Association.

Norm: Yes, the Civic Association and I was putting - I have an IMAC, that I got in oh my gosh I started with Apple in 80 I think; and when I was coming over here on the Microsoft I'd have to switch thoughts immediately. And I was trying to put everything into the computer here

Sue: The Home Owners Association items.

Norm: trying to work Mantua as a leader in the Associations.

Linda: I think that Providence District Council was started under Kate Handley and it was basically for, you were organizing for her the Civic Associations within your area of Providence District so that you could have input - you would give her input that would help her with decisions.

Norm: Right, she was the Supervisor.

Linda: Exactly. Can I ask that we take a short break here.

Norm: Okay.

[Recording paused]

Linda: Okay we're back with Norman Neiss.

Sue: You mentioned that this area was different and Luther Jackson your daughter attended the first year that was an integrated school. Can you tell us a little about Providence District and the ethnic pockets that existed here and a little bit about how that changed the demographics in the time you lived here.

Norm: When I was first at Air Systems Command and got out of the assignment up in the Standardization Group I would tell them that I lived out in Mantua "way out in the boondocks", it was boondocks then.

The only place to shop right at that time was Seven Corners. There was no Yorktown Plaza. When Yorktown Plaza went in it made the front page or the cover of the Saturday Evening Post, Yorktown Plaza going in.

This whole area was basically Caucasian at that time, in the late 60's, early 70's and actually the early 80's. The black high school Luther Jackson was integrated in 65, so 66 well late 65 the school year 65 it was integrated school and the area that was black was behind Duberry Davis, in that area.

Linda: That's off of Rt. 50 over toward where the hospital is now.

Norm: That is exactly right. Behind Duberry Davis, Ridgley Hills area actually it was to the east of Ridgley Hills that was the only black area in the Commonwealth of Northern Virginia right at that time in this area.

Since then well especially in the 2000 era Hispanics, Blacks, Koreans all the ethnic background had moved into Mantua; before that it was pure white, Caucasian. As a matter of fact the whole area was primarily Caucasian except for that one pocket of black people, colored.

The Merrifield was not developed the post office at Merrifield wasn't there, the water works wasn't there; there was a Texaco Station at the corner of Prosperity and Rt. 29. There were no - across the street to the west side of Prosperity there was nothing it was strictly open area. This area wasn't developed there was a fire station here but it was later, I think when Kate Handley finally moved in here, I think I don't know where the Supervisors were.

Linda: I think it was here because Jim Scott was Supervisor and I believe he has his office on the side of the fire house in Merrifield.

Norm: Oh yes that's right Jim Scott was before

Sue: With the change in the demographics in the area which has been reflected certainly in the retail establishments we have Korean grocery stores and the Chinese stores.

Norm: Right.

Sue: None of this was here at the time this was since the 80's as you were saying do you frequent these stores do you go in them.

Norm: No, as a matter of a fact I haven't no.

Linda: As a retired military person do you shop at a Commissary?

Norm: Commissaries was the primary thing, Cameron Station was in a good spot right at that time. When they closed down Cameron Station it was at ah let's see first it was at Fort Belvoir and found that that was too difficult to get to. We started going down to Henderson Hall for the Exchange and right next to it was the Commissary.

Sue: Let me ask you something that goes a little bit beyond that. What would you like to see different in this area what kind of change or changes do you think would help in Providence?

Norm: The only thing - Fairfax County has come up with so many restrictions it takes so long to get a building permit through. My youngest son is a Regional Manager for McDonalds and he has been trying for the last five years to try and get a drive though at the McDonald's down off of (route) 237, you know where the McDonald's is right at the circle. And then all of a sudden what is it the Chic A Flic

Sue: Chick-fil-A.

Norm: comes in and they get a drive through and I said okay Chick A Flic just got a drive through why can't you get a drive through McDonald's right there? And he says "I don't have any idea". He's still trying.

Sue: Sounds like something that

Norm: The only thing I could see is to be stricter on the Fairfax County rules. Some of the things – well the development going across Nutley right now across from the

Sue: The Pan Am Shopping Center.

Norm: the Pan Am Shopping Center. It took them forever and a day to get that through and what they are going to on that I have no idea.

Linda: They are putting in a bank and a pharmacy.

Sue: No Residential in that corner?

Linda: No, as far as I know at this point the applications - I believe the applications for that particular corner – you're are talking right across

Norm: Yes.

Linda: on that corner

Sue: There banks and pharmacies already in the shopping center right across from it.

Linda: You got it. When I grew up there were gas stations on every corner and now there seem to be banks and pharmacies on every corner.

Norm: Right, yes.

Sue: Do you agree with idea of development though around the Metro stations making them urban destinations.

Norm: Well the development that's been approved for the Vienna Metro Station, the apartments and the like it's a basic shopping area and I don't know whether they are going to put in a bank in there or a pharmacy or not, but they shouldn't. They should just leave that residential access to the Vienna Metro Station for transportation into Washington, DC.

But now things are developing to the point where traffic is terrific - after 3:30 trying to get onto Rt. 50 going east is impossible, impossible. You can go west on Rt. 50 after 3:30 in the afternoon - you can't in the morning until about 9 o'clock.

Sue: So if there's one thing you could change it would be the traffic.

Norm: Traffic, and that's the whole thing I think the Fairfax County is doing the right thing on restricting development right now; making it hard to get a building permit and getting it through. Now the building permits from Merrifield that they've got in Moving Nation the U Haul I mean the rental area out of there and putting a road right straight through by Home Depot straight through to route 50 will help. I think that'll that will help the traffic on Rt. 29 and also route 50. But I don't know whethe hot lanes are going to do it or not. I have no idea on that.

Sue: (to Linda) - do you have any other questions on closing?

Linda: If you had to give advice to someone moving here today what would you say about the area?

Norm: It is a good area; it's a good area to be in. I would stay away from the area near the Tank Farm. The present Vice President of our Association, Meredith

Hinkle, she said when they moved into this area she didn't have a problem with breathing, now she has a problem with breathing and she thinks it's from the vapors from the tank farm.

Linda: Just briefly tell us that story of the problem that developed there and what happened.

Norm: Okay, in 1990 they all of a sudden discovered that there were spills at the tank farm that went into the ground and went into the ah underground

Sue: Water table.

Norm: water table right.

Linda: And the tank farm is over on Pickett Road.

Sue: Technically it is in Fairfax City.

Norm: On Pickett Road and when they put it in it was boondocks out here but now it's grown up like crazy.

Linda and Sue: And it's storing the oil, which is not used here.

Norm: Convento Terrace a little bit seeped down there but it was primarily Tovito Drive and there are still a majority of the homes I think 45 or so that are owned by, what's the outfit that took over from Texaco?

Sue: TransMontaigne or Chevron?

Norm: TransMontaigne, that's TransMontaigne they're talking about restricting loading that they can do. Now to the surrounding the area to the east and to the south and actually a little bit to the west the golf course takes the brunt of the spills.

Sue: And the golf course is Federal land the Army Navy?

Norm: The Army Navy Club yeah it's off of (route) 237 goes over to the Tank Farm it's primarily to the east.

Linda: So there was a law suit I recall in the 1990's and they had to settle.

Norm: Well the Tovito Drive is a Homeowners Association

Sue: Stock Holders Association.

Norm: Right, it is separate from Mantua actually they are members of Mantua Citizens Association, but it is a Homeowners Association such as Copeland Pond is a Homeowners Association there's a Homeowners Association on Glen Brook Road off of Rt. 236.

Linda: And they are all under the umbrella of

Norm: Under the umbrella of Mantua Citizen's Association right.

Sue: So when this spill was discovered what happened, what did the Association do?

Norm: EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) came in and the taxes, well and Gerry Connolly at that time was Providence District let's see, 1990….

Sue: Supervisor.

Norm: Yes, Gerry was Supervisor and Kate Handley and the

Linda: Oh I recall he was the President of the Mantua Citizens Association at that time and Kate was maybe the Supervisor and then he eventually moved up to become Supervisor and now he is a Congressman.

Norm: Yes that's right and I was trying to think of when Kate Handley took over as Supervisor because then Gerry came in

Linda: When she became Chairman of the Board.

Norm: EPA came in - they made as deal with Texaco at that time was Supervisor of the Tank Farm and got a grant from Texaco to improve the school and improve the situation as far as Mantua was concerned. Although it was primarily with the Homeowners Association on Tavito it also impacted Convento Terrace which is part of the Citizens Association, Mantua Citizens Association. Most of that money has been used for improvements on the school, computers all the way through.

Sue: But twenty years later what the feeling in the neighborhood? What is your personal feeling about that Tank Farm?

Norm: Well right now the EPA they still want to get the Tank Farm out of here.

Sue: They meaning?

Norm: Mantua, and the Providence District Council, the Citizens Associations in the area, the City of Fairfax wants to get the Tank Farm out of here.

Sue: Has the City of Fairfax made that decision.

Norm: Yes and no. They are still fighting over it. I know the economic what the heck is his name?

Linda: So you are telling me that there are wells over in Mantua and the people

Norm: Yeah, on Tavito Drive and the EPA is monitoring the wells. The previous Roger Cryan was MCA (Mantua Citizen Association) President. He wasn't President of the Homeowners Association but he had an input into it right away. And they were monitoring it very closely and the State of Virginia, the Commonwealth of Virginia is still trying to maintain that the Tank Farm needs to replace there but everyone else all the communities, the Citizens Associations and the Homeowners Associations in Fairfax County are trying to get it moved downstream. Now where downstream is God only knows because it's piped in from Texas and it would be down the pipeline. Now exactly where the pipeline goes I don't have any idea.

Linda: So there is an underground pipeline coming in all the way from Texas to the Tank Farm.

Sue: And I think it continues somewhere on the East Coast

Norm: In Newington.

Linda: That's right there's one in Newington as well.

Norm: Right, but this one was way out in the boondocks when they put it in.

Sue: At that time, that's right. Anything else?

Linda: No.

Sue and Linda: Thank you very much for this interview.

Norm: I will see what I can find in the way of pictures.

Sue: Thank you that would be great.