

Code	304007
Subject	Donna J. Belles
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Interviewer	Josh Dorsey
Special Notes	

minutes:

introductions, where she grew up. Grew up in Detroit Shoreway, lives on W 64th,
0 live in house she grew up in. Used to be her Grandma's house.

Bought house after Grandma's estate was settled. Grandma had three houses
and twelve children. Mom was the youngest, so Donna knows less about what her
1 grandma did.

Grandma came here in the 1950s from Pennsylvania. Was able to get three houses
2 because of money sent home by uncles during the war.

Grandma moved to Cleveland for work. Children that weren't adults already
3 moved with her from Penn. Donna attended Waterson Lake high school.

1969, new school was completed, around 73rd and Detroit. Attended Dyke
4 College, now Myers University. 1981-1986. BA in marketing.

Never lived anywhere except for where she grew up, except for when she was first
married. She lived down the street for a little over a year. Started at St.
5 Coleman's. Because the old division lines in the diocese included her.

Now, it is Mount Carmel. Mt. Carmel is closer. St. Coleman's was very well
6 attended. Back then, there were very strict rules about going to the right church.

I-90 being built, it actually gutted St. Coleman's parish. People moved to the
7 suburbs, or just different areas. The schools closed down because of that.

There was a slow decline for years. Now, the church is more hispanic. For a time,
8 they didn't even have a resident priest. Now, her children are going to Mt. Carmel.
Hispanic population. Very mixed, Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc. Neighborhood
began as an Italian and Romanian. The further south, towards St. Coleman's, was
9 Irish.

Italian and Romanian families' history are linked to the neighborhood. Talks more
about Romanian churches. Talks about how each ethnic group wanted their own
10 parish.

Role of religion was important to immigrant life. Talks about exodus to suburbs.
11 Strain on urban community?

Most neighborhoods and parishes faltered in the 70s, hurt Mount Carmel. St.
Coleman's was hurt more by I-90. Many neighborhoods devastated by people
12 moving out of the city.

13 Used to be more family business. Ex. Baily's Bakery, best bakery.

Went out of business because of new developments. Had to change equipment to
stainless steel. But some places have survived up to a few years ago. The family
died out, and no one wanted to take it over.

The neighborhood hit bottom in the 1970s, now things are going back together.

15 Gordon Arcade, was a rooming house, was unkept, filthy.

No new businesses. Detroit Shoreway came in, and tried to rehab buildings. Now,
the majority of the older buildings are being kept up. DSDC founded by residents.

16 History of DSDC.

Started by concerned residents. Didn't want the neighborhood to deteriorate.

17 Wanted to save the buildings and the culture of the neighborhood.

DSDC, funded by grants, especially from Cleveland. Councilmen of the ward gives money as he sees need for certain community development areas. Ohio gives 18 money. Federal funding. Most money comes from grants.
Not sure on relations with DSDC and Cultural Gardens. Donna's relationship with 19 DSDC.

20 Anyone can become a member, but you must be elected to board by community.
Annual DSDC meetings: elections, anything that a majority vote would be needed 21 on. The board of trustees governs staff and approves resolutions.

Areas of need in Detroit Shoreway. There are some things she might have done 22 differently, but efforts have been very successful.

Done well on main streets (ex. Franklin), now their renovating on important side 23 streets (ex. W 65)

Oversee renovations of new or older houses. Variety of housing types. Want 24 diverse neighborhood with good quality of life.

25 Funding and grants based on bids, not just given to people from neighborhood.
Sometimes, contractors move into the neighborhood because they like the area so 26 much. Talks about being a librarian assistant.

reads childhood. W 64th, to her, was a unique street. W65th goes through 27 changes.

W64th, always has been quite, always has been nice. The people that lived there, they don't sell to outsiders. Don't put house to realtor, or sell to anyone. They sell 28 to family or friends.

Majority of people there now have had relatives who lived there before. Not much rental property. The street almost didn't belong to the neighborhood back in the 29 1970s.

It was always stable, didn't have the the problems of other streets. That house is 30 home, to her and her kids. Felt it was a family house.

A lot of people from neighborhood felt that way. House isn't extravagant, but is is a 31 nice home.

32 Won't let her kids sell the house, even after she's gone.

Walking to school. Was scared of two different houses. But then, the houses were 33 torn down for a McDonalds.

W65th and Detroit, was at least eight bars when she was growing up. There were "winos", but they were nice to kids and were part of the scenery. Bars got worse, 34 harsher crowd, by 1977 things got so bad liquor licenses were taken away because of fights, drugs, etc. Used to be able to go into a bar and see your family, would get sent by mom to get money from her dad in the bar if they needed to pick 35 something up.

Things seemed safer back then. Couldn't do anything bad, because people would 36 tell your parents. Older people were always looking out for you.

Street was almost entirely Romanian and Italian. But other Eastern Europeans too. 37 Still that way today.

One problem on the street was surrounding a certain apartment building. There 38 were drugs, loud music, prostitution, trash, people in and out at all times.

Was really bad for about five years, DSDC now manages the apartments, now there are different families, still keep low-mid income families, just more respectful 39 people.

Would never give up her life/house for those types of problems. 70-78, was young
40 and didn't remembr as much.

Alice's beauty shop, all neighborhood ladys would get their hair done there. In the
Gordon Square arcade. Was also an old 5 and dime nearby. Augustine's?
There was candy, ice cream. There was a wooden Indian. Eventually closed
down. Maury's Men's Shop was there,

Myers five and dime, all sorts of good junk toys. Highland resaurants, good french
0 fries, was there for a long time. She worked there when the area was bad.

Saw the bad situation that people were in, the area was in. Was called El Toro for
a few years. Had a big grand opening, Ray Pianka was there. That's where she
1 met her husband, while being a waitress at that restaurant.

Capital theatre was there when she was real young. At that time, more foreign
filmes, especially Spanish and Italian. Always thought the Captial theatre was cool,
especially while she was walking to grandmothers. Got to see that fancy crowd at
2 the Captial, was great to a little a girl.

This was at the time the neighborhood started to decline a little. Tried to reopen
the theatre when things were bad. Tried to give the kids somewhere to go, so they
3 wouldn't get in trouble.

Happened for about a year, and then nothing else. When she was fourteen, they
4 had a "rock palace". Was for under 18 year olds, had rock music and djs.
was a place for young people to go. Chagning adolescent population then and
5 now.

When she grew up, there were no girls, it was all boys. Street had nothing but boys.
6 Played football, kick ball, cowboys with the guys in that neighborhood.

Everything revolved around sports on the playground, girls and boys. Gathering
7 place was Herman playground.

Three generations of "Herman Ghetto Rats"-what they called themselves. A
generational group. They all grew up in the neighborhood, now some have moved
8 back.

9 Lucky to have a group of friends that she sees thoroughout her life.

Know half the people you grew up with, know their lives, know their children. Had
10 their first Herman Ghetto Rat renunioin last october,
there were three hundred people there. Neighborhoods that survived the 70s have
11 grown stronger. Neighborhood revolved around the church.

Church held people together, even those that didn't go to Catholic school. Was still
the center of community. Her children respect the community, respect elders,
12 respect community.

Pioneer Savings and Loan, one of the oldest savings and loan banks in Cleveland.
13 Place to go in the 50s-60s if you were going to buy a house.

Place called Mike's Body Shop, night club type place. Supposedly had mafia ties.
14 Mom wouldn't let her walk near it.

Interview recomendees, Donna Gonyon, was her second grade teacher, then they
15 became friends/neighbors

great thing about the nieghborhood, know your teacher forever. Lives and works in
the nieghborhod. Feels like that is the place where she can do the most help.

16 Donna Gonyon is now a guidiance counseler for Ceveland schools.

Zone family, she grew up with Matt Zone. Neighborhood is very political, don't realize it until you see that other places aren't the same. Grow up with a belief system for politics, the church and education.

Cration(sp?) family, Jimmy or Joe, would be good to contact, helped run funeral home.

Talks about the funeral home, used to be small. Then there was Barry's, which was large. But, Cration became better known, then they consolidated. Older, would know different things.

Talks about what some of the older people knew.

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