



ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

With
Vonnie Rossman

Conducted By

Jerry Wasser

April 1998

This is Jerry Wasser. I will be conducting an oral history interview for the City of Glendale Planning Division with Vonnie Rossman, a resident of Glendale, at her home in Glendale in the Rossmoyne area of the city. It is now approximately 10:15 in the morning on Thursday, April 23rd, 1998. Vonnie Rossman is sitting at her dining room table with me. We will be chatting for approximately an hour or so. And, Vonnie the question that we've been starting out with, I know it's a rather indelicate one that my mother has always told me never to ask. She told me this since I was probably five years old. You never ask a woman her age.

Vonnie Rossman: Well, I think that's a good question.

Jerry: And when were you born?

Vonnie: I was born, I don't have to tell you my age.

Jerry: You don't have to. You don't have to.

Vonnie: What I can say is this. That I'm older than you are. I have lived in Glendale longer than perhaps you think. I have a grown son. And my age I think is relative to what has happened in Glendale. So I feel that when you ask a question like that and I'm speaking to you, you can tell by the time the interview is over how old I am.

Jerry: You know, I think that is probably the most diplomatic answer I have ever gotten to an undiplomatic question. I know Vonnie that from past conversations that I've had with you, you were not born in Glendale. Where were you born?

Vonnie: I was born in Washington.

Jerry: In the Seattle area?

Vonnie: No. I was born in Wanatchee Valley area and was only there a very short time. But I'll see from my birth certificate that, that's where it's registered.

Jerry: When did you come to California and what were the circumstances that brought you to Glendale?

Vonnie: I've been to California and lived here three times. First time we came to California, I married my husband. And joined him here in California. We moved away and were gone two years, almost three, and back to California again. We were here six years and moved back to the south where my family came from originally. But they hadn't been for many, many years. Many years. And moved down to Georgia. Then came back for the third time in the early '70s.

Jerry: So, So you started in Glendale in the early '60s then? Is that when you first arrived?

Vonnie: We were here in the '50s.

Jerry: '50s. What part of the City did you originally live in the first time?

Vonnie: We lived over in the northeast section.

Jerry: Was the reason that you came to Glendale for business purposes?

Vonnie: My husband was employed by an aircraft company.

Jerry: And was he transferred out of California? Is that why you moved back and forth?

Vonnie: My husband, yes, and he also wanted to pursue an advance degree in his field.

Jerry: When you first arrived in the '50s, what were your impressions of the city?

Vonnie: It's different. It was a small town. We arrived in the fall where everything is dry. The hills were brown. They were just having a nice building boom all around and there were no high-rises. With the exception of the, I think the Verdugo Towers which were about the highest apartment building...about that time. We had a home so we didn't pursue apartments or condominiums or anything.

Jerry: Was your impression of Glendale that it was a city that was kind of self-sufficient or did you...

Vonnie: Very much so.

Jerry: So it was not, you didn't get the impression that it was a bedroom community of the City of L.A. or Burbank or Pasadena?

Vonnie: We felt it was a bedroom community to this extent; we liked the layout of the city. My husband's employment was in Burbank or I guess towards the valley. That area. And we like it here because of the green. We like the shopping center which seemed to be clustered in one area. We like the way it sort of nestled against the mountains. I guess you could say it was a bedroom community.

Jerry: Did you have a sense, I know that you mentioned, that you were just here for two or three years that, that first time. Did you have any sense of how the city was run? Did you get involved in the community after the years in that, in that first stay here?

Vonnie: I was a member of the American Association of University Women. And we were interested at that time in book reviews and travelogues and that type of thing. We were interested in the very fine symphony they had. We felt close to other cities in the

fact that we didn't mind driving to some program that we wanted to become involved with. It didn't seem to me that we were shut out in anyway.

Jerry: Was it a group that, uhm, where you had dealings perhaps with the City Council or other parts of city government?

Vonnie: About the only group that seemed to me, in a little while, that we became more or less involved with library cards. We liked Brand Park. My husband and I both were bicycle riders. We were hikers. We liked to, closeness to the river bike paths, and the valley. San Fernando Valley is a good place to bicycle. We also hiked. My husband was very good in the mountains. And we hiked most of the peaks around here into the Verdugo Mountains.

Jerry: You also mentioned Vonnie that after that first couple of years here in Glendale that you left for a few years as well. When you came back, was that the '60s when you came back?

Vonnie: Yes. Well it was in, we were only gone, it was pretty close to the end of the '50s. And we bought a home in the valley.

Jerry: Oh.

Vonnie: In the Northridge-Granada Hills area. We had a little boy by then. And he started school. We joined the PTA. You go back to the groups that you're involved with. We still patronize the Glendale Symphony Orchestra. We still would come over to Brand Park. We still would go to Descanso Gardens.

Jerry: So there was something about the city of Glendale that had a community draw for you?

Vonnie: I think so. And we, we didn't shop here, but as I recall our insurance agent was here. Our car agency was here. And we just seemed to relate to it without really considering that it was a distance.

Jerry: So it sounds like your first stay in Glendale more or less instilled a sense of community in you?

Vonnie: Yes.

Jerry: When you left California that second time, you were gone for about six years?

Vonnie: We were gone almost ten.

Jerry: Almost ten years?

Vonnie: Really more than ten when I think back.

Jerry: When you came back, did you settle in Glendale again?

Vonnie: Yes.

Jerry: And which part of the city?

Vonnie: We bought the house we're in now.

Jerry: Oh.

Vonnie: ????

Jerry: Hmmm. Um, when you came back that third time, did you notice some significant changes in Glendale since the '50s when you lived here originally?

Vonnie: Yes. We, uh, had a very nice realtor who sold us this home. And one of the things she did was to point out the Fashion Center which was there. And on the freeway...

Jerry: Now when you mentioned the Fashion Center, is that Fashion Square at Glendale and Wilson?

Vonnie: Yes. Robinson's was there. Churchill's. We had kept a small bank account... Bank of America so it just picked up with that. We became involved through our insurance agency with Glendale Federal. And we were aware of that because of their sponsorship of the Glendale Symphony Orchestra.

Jerry: So it sounds like you've had a love...

Vonnie: We had a tie.

Jerry: With music as well.

Vonnie: We had a tie here to Glendale. And...

Jerry: Were there other civic organizations that you got involved with in those years in the decade of the '70s?

Vonnie: Yes.

Jerry: Which ones were those?

Vonnie: We became involved with, we uh, Glendale Beautiful, History of Glendale. Not knowing anyone other than one or two people in this particular area. We attended UCLA to find out about what plants to put in our garden. All these things we attended for a year. We...

Jerry: To learn about the climate and the soils of the region? All of those things?

Vonnie: The climate and all of those things. We, uh, became involved, trying to think back, in social groups.

Jerry: Were there any formal ones?

Vonnie: Well we, yes. Still picked up with the University of Women. Picked up with their D.E.O. which is a sort of philanthropic educational organization in the '70s. We became involved with the Republican party, basic organization because of our neighbor who was chairman of the group in Glendale. We became involved with the restoration of the Casa Adobe. The interest in the Doctors' House. The form, the reformation of the Historical Society. We continued interest in the Casa Adobe and uh, became involved also with the library and its books and interests, with the symphony. Became its chairman, the woman's committee. This is what you're asking?

Jerry: Absolutely. I wished my, my smile and the light in my eyes could show in the tapes because when you, you, you spoke, probably more questions that I could ask you in, in any daylight hour of one day. Uh, just by the list, the short list that you've given me so far and what I'd like to do is, is ask you some questions about some of those groups that.

Vonnie: Sure.

Jerry: That you've already mentioned. And probably something that, I guess I'm somewhat fascinated by, you mentioned that you'd, you'd become active in the, the Republican party here in Glendale because of your neighbor. I know that the reputation that Glendale has had is that city government has been pretty much dominated by the Republican party even though local government is, is non-partisan on its, the reputation is, is that even though it's non-partisan, most people who've been elected to City Council over the years by and large have been members of the Republican party and active in it at other levels of government as well. Was that true in those years?

Vonnie: I would think so. Coming from the south and my heritage back to my family being from the south, south was Democrat, and coming out here in this neighborhood in which I live and the two or three of my neighbors who were so actively involved. I liked the program they provided. And I became chairman of the group in, about 1975 and chaired it for two years along with many nice perks that went with it. For example, President Ford visited the Adobe and we had a chance to be his hosts. We had a chance to host Ronald Reagan. So I guess you would say it was Republican.

Jerry: You know, I, I, I guess in the years of the '60s, '70s and the '80s, many people regarded Republicans as conservatives and Democrats as liberals. But those, those names are probably misnomers to a lot of people because I guess it depends on the individual. I think that recently a lot of people associate the Republican party with more of a business interest. Was that kind of an attitude prevalent in, in Glendale in the '60s, '70s and the '80s because of the, perhaps the dominance if you will, of the Republican party?

Vonnie: We were not here during the '60s. But during the '70s, to me Republican over here was a doorway to where we're interested in the development of the library system. The development of Brand Park and the library there and the art museum. That was quite prevalent in the group in which I belonged. We were interested in local and State and national elections. I felt at times we were proud to be...maybe we called it testing ground because we always had the uh, the big politicians as we called them, always stopped in Glendale.

Jerry: To change the subject slightly Vonnie, another thing you mentioned in the list of organizations and activities that you were involved with was the Casa Adobe and the Doctors' House. Can you tell me a little bit about your involvement in both of those?

Vonnie: With the Adobe and this Glendale Beautiful, Glendale Beautiful came in to being when it was originally purchased by the city in the '30s. It had an organization that worked, and it became re-activated.

Jerry: That was the Casa Adobe though?

Vonnie: Yes...de San Rafael. At that time was coming along, the interest in preservation. And I enjoyed Glendale Beautiful and hoped we did with the Adobe... the fact that there was fun along with development and it led to the formation really of the historical commission of the city in the late '70s. Because of the interest in the fact that the Doctors' House was going to be demolished.

Jerry: And the Doctors' House was located in its original location at Wilson Avenue at that point?

Vonnie: Yes. Close to Adams. And an organization was formed. The Historical Society. And in the, between '80 and '81, it was moved to where it is now. Very active committee was organized and along with it was the development of the commission.

Jerry: Vonnie, this is reminiscent to me of what people often describe, in quotes "public/private partnerships". This sounds to me as though it was a successful public/private partnership. Would you agree?

Vonnie: Very definitely. I think there was a great interest in the City Council in the development of the historical society and the preservation of the Casa Adobe which already belonged to the city. It was a purchase by the city. One of the first adobes...park, that type of activity in the State of California. So we are very proud of that. Then, with the object to develop a specific group that chaired and oversaw the development of the Doctors' House. A very strong group there. And it took a couple of years to saw the house in half, take it up Western Avenue to the site it is now, put it back together. And there was a great

feel of interest from builders, from corporations, in seeing that it got put back together, developed. And a great many donations, not only of time, years of time and money to what it is today.

Jerry: And most if not all of that was from private donations?

Vonnie: Private donations. But companies donated too. I recall several corporations that donated labor to move the house, put it back together where it was cut in two, to the electricians, painters, it was a great effort.

Jerry: Do you think that, I, I know that you mentioned, and I know that, that the City purchased the Casa Adobe de San Rafael in the early '30s.

Vonnie: Yes.

Jerry: And the first restoration began at about 1932?

Vonnie: That's right.

Jerry: Glendale's always seemed kind of an innovator in historic preservation because of that. They were probably, this was probably one of the first jurisdictions in Southern California to really undertake something like this. Do you think that the moving, the purchase and the moving, and the work on the Doctors' House solidified the ethic of historic preservation in Glendale in the '80s?

Vonnie: I think it helped. I think it helped because in the back of the mind of all of us who were involved was the preservation of the Verdugo Adobe up on Cañada Boulevard. And here again, that didn't happen without a great deal of concern and effort. Deukmejian Park became involved here again. All of that, I think that the Goode House and its preservation, the big castle that's up in Sparr. All of the preservation items were already listed, the need to be, but did not have, what I always called a contract circling them to keep 'em within the fold.

Jerry: With the restore, with the movement and then the restoration of the Doctors' House, do you think that set in motion a mechanism for coming up with drafting a historic preservation ordinance? Provisions in the Glendale Municipal Code to protect historic resources?

Vonnie: I think it had an effect, certainly a ??? effect. I think at that time came the realization that if they didn't watch out, we could lose our historical past. Really. And the organization certainly an impetus, still remains a strong impetus. I think that a great deal of research was done in drafting the original ordinance for the city by the historical commission. A great deal of study. It was under the Public Works Division when we first started.

Jerry: And that was in the mid '80s?

Vonnie: Yes. That was at the beginning of the '80s because it really got its start with the... I think the Doctors' House. Based on the Casa Adobe and the success there. Just a number of things. Because the railroad fell along with it, the Richardson House, the Schindler House. All of those came to the public eye in the '80s.

Jerry: Vonnie, through my work as a planner in the Planning Division for the City of Glendale, especially specializing in historic preservation planning, I often hear that, that the sentiments that these places aren't that old. And even if they are old, who cares? What does it mean? Why? Why should we save places like the Verdugo Adobe, the Casa Adobe, the Doctors' House, the Walters House up on Sparr Boulevard, the Richardson House, or the Railroad Depot. Especially since the railroad depot is used for all sorts of transportation now. What is the point? Do you think that these places are protected because they're old. Only because they're old? Or is there another reason? Do you feel that perhaps they'd give Glendale a sense of place or a sense of identity? That people who come here more recently can, can see and feel?

Vonnie: I think that any community, to settle into its roots, must go back and must depend upon a continuation of history. I always have felt that if you do not recognize the past, you'll repeat it. It's good sometimes and it's bad other times. I think that preservation, well thought out, well handled, is an asset regardless of where it is. We think of the 200-year old buildings in Europe, the 2,00-year old, the 4,000-year old, and there are some, all of those. And we have. There's a magic to 'em. And it doesn't matter that something is only fifty years old. If it contributed in its lifetime to something special, then it should be preserved. You cannot preserve everything. But you could preserve that which has a real effect on a community. And I think that this is why the railroad station with its bringing the first people in the late 1800s to Glendale, it's a tie-in. I think the Deukmejian Park was really was???the industry of winemaking. All of these. I think the Casa Adobe which here again was really a retirement home for the family. I think all of these say to us that there's a continuity and you preserve what is good, and what is interesting, and what has had a definite effect.

Jerry: Do you feel that Glendale, the City of Glendale, the city fathers if you were, have a knack???, an, an ethic that involves preservation of historic resources in the city?

Vonnie: I have felt from the beginning. We uh, being in on the beginnings of several things, we were still, they were going on when our family came. But being in on some of the development, I've always felt that the city is a, a helper in this. I think it has always been on the side of preservation. It is hard. It is not an easy job because money, political pressure, many factors

and they're intimate. But I think in the long run, it's such an asset because it says to the people that are coming here: we respect our past. And Glendale has many senior citizens who feel a real tie. And many of our senior citizens are the financial background on which they've developed. So they feel that they have an interest. And more than an interest, they almost seem, because they remember so closely how much it meant to them and they're wishing that others that are coming would not look at just the material value of things but I'm getting on my soapbox.

Jerry: That's okay. Do you feel as though that might be happening? Glendale has experienced probably since its beginnings even before the city incorporated in 1906, it probably experienced waves of immigration.

Vonnie: Very definitely.

Jerry: But probably with, with the Spanish through Mexico coming up to this area. And then the Verdugo family getting a land grant that encompassed most of this area including Glendale. And then people, if you will, waves of immigration from other parts of the United States as well as other parts of the world. From the East Coast, from the Midwest, perhaps from France and Italy, from other areas. And then more recently, there have been waves of immigration from Latin America, from Armenia and other parts of the Middle East. There's been a growing Armenian population in Glendale for several years and it probably has one of the biggest Armenian American populations in, in the United States now. Do you feel as though the newer residents of Glendale, people who've come from other parts of the country and particularly other parts of the world have that sense that the long time residents of Glendale would like to instill in them?

Vonnie: I think they're getting it. I think it's been difficult because so many of the immigrants were running away from something. And so, we really had to come and put down a root or two first to be secure. And therefore, I think that when you go back to this area, particular area in the Indian tribes that were here, and we still have remnants of where they were, had a history of coming here for the acorn harvest in Verdugo Canyon, Dead Horse Canyon which is around my home. Not far. For the water system. For all of these things. I think there's been a time of, it's been a residence...it's been security. And I think the city gives that because it seems to be an entity unto itself. When the people came here, with the beginning of the railroad coming in, the station, Richardson giving land for the first school, land for the first railroad station, all of those things. And the ease with which people could come to the valley. This part of the valley, merging of the San Fernando and the San Gabriel Valleys. I think the people that came to the area of Montrose and La Crescenta came for health reasons because of the clean air. Everyone who has immigrated here. And also I think of the military people who all went to Asia came through this particular area of Southern California liked it and stopped on the way home.

Jerry: So you're talking about those, the military people during World War II?

Vonnie: Yes. I think this made a difference. And here again, this was a wide area. It was a journey on this railroad. There was another railroad preceding the one that goes to South Glendale, going up to the canyon here to Montrose in that area. All of the development has been an expansion of someone putting roots down.

Jerry: Do you think that transportation system has helped groups settle in this area and feel part of the community because they were able to radiate out within it?

Vonnie: I think that transportation ease. We were not here when the freeway came through as far as the intersection of the (2) and the (134). They were extended in (the late '70s?). But it was an item because of the ease of transportation. The speed of which you could get to the beach, you could get to the mountains, you could do these things, and the ease with which my husband could go back and forth to his office.

Jerry: You know, I guess the United States has been described in some respects using the cliché that it's been a melting pot of different cultures. Do you feel as though Glendale is kind of a microcosm of that melting pot?

Vonnie: I think it's one of several. We have many areas in the United States where it's still is as it was a hundred years ago. I think here you have a melting pot. I think it is slowing. It isn't quite as rapidly developing as it was in the '80s and in the '70s. I think today we have an effort going out to entice people to be a melting pot. I think in the '70s and '80s it just automatically happened. The people who came during those years were anxious to settle down. I think the people coming now are too, I think it's interesting in Glendale to see the different groups that come and where they come from. I think that's real interesting. And I think it's interesting also in Glendale the role of women in Glendale because so many of our groups that are coming now, the women do not enter the activities as much as the war brides that were all United States citizens. I think the cultures of other countries are slowly changing. You see it in the women who are entering, not only social groups but business groups and I think there's a difference.

Jerry: Do you think that, let me re-phrase the question because once again I'm... into the tape recorder because it seems to me in my work and everything that I've learned is that especially in this city, the city of Glendale throughout its history there have been a lot of strong women. Eleanor Toll, Mrs. Brand, Leslie Brand's wife, lots of other women. And currently there are lots of women that take part in those civic organizations, amongst civic organizations, social organizations and certainly in city-

elected government. Do you think those women are providing a role model for the cultures who have immigrated into the city from other parts of the world that might change their cultures as they evolve in the United States?

Vonnie: I think it'll take time. But I do feel that women's roles since the war years and really and some place in the world there's always a war going on. So you can't say the war between the wars because the between the wars is when our country has not been involved in the situation. I think that we have these strong women that came here, Eleanor Toll is one. We have pioneer women who came and it was hardships and many of the things have evolved. I still feel that one of the nice things about the countries that are coming in, they remind us that we still have a family. Still responsible for our children first. I think we have to keep those things in mind as we get busy in other activities and in jobs??? Because I definitely feel our best material goods are not what count in the long run.

Jerry: It, it sounds to me Vonnie, and tell me if I'm correct, from what I hear you saying is that both the Glendale culture if you will or the culture of the United States that has kind of evolved over the last 225 or so years is affecting the newer cultures that are arriving in it, and in the City of Glendale as well those new cultures have created a continuing evolution of our culture.

Vonnie: I think this is very true. And I think that those cultures that are, those people who are coming to us, the first thing is to understand the English language. I think that's very definite. Because wherever you live in the world, and I've lived a number of places, you react you live, even you shop in the language of the community which you're in. And the schools. All of these affect your basic culture. And in coming here, I think it's slow because some of the cultures were very rigid. Not necessarily religious-wise but in some areas they were. So I think we have that. But I do think there's a trend there and I think there's also a trend that once in a while you have to sort of stop and take a deep breath and see where you're going.

Jerry: You know, one thing that comes to mind as I, I hear you talking about these cultures is that as the newer immigrants become more proficient in English, perhaps more proficient in learning the American system if you will, particularly the political system and how its, its roles play out. You feel as they become more acculturated or assimilated whichever word is more appropriate, do you think that those groups of people will play a bigger role in, in city government?

Vonnie: I think it depends on the leadership of the groups. I think we have role models in all cultures. I think you have a sign of the times. I think we're slowly and just a little bit getting away from the materialism of the '80s. The vibes of that. We have more freedom to do things but we don't have the

permissiveness. I think this is the difference. The freedom to do things but you can't do everything you want to because it isn't a permissive society because we are bound by regulations.

Jerry: Talking about, talking about some of those regulations Vonnie, I know that you were involved with drafting some of them. I know this is kind of an abrupt transition but, but you got me going on it with, with the word regulation. I know that one of your interests has been history and historic preservation. With a specialty in Glendale because of your involvement in the community, the fact that you live here. In the '70s there was part of the general plan of the city of Glendale that was created. And it was the Historic Preservation Element. Can you tell me when you, when you came back to Glendale what your involvement with, with that document and what it's intent was? And also then the subsequent drafting of the ordinance that, that help to implement it and protect history and historic buildings in Glendale?

Vonnie: The general plan, uhm, usually when you have a general plan, you have many hearings. Many meetings, both social groups which I was involved and the civic groups. Civic groups I made that the historic preservation commission and those. Speakers to involve the residents. Not only the old-timers but 20 years ago, almost 20 years ago, the people who now are the senior citizens were the planners of that particular feeling and I still think the planning they thought then, because of their maturity and their philosophy, that they would leave something to their children. A heritage that says we cared for the community to make it safe, to make it productive, to do all of these things. And I think they did very well. The establishment of preservation I think got its real impetus with the Doctors' House because that was a cross-section of everyone in the city watching it. Even the Traffic Division. Because the night that the Doctors' House was moved, cut in two and moved, took all night. And with that group as you walked along behind it from Adams area and Wilson and up across telephone lines, traffic, everything had to be stopped. And at 3 o'clock in the morning, we were still at the bottom of Western Avenue at the northeast side of the city. And a large crowd following all of this. I think the interest of the builders and I think of the ones that did it, the corporations with funds, the loaning of thirty thousand dollars to put the house together... I think...very...low. I think the effort that went in to raise \$30,000 by the historical society in a year's time and earn the mortgage. It wasn't literally a mortgage but the paper that we signed saying we would do it brought the community together. I think that the interest in people bringing artifacts to the Doctors' House gave them an interest in the house. Gave them the interest to where there was a following, where the ordinance just had to happen.

Jerry: Vonnie, the first ordinance, the first version of the ordinance was adopted by the City Council in, in August of 1985.

That ordinance create, among lots of other things, created the Historic Preservation Commission.

Vonnie: That's right.

Jerry: I know that you were the first chairperson of that Commission. Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences both prior to the start of the Commission, and then during the first few years of the Commission's activities?

Vonnie: At the beginning, before we ever took it to the City Council for approval, we researched it almost a year. We contacted the national organization, the State. Redlands had an ordinance that they were beginning. We talked...L.A. was developing one, Hollywood was developing one. We were all speaking to each other and trying to line it up. We met practically weekly to work on it. We worked with not only the Public Works Division but all of the divisions of the city especially Planning. We have the interest of people. We had the sponsorship, large corporations. We had tours. We had tours that, uh, we had 400 people on a tour on a Saturday and we took 'em around to show 'em all the historical places. The commissioners, the members of the historical society acted as guides. We read up on everything we had. We interviewed the owners of the homes or the institutions or even the...the railroad station. We searched with everything that we had including all the files. I remember going out to Northridge, the library out there and working through there. We spoke to the religious organizations and especially the churches that have been here when the buildings were going up. We met with the city of course and the City Councilmen were with us on helping. The donations from, and we had donations from 25 cents to 500 dollars here and there from people. It seemed like we could always pull a rabbit out of the hat and that things would work.

Jerry: I'm so fascinated by this Vonnie because it sounds like there was quite a diversity in the group of people who were supportive of the, of preserving history in the city of Glendale as well as forming a somewhat formal organization under the city auspices to control if you will, or to assist people perhaps is a better word, in the preservation of their properties. Do you feel that that feeling continues?

Vonnie: I think it does. I think that right now, we are in a time in the country where we are coming out of, not a depression...it was just sort of people stopping and take stock of what's happening. And now again, prosperity to a degree. I think in the '80s, '90s, education got a real boost because there was a general plan...There were all of these efforts. And in the city we had I would say a cross-section of every area in the city regardless of whether it was found at the Los Feliz bridge down in the south part of Glendale clear out to the Burbank line. And people were bringing to us history, old letters...everything that

of why we should do it. I think it was perhaps one of the busiest times of my life.

Jerry: The years that you, that you were on the Commission?

Vonnie: That is with the Commission. I did other things. I belonged or I'm a director of a couple of other organizations during some time. But at that time it was, it was really an activity that kept us all busy. I would say four days out of five. And I think that with the success of the Doctors' House and the dedication I think of some of the people who physically worked scrubbing and peeling paint and everything else was terrific. They really did a super job. People saw that. There were tours. There were fund-raisers. There were dedicated people who'd had helped the group together. I think that the City Council was certainly behind us in the Commission. I think that here again when you change from public, when the building was going up and we were dealing with plumbing and all these things, sometimes Public Service and Public Works would seem to be closer but Planning is where the Commission belonged. And uh, because it was Planning for the future recognizing the past, it was as simple as that. We researched new places for a long time because people...took a long time for us to get through the fact that, uh, people could have a little bit, a very, very minute amount of, uh, shall we say, recognition... financial benefit of being... I think...it was an understanding, the role that the church had played in Glendale, the dedication. These things, the people who built the churches, were really the citizens of the community. Because one of the first things that people did when they came to Glendale was to have a church.

Jerry: I suppose an interesting juxtaposition even though this country talks about the separation of church and state, it seems like the church or religious institutions as a whole were really what formed the substance of a community. Do you think that's true?

Vonnie: I think that's true. But then you have entrepreneurs that came. I think you had the combination of the two. And I think that when you think of the organizations like the Tuesday Afternoon Club, the Thursday Afternoon Club, Women's group getting together, working with Eleanor Toll, the establishment of parent education courses in the public schools, the interest in building a library, all of these things by the Tuesday Afternoon Club they started many things as a civic organization and combined social organizations too. All of those combined with the fact that the breadwinner came here to make a better life for their family.

Jerry: Vonnie, what I'd like to do is change the tape and perhaps continue just for a bit longer. I know that we're coming close to an hour. I don't want to wear you out. I'd like to keep the interview fresh as well. But what I'd like to do is change the tape now.

Jerry: This is the second side of the taped interview with Vonnie Rossman on April 23rd, 1998. Vonnie, we're talking about some of the other organizations that you were involved with other than the Historic Preservation Commission. You were talking about, also women's involvement like the Tuesday and Thursday Afternoon Clubs, adult education. I suspect that you were probably involved with some other civic organizations as well. Can you tell me what, what those were or are?

Vonnie: Well, of course, I was involved with the Republican Women's Club. It was a spontaneous happy time because Glendale here again, I felt is a Republican town. And uh, it was something that was happening. And I enjoyed it at the time I was in. But I've always felt that once you've been chairman or president of an organization you should let the new blood come in. You're always there and you sponsor the new. You believe in it. You help if you can the leadership if it changes. That person should have the right to do it as they see appropriate. I became involved in social groups. I played golf. We've always played golf. My husband and my son and I. They were wonderful golfers. I was a duffer on ladies day or couples day. And it was really a highlight where we would play golf at different places in the United States. We played in England. We just played as a fun thing. Not as pros, not as athletes, but just as a family.

Jerry: So there was that aspect of your life here in Glendale that was enjoyable. Wasn't all work in the public sector.

Vonnie: Exactly right! It sounds, the way I talk, sometimes it sounds like it's all been life but it's not. We had a sailboat which we enjoyed very, very much. We had a son who went to school in the East. And we journeyed to Parents' Day to all the things that when you have a son in college. What you do, or daughter, whatever. You have their friends and their activities. You have your own hangovers from your college years. You have your friends that come and your social groups. You learn to play bridge. You learn to do all of these things. You learn to eat well. You learn to enjoy gardening which has always been a hobby of ours.

Jerry: Vonnie, the recreational activities that you participated in. I know you said that you had a sailboat. But I know that Glendale is landlocked. Didn't you have, you had other activities here. Golfing was one. Were there a number of places for you to play golf in Glendale?

Vonnie: Oh, sure! There are private clubs as well as public courses. And we were real interested in the development of Scholl Canyon. Here again was a place that was close. You get in a habit of old, you play golf with old friends, who were friends of ours that had lived in the South we had gone to college with. We were friends here and we'd go to the clubs here. But you also go to their hometowns too. We enjoyed that. We enjoyed...Going to mountains and staying in a cottage up there. We enjoyed

traveling, sounds like it was full everyday but we had time to stay at home and garden and swim.

Jerry: Vonnie, I, I know that you still enjoy lots of these things and, and I know from what you've told me in previous discussions that have not been part of this oral history program some of your other involvements. For instance, with the Red Cross. And I know that you have been very heavily involved with the Red Cross.

Vonnie: Yes. I get involve with two volunteer groups really. One of them has been with the hospital.

Jerry: That's with the Glendale Adventist?

Vonnie: Adventist Medical Center. I started there as, uh, with the beginning of the establishment of the foundation and worked with them on putting on there annual gala up there, charity work for years and a member of the Board of Directors with that institution, still am. I joined the Red Cross because I had promised an old friend many years ago when I was involved with parent teacher groups that if he ever became chairman of the Red Cross I would work with them. So they reminded me, and one day Robinson's Department Store when it first came out here that they were going to be president or chairman the following year and I better come too and help. So I've been involved with the Red Cross. I've been Chairman of Disaster Services. I was Chairman of Disaster Services for five years. Still involved. I still work on the regional committee and on the regional council of the Red Cross for the western region which includes Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, California. All the western region. I've enjoyed that. I worked there in Human Resources and Disaster Services for them. I'm on the national committee of the Red Cross and awards and services. One of the things I think I enjoyed back in the days of Glendale Beautiful and I was there... two years on designing and working with the Parks Department on the designing of the, and the carrying out of the float. And we were real proud of our group.

Jerry: That, that's the Pasadena Rose Parade?

Vonnie: Rose, Rose,

Jerry: Float?

Vonnie: Yes. That was sometime ago. That was '76 and '77. We're very proud of the fact that we got the theme prize one time and the Grand Sweepstakes the next year. Had a co-chairman, a very nice woman whose husband was a doctor here in the city and they retired to Fallbrook. But we had a lot of fun and it was something that sort of came along in the middle of things and it was a nice interlude.

Jerry: Vonnie, I, I, I know the hour is getting toward lunch time. I know that you have other appointments today. I would like to talk to you forever and make this part of the Glendale oral history program. It's rare that I ever put anybody to a test unaware during an oral history interview but what I'd like to ask you is if you could describe Glendale from what you know that, for the 20 some odd years that you've lived in the city, what word or phrase would you use to describe the city?

Vonnie: Caring.

Jerry: Where would you like, based on, on your knowledge of the history of Glendale, what would you like to see, where would you like the city to go in terms of its development, the compatibility of its citizens, the type of commercial and industrial enterprises that, that are coming into the city, you would like to see come into the city and it's general make-up?

Vonnie: I think that our city has come of age. I think that uh, we had the periods of growth and establishment. I think we need to continue to maintain our libraries. If I had an hour to spare sometimes, this is where I go and read. I enjoy that part of the city very much and I'd like to see the development for weekend hours. I think we need to support our schools. I think our schools are good. I had an opportunity to be principal for a day last year. Glendale High School. It was wonderful. I enjoyed the kids and what they're doing. Entirely different growing up in a parochial school. It was wonderful to...and going to public university. I still feel that public schools have a definite role in order to get that melting pot cohesive. And I think that Glendale cares. I think we need to spend more time, which it takes, get away from things that are really none of our business and get back to the value of education and our families because it gave us the strength here. And I think this is what we need. We need to get back to caring about what happens. Does that answer your question?

Jerry: Yes it does. Vonnie, I'd, I'd like to bring this, this interview session to a close. It's now nearly 11:30 in the morning on April 23rd. What I'd like to ask you is that at some point in the future, if we could continue another conversation on tape, so, for future generations of Glendale. So that they can hear about your past experiences here and your thoughts on the future as well.

Vonnie: Thank you Jerry. I've enjoyed it because the, our future is our young people. And I think we forget it from time to time.

Jerry: Thank you very much Vonnie.

Vonnie: Well thank you for letting me talk about myself!