

AL 130

Interviewee: Lynda R. Knight

Interviewer: Connie Bieber

Date: March 19, 1991

B: This is Connie Lazenby Bieber. Today is March 19, and I am interviewing Lynda Knight at my home in Gainesville on her association with the Junior League of Gainesville. Good evening, Lynda.

K: Good evening.

B: I would like to start today by getting some biographical information from you. First, where were you born?

K: In Lake Shore Hospital in Lake City, Florida.

B: In what year were you born, Lynda?

K: 1945.

B: Your parents' full names?

K: Banks Basker Rogers and Sara Sloan Rogers.

B: OK. Where were they from?

K: Daddy was from a little town called Fuquay-Varina in North Carolina, and my mother is from Pelham, Georgia.

B: I am a little familiar with Pelham. Where is Fuquay-Varina?

K: Close to Raleigh. It is a little town.

B: How did he come to Florida, then, from North Carolina?

K: He was born into a tobacco-farming family, and his uncle, Banks Saunders, was a tobacco warehouseman. He opened the first tobacco warehouse in Lake City and then in Valdosta. He brought the tobacco market to Florida and to Georgia. My daddy dropped out of school when he was in ninth grade to go to work for his Uncle Banks and help support the family. His father was an invalid. He has been in tobacco ever since. He went to work in the tobacco warehouse, and then he built warehouses. Then when he had a family he settled in and had his own in south Georgia.

B: So he lived for a time in south Georgia.

K: We lived in Live Oak [Florida] when I was born. I was born in the Lake City

hospital because there was no hospital [in Live Oak]. We live in Live Oak, and when I was twelve we moved to Fitzgerald, Georgia, where Daddy built his own tobacco warehouse.

B: How did he meet your mother?

K: She was a school teacher in Live Oak. His family had moved from North Carolina to Live Oak; Uncle Banks had brought them there. They had bought some land. As I said, my grandfather was an invalid, so they moved there to be close to the family.

B: And she was there teaching school.

K: She had graduated from Georgia State College for Women in Milledgeville and had gone there [to Live Oak] to teach school.

B: So you grew up in your early years in Live Oak.

K: In Live Oak.

B: Thinking way back, what is the first thing that you can remember as a child?

K: We lived out on the farm in Live Oak, in a great big farmhouse with a wrap-around front porch. [We lived] in the house with my grandparents and my aunt, who was widowed very shortly after her husband entered the war. My father was at that time traveling, building warehouses and working warehouses. He followed the market from Florida to Georgia to North Carolina to Virginia and on up, so he was not home much. We lived out on the farm, and I guess as a very young child I remember sitting around my grandfather's wheelchair on the front porch. I had a twin sister. We were out in the country, and we never went to town much except on the weekends to trade eggs and milk and butter for other staples at the little grocery store with my grandmother. So I guess that is the very earliest [memory]. This was] preschool.

B: How old would you say you were then?

K: I was in nursery school at the time. I have some good memories [of nursery school]. We went to a nursery school there. My mother worked for the welfare department, so she would take us in during the day and leave us there in nursery school.

B: OK. So you lived out in the country, but you really experienced the community.

K: We did. We went to nursery school in town, and we went to church in town.

- B: Tell me a little bit about your twin sister.
- K: She is an identical twin. She lives in Greensboro, North Carolina. We are still very close. We still look very much alike. She has three children, and I have three children. We enjoy doing a lot of the same things. We talk; we run up big phone bills. [laughter]
- B: When you were growing up I guess you were really close playmates.
- B: We were. We were each other's best friend. We did not have playmates. We had only two friends that came to the farm to play with us. We did not have after-school friends like everybody has here. We had only those two friends. But we always had someone [because of being twins]. We have a brother and sister that are twins, too.
- B: Oh, do you?
- K: We have two sets of twins.
- B: Does that go in your family all the way back?
- K: Fraternal twins do. There are fraternal twins in Mama's family.
- B: Is it every other generation, or is it in every generation?
- K: Well, they say that. I guess it is, because my mother had twins. But we are identical.
- B: And you are the only set of identical twins?
- K: We are. We are the only set same-sex twins in our family. So it was fun [growing up].
- B: You went to nursery school in town. Where did you go to elementary school?
- K: It was Live Oak Primary School, is what it was called at the time.
- B: And you stayed in school in Live Oak until you moved?
- K: To Fitzgerald, Georgia.
- B: How old did you say you were?
- K: I was eleven. We entered the fifth grade in Fitzgerald. We lived in town. We had our own house.

B: This was a different experience.

K: It was a really different experience. We moved there without furniture because we had been living in the house where my grandparents and my aunt lived, so it was really exciting. We got to go to the movies and go swimming. We walked to school instead of riding the school bus. It was a really new experience.

B: It sounds like you liked it.

K: We did.

B: How long did you live in Fitzgerald?

K: Until I graduated from high school in 1963.

B: What did you do after you finished high school?

K: I went to my mother's alma mater. It was then called Women's College of Georgia, where I got a degree in home economics education. Then I left there and went to Moultrie, Georgia, to teach. That is where I met my husband, Jim Knight. He was the city editor of the *Moultrie Observer* at the time. The year before we married he went back to the University of Georgia to get his master's. So when we married we moved to Athens. We lived there for three years before moving to Gainesville.

B: So you came to Gainesville after you had been married for three years.

K: Yes.

B: Which was in . . .

K: 1973.

B: Now, was it still just the two of you?

K: No. We had our first daughter a couple of months before we moved. In April of 1973 we had our first daughter in Athens, before we moved here.

B: So you came with a young child.

K: We came with a young child.

B: In the 1970s, what size town was Gainesville?

K: I wish I remembered. I do not know the number of people. It was a lot smaller than it is now, because the neighborhood where we live we considered too far

out at the time. It is very much in town now.

B: It certainly has grown to the west a lot.

K: It has. Pic 'n Save was the only thing out on this side of town at that time. Everything else was pasture or rural.

B: That is right. I was thinking that the early 1970s was around 50,000 or 60,000 in the city limits of Gainesville, but that does not cover the whole metropolitan area.

K: That is probably right. I really just do not remember.

B: Tell me when you were invited to join the Junior League.

K: I have to go back by children, I guess. [It was] 1979, I think.

B: Before you were invited to join the league, what did you know about the league in Gainesville?

K: I did not know a lot about it. I knew that it was a group of outstanding women who were involved in community activities. A lot of my friends at church were members of the league. I do not remember being specifically being aware of particular projects that they did other than the Follies. I had been to a Follies prior to my having been invited into the league.

B: Now, this is the fund raiser.

K: The Junior League Follies, the fund raisers that they did every four years. Going back, I guess my first experience with the league was when I was on the board of the Association of Retarded Citizens. Becky Evans was at the time a member of the league, and her placement was as a board representative to the association. I guess her first year she just had a board position, but the second year she actually served as president of the association. It was a really big, demanding job. And I remember at that time she went back to the league and asked for full placement, which, I guess, was not standard procedure at the time, and was granted that. I remember being very impressed with her leadership style and her leadership ability. She really did some very good things. The Association of Retarded Citizens, I think, still reaps the benefits of Becky's leadership, because until Becky came on as community leader, it really was struggling. It was a group of parents who had a very concerned interest in programs for retarded children and adults in the community but who [the parents] lacked organizational leadership skills.

So that was my first experience. As I think back, I was aware of that [the Junior League] from their community involvement. Becky was my first link to that.

B: When you were invited to join the Junior League, how was this invitation handled?

K: It was interesting. That was back in the days of secret admissions and invitations. I remember getting a call from Patti Caton, a good friend of mine. We were in church together. Patti invited me to a tea. She invited me to a morning tea at her house a number of weeks [ahead of time] – four or five weeks. I remember saying thank you for the invitation, but as I looked at my calendar, I had a dentist appointment with Phil Ankrim at the time, Bonnie's husband. I said that I appreciated the invitation but I did not think I could come because I had a dental appointment that morning. I was having a lot of dental work done, and I hated to rearrange that. Patti wanted me to come and pour punch for a group of friends, and she insisted that I come on, that it would be fine to come as soon as I got through with my appointment, that she really needed me to do this.

A little later we talked, and, as I recall, I asked her [who] some of the other people that were coming [were], and later I realized that they were all within that group of members that I knew were members of the league. I did not think too much about it, but I did feel a little different at the morning tea. I was aware that this was a very select group of people. There were no neighbors there. It was obviously a group of people who had something in common.

B: So you were suspicious.

K: Yes. I was not sure why. I did not necessarily tie it to the league and to an invitation.

B: How did you feel about that?

K: A little uncomfortable, but I felt like they were all friends who were being very kind and gracious to me. I met some new people. Ann Ross was pregnant at the time. You turned out to be one of my very best friends later on. I have looked back on that as the beginning of some really nice and special friendships. But it was a little strange, unusual at the time.

B: This is part of a system where the organization was selecting members without the members' knowledge, supposedly.

K: That is right.

B: So the first time you as a prospective member learned anything about it in the open was when you were, in fact, invited to join the group.

K: Right.

B: So therefore if you were not selected, you just were not ever notified that you had been [considered].

K: That is right. You would not have known that you had gone through this process.

B: That is right. How was your invitation delivered?

K: Well, Patti Caton had the invitation, and she took it to my home. She stopped by one afternoon very excited. But the thing was, I was not there. [laughter] I was in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, visiting my college roommate. Jim was about to go up for a meeting, so I had gone up [early] with [Susanna]. Susanna was a baby at the time, so we had gone off a couple of days early to visit with her. Then Jim was coming up for his meeting. So she delivered the invitation to Jim. [laughter] As I understand it, there was a lot of excitement when she first got there and then some disappointment that I was not there, but she extended the invitation to him for me, and then he gave it to me on the phone that night. Then I called her. But I was excited when I was in Philadelphia and got the invitation.

B: What happened after you were invited to join? What was the next step?

K: We went to an orientation. I really thought it was a very important meeting. It is a meeting that we have not always done in the past; sometimes we have. It was at Kathy Jenkins's house – I remember that. Kathy was the provisional chairman that year, and Joella Harris was her assistant. It was a couples thing when we went. It was a wine-and-cheese kind of evening where all of those who had been invited came with their spouses or significant others or whatever and mingled and got to know one another. Then there was a slide show that Patsy McCullough had done to show us what the league was about, [and what it] had been involved in in the past. Then they talked about the time commitment.

That was a very important meeting, I thought, because knowing what the time commitment was and knowing what my other commitments and time constraints were, I am not sure that I would have accepted the invitation, as much as I wanted to, would have liked to, if Jim had not been there to hear what had gone on in the past, what the time commitment was, what was expected of me. When you have young children, especially with the provisional year, it is very important to have that support. I felt like both of us were buying into it at the same time, so it was a good opportunity. It was a nice meeting, and we both came away feeling good. It was actually with his encouragement that I accepted the invitation.

B: Then did you enter some sort of instructional period?

- K: We went into the provisional course, which began in September, I believe, and went until some time after Christmas. I do not remember exactly what the calendar was. But we met weekly for instruction into not only how the league worked and the league's organization and structure and the association's structure [the Association of Junior Leagues, the national organization], but also we spent a lot of time getting to know our community, about the league projects and the needs in our community, the people in our community, those kinds of things. It was a very informative year.
- B: Tell me a little bit about the group of women who were in this course with you. First, about how many were there?
- K: I think there were twenty-two in our class, that we started out with.
- B: Was that an average size for the time?
- K: No. As I understand it, that was a larger class than usual at the time. Most of the women I did not know. We came from all walks. There were three that were at our church, and we started out together as a little group.
- B: What was the age span of the group, approximately?
- K: I was one of the older ones at the time, and I must have been thirty-two, I think. There were some who were in their early twenties – probably twenty-three or twenty-four years old. I am not sure what the youngest age was at the time. Then there were one or two who were a year older than I was. I think at that time thirty-four was the maximum age that you could come into the league.
- B: If you were looking at them as a group, what would you say about [them]? Were they homemakers? Did they have careers outside the home?
- K: At that time, without going back and looking at my notes, it probably was about fifty-fifty. It was about evenly split at that time, as I recall. We had a couple who were in school, and there were a number that worked part time. But there were not more than half that worked, I am sure, at that time. There were still a lot of us – I was one of those – who were at home and not employed outside the home.
- B: At the end of the course, what happened?
- K: At the end of the course we had a very nice celebration evening at the Thomas Center where we were introduced as full, active members. We were introduced to the rest of the membership, active and sustaining. It was a very nice evening where everyone came dressed up. Our sponsors took us out to dinner.

- B: Did everyone who started the course complete the course?
- K: No, they did not. Most of them did. I remember two specifically who moved away, and I think we had one who dropped out. She was pregnant and was having a difficult time of it. She came back in later. But most everybody finished.
- B: What were the requirements of membership at that time?
- K: I would have to go back and look. Certainly [one was] to attend all the membership meetings. We had a quota at the Thrift Shop, which was a Junior League service project and fund raiser for the community, and I think the quota was \$75 at the time, but I do not remember for sure. We had to work on a project, a league placement, either in-league or community.
- B: Can you tell me what those two terms mean?
- K: Community placement involved being in a project that was [a service to the] community in some way, dealing with the community. In-league was one of the in-league committees that made the league function and continue to go, whether it was membership, development, or working on the newsletter or the placement committee or arrangements committee or something like that.
- B: I see. So did you serve on one of each, or was it an either-or?
- K: At that time it was an either-or. Ours may have been the first class to have done that. I know that very close to my time coming it was one of each, but ours was one. My first year [as an] active was a Follies year, and in addition to having a regular placement we all had to serve on a Follies committee, as well as having to sell a certain number of Follies tickets.
- B: Now, at this time was Follies still the major fund raiser for the group?
- K: Yes, it was.
- B: How often was it held?
- K: It was held every four years at the time.
- B: So enough money was raised to fund the league's work and projects for a four-year period of time?
- K: For a four-year period; it was pro-rated over four years.
- B: How did you make money on the Follies?

- K: Primarily through selling ads for the program. Money was made selling tickets, as well, but it took a lot of that, as I recall, to underwrite the actual expenses of the event. Most of the money at the time was made through ads in the programs, through walk-on ads, walk-around ads, and that kind of thing.
- B: Was the money earmarked? Did you generally tell the people to whom you were selling the tickets what you were going to use the money for?
- K: At that time, I am not sure, Connie. I was so new to it. I do not think they did. Later in my career we did that when we were developing a family resource center, but I think I am correct that we did not earmark them at the time. It was for general Junior League projects that would serve the community.
- B: So the business community was supporting the league on the basis of its name and its reputation, then.
- K: That is right, and what had gone before.
- B: Instead of any particular project.
- K: Absolutely.
- B: Tell me about the membership meetings. What time of day were they held?
- K: At that time I am not sure when they were held, Connie. That goes back a long time. I did not come in during the time of the day actives and the night actives. It was combined at that time.
- B: There were no longer two separate memberships then?
- K: No. I say that. My first year might have been a day and a night, but after that it was not. As I recall, the meetings were flip-flopped. They were a combination of both.
- B: Some day and some evening, you mean?
- K: I think that. Maybe that was just the board meetings.
- B: Would you say that the proportion of the general membership was the same as you described the provisional class? You said [it was] fifty-fifty of those who did work outside the home and those who did not.
- K: I would guess that that was close. It might not have been quite [fifty-fifty], but I would guess that that is close. When I came into the league it was certainly going more toward greater numbers of those being employed. It was only

increased.

B: OK. About what size would you say the group was?

K: I think the league was about 100 or slightly over 100 active members at the time, maybe 110 or something like that.

B: What were the membership dues, approximately?

K: Forty-five or fifty dollars.

B: Did that pose an economic problem for anybody, and, if so, how was that dealt with?

K: I think it may have a little bit. Even in our provisional class I remember, but I am not sure what had gone on. I remember thinking that maybe they had changed things for us a little bit. Ours were split so that our arrangements fees were paid. Maybe it has always been that way; I do not remember. But we paid our membership dues in the spring, and we paid our arrangement fees in the fall. I do remember the discussion with a couple of people that that was difficult, but they worked it out. Now, whether they worked out individually with the treasurer I do not know. But it was not a major problem, certainly. That was one of the things that was explained to us in our orientation, that one of the criteria was that we would be able to meet the financial obligations of the organization, which did not seem that great. But it certainly was an area of concern.

B: Tell me about some of the projects that the league was involved in at this time, in the early 1980s. What did you do your first year, in addition to Follies?

K: My first year, in addition to Follies, was Thrift Shop.

B: That was customary at that time?

K: Yes. I was in the provisional class in which it was expected that within your first three years you would serve on the Thrift Shop committee. To me it was one of the best placements I ever had. It certainly was the best way to get to know the people in the league in a hurry.

B: So did the league depend on the provisional class to staff that?

K: Very heavily.

B: Was anybody else required to [put in hours there]?

K: Well, all the league members still had their two rotations.

B: Two per –?

K: Two rotations per year.

B: What is a rotation?

K: Where league members were all obligated to come down to the Thrift Shop and work two days throughout the year. But it was primarily staffed by provisionals. And there were sustainers. Betty Riker was one of the sustainers who worked on a regular basis. There was another, but I do not recall who that was. There was a staff member who was there all the time.

B: A paid person?

K: A paid person who was there all the time. Then the committee leadership was not provisional. Those were seasoned league members. There were probably a couple of other members to the committee. All the provisionals were not on the Thrift Shop committee. Some were pulled into leadership very early. But for the most part it was a provisional committee.

B: What was your project responsibility the second year you were an active member?

K: I was on the education and training committee as a committee member.

B: Is that an in-league project?

K: That is an in-league project. Basically we plan the programs for the league meetings, plan training for league members, for board training and for committees and that kind of thing.

B: What sorts of community project was the group involved in in the early 1980s? Was it in the early 1980s that the Family Resource Center began to be discussed and considered as a focus for the group?

K: It was. I do not remember exactly the date on that, but it was in the early 1980s when we had the initial round-table discussion for that.

B: Can you tell me something about how that group was pulled together? Who made up the round-table discussions?

K: I remember that Kathy Jenkins was one of the leaders of that. I was not in on any except for the last one, but I know they pulled together representatives from various agencies and community groups . . .

- B: Throughout Gainesville and outside the league.
- K: – throughout Gainesville and definitely outside the league to talk about various issues that were of concern in the community, various needs that the community had that were being unmet. As I recall, there were three community round tables. There may have been more, but I think it was three round tables that they had before they had the final session at a Junior League meeting where the idea and concept of the Family Resource Center was actually born.
- B: Can you expound for me a little bit about the Family Resource Center and what its mission was and just exactly what it entailed?
- K: My understanding was that the Family Resource Center initially was designed to be a networking agency. It was not an agency so much that would do its own projects, though that was certainly possible if there were a need that was not being met by a community group and was something that the Family Resource Center could do. It was primarily to be a clearinghouse or networking opportunity to bring together all the various agencies and organizations in the community that were dealing in the area of children and child welfare but that were maybe were not communicating and did not know what the other was doing. There was great duplication in some areas and a real void in other areas. I think the original concept was that the Family Resource Center would help pull all this together into some kind of a cohesive unit for the community.
- B: I noticed – when I was doing some research through the annual reports and the minutes – that the organization contributed a sizable amount of money on several occasions toward this.
- K: We did. All of the Follies revenue from one of the mid-1980s Follies – I would have to go back and look at the year – was committed to the Family Resource Center for its initial start-up, and then we continued to fund it to a lesser degree after that.
- B: I show that in 1984 the league donated \$32,000 to the Family Resource Center, and then in 1985 as a result of the Follies that year, the league contributed another \$50,000 to the center.
- K: Right. It was close. I think toward the end of it it was close to \$100,000 that had been put into it.
- B: This was one of the largest-scale attempts to include the community in its projects. Am I correct about that?
- K: Yes. Once the Family Resource Center was actually established, the board was made up of leadership from outside agencies and organizations, not just league

members.

B: So the Junior League did not control it in total.

K: No.

B: Other projects during the 1980s that I have read something about and would be interested in knowing a little about included Project Graduation, which I think the league started in 1984.

K: Right, and the league continued to fund that for a good number of years. Project Graduation is an event that happens on graduation night here in Gainesville [and many other cities] which is aimed at having a drug-free graduation evening, thereby reducing deaths of teenagers. [It is intended to keep them from] drinking and going out on the road and that kind of thing. [We want to prevent] not only deaths, but other kinds of injuries or tragedies. It is just a wonderful evening now where graduates can go out and celebrate the excitement of the occasion in a drug-free party environment.

B: What about the Teen Outreach program?

K: The Teen Outreach program was actually a replication of a national model, an A.J.L. project.

B: What is A.J.L.?

K: The Association of Junior Leagues, the national organization that the Junior League is a member of. That was to provide some peer counseling and basically some life-management-skill-type programs to the high school students. That was actually adopted; it was researched and adopted. But once we began working with the school system, we determined that the school system in Alachua County was really doing a pretty good job of that kind of educational programming. We worked a lot with Mae Isler at Buchholz High School. So that program was modified, even after its adoption, a little bit.

That committee the next year, instead of doing the Teen Outreach model that we had originally taken from national, worked with Buchholz High School and I think one of the other high schools (I am not sure) to try to involve parents in the school system, because that was a need documented by the school system, particularly at Buchholz High School, a school in the northwest section that nevertheless had a lot of low-income minority students coming from the east section of town. Those parents were not involved in the school system, so that committee actually tried to take the school-parent meetings to the community where the parents were. [The program experienced] only moderate success, even after taking the P.T.A. meetings and other types of programs aimed at

parents actually into the areas where the low-income minorities resided. But that was basically what Teen Outreach was trying to do, to bring the school and the parents closer together.

B: I see. What about this program called Showcasing the Arts?

K: Showcasing the Arts was begun and actually adopted as a full-scale project in 1988. It was started actually in 1987, I think, for working with the school system, with Janice Beis, who was the supervisor of art education at the time for the Alachua County school system. [Its purpose was] to take the art work of school children all over Alachua County – working with the art teachers – and hang it first in the Thomas Center for showing and then to have an evening reception at the Thomas Center that was hosted by the Junior League members that would recognize the students who had participated. There were some awards given for the best of show in different areas. It was an exciting project. I found, once I got there and actually saw these children and their parents, children who many times are not recognized for their academic achievement but who could be recognized for their artwork, and recognized in front of their peers and their teachers and their parents. Once the reception was over, then the Showcasing the Arts committee would actually take the children's art exhibits on tour to some of the city and county buildings and to some of the nursing homes. It was framed and matted, too. The committee worked in conjunction with the school system and with the media centers to get the artwork matted and framed, so it looked really pretty and professional, as well. So it was a traveling art display, art exhibit, actually.

B: I want to ask you about one other project that I read about during this time called Elderly Outreach. You alluded to it just a minute ago when you were talking about the Showcasing of the Arts.

K: Elderly Outreach actually started with a program that had begun at the Florida State Museum [now the Florida Museum of Natural History, on the UF campus] where we would take mini-exhibits into the nursing homes. I actually worked on that through P. K. Yonge's [Laboratory School] Adopt-A-Grandparent program where one of the historians, I guess – an educator at the museum – would prepare a little [presentation]. We would have funny fish and we would have fishes in little ziploc bags and that kind of thing. One time we would do a program on the Confederacy. We took some of the portable exhibits and pieces from different exhibits from the museum into the nursing homes. That expanded into Elderly Outreach, where we worked with the museum. They would prepare the trunk showings of the museum exhibits, and they would be taken [to the nursing home]. The museum personnel would actually prepare the background information and package the displays into trunks that the Junior League members would then take into the nursing homes. We would visit with the

elderly residents. It was a wonderful experience for both the members and the residents. They would get to reminisce on things that they had seen back in their time, and they would get to experience some of the things from the museum that other people got to experience all the time. Because of their inability to leave the nursing home or to be mobile, they could not experience [these exhibits at the museum]. So that was how Elderly Outreach started. It was Junior League members going into the nursing homes just to visit and to brighten the residents' days, but at the same time taking something of educational interest to them.

B: That sounds like an interesting project.

K: It was a very rewarding [experience].

B: What was the period of time in which you were the president of the Junior League?

K: I was the president in 1987 to 1988.

B: Tell me a little bit about that year.

K: It was a busy year. It was a wonderful year. I think of some very good things that happened for the league. [It was] a year not without controversy from time to time.

B: That sounds like an interesting statement. Tell me what the controversy was about.

K: Well, they say that every president has one meeting. There was a big discussion over whether or not the Junior League could adopt a very large project called Working with D.A.R.E. I will think on that a minute and will be able to tell you what that is an acronym for. But, basically, the D.A.R.E. group, which is a support group for elderly and infirmed, had worked out a deal with the Easter Seal Society. Easter Seals was wanting to partially fund an elderly day-care center in this community, and D.A.R.E. came to the Junior League and asked the league to be the partner with Easter Seals in developing this elderly day-care center that would meet, primarily, the needs of Alzheimer's residents, but not limited to Alzheimer's. [They] realized that there is a real need now for an elderly day care so that children of these adults can go to work and have some kind of a safe environment for these people.

There was a strong group that really wanted this and a strong group that really did not want this. We felt like it was too much for the league and that it had possibly not been as thought out [as it should have been]. So it provided some meetings of interest and discussion. It was finally decided that it was not

something that the league could do at that time but that needed to be researched more carefully. So it continued to be researched the next year. However, in the process, Easter Seals decided to go elsewhere to fund their day-care center. To Sarasota, I believe, is where they finally took it.

But it was a year of some good things that happened.

B: Well, I got you off the track by asking you about this controversial piece. Please go ahead.

K: Are you thinking in terms of the projects and the things that we did that year?

B: That is part of what I would like to know about, yes.

K: [There are] some things that stand out in my mind about that year. One of the fun things that we did was we hosted Kaleidoscope, which is a traveling art experience, really, for children. It is hosted by Hallmark. I remember having heard of that some years before in some Junior League meeting I had been to, and [I remember] wanting to know how we could get that to Gainesville. I was told that you did not ask for it. On its travels through the United States, you would be sometimes be fortunate enough for it to be in your community. One day shortly after I became president I remember opening the mail, and here was this wonderful packet saying, "Kaleidoscope is coming through Gainesville. Would the Junior League host it?" It was like a Christmas present or déjà vu, because I had wanted this from years past. That was a wonderful, unplanned-for, unbudgeted-for project that the league and the community really threw themselves into. Kaleidoscope was here for four or five days, something like that. The sustainers in the league (who are active members who have gone on past active membership but continue to support the league with their dues support and in helping with other projects) really manned and made Kaleidoscope happen, because our league members were already maxed out on placements. But it was a wonderful experience that brought hundreds and hundreds of children through during the time that it was here. We set it up in the back of the Oaks Mall. It was a really fun and wonderful hands-on art exhibit for children to come through and actually experience art in its different forms, getting to do art, to create art. So that was fun.

We hosted the first middle school youth conference during that year, and we were a co-sponsor with the crime commission and the school board. It was at that time that we were able to bring the Crittenton Awareness team to Gainesville.

B: What is that?

K: It is a panel of teenagers that are very highly trained to represent different

aspects of adolescent sexuality, from the teen drop-out mom to the teen abstainers to the teen mother who had put up a child for adoption. There were five of them that came. We worked with the March of Dimes and Eastern Airlines to actually bring them to Gainesville for the youth conference and to do a parent seminar at the Hippodrome [State Theater] the night before the youth conference. These young people presented their views on adolescent sexuality and the choices that they had made and the consequences that they were living with and that kind of thing. It was a very important part of the youth conference.

We have now since that time realized that we would like to have that kind of program here in Gainesville, and we have been able now to work with the March of Dimes and actually have our own what we call Teen Awareness Panel Attack Group, which is modeled after that. We first saw the Crittenton Awareness Panel in Nashville when we attended the annual conference. The president and the president-elect go to the annual conference in the spring, and we saw [the Crittenton Awareness Panel] at the 1987 annual conference in Nashville. They were by far the most outstanding of all the model programs that were presented there. So we felt good to be able to bring them to Gainesville. It has taken four or five years, but we now have our own as a result of that.

1988 was the year that the second edition of the cookbook. The *Gator Country Cooks* sold out; we sold our last copy.

B: This is another fund-raising project?

K: This was a fund raiser that had started before I ever became a member of the Junior League. Early in my active years I remember that we printed the second edition at the time, but I do not remember the beginning of *Gator Country Cooks*. We closed out and finished the sales on that that year.

What else did we do that year? One of the mandates that we have more or less gotten from our predecessors the year before was to bring the Junior League into the twentieth century as far as office operations were concerned. So we hired our first full-time/part-time secretary who was computer proficient. We bought a computer and a postage meter, so we thought we were really in the big time with that. [laughter]

What else did we do that year? We did participate in the Family Resource Center's Family Fun Festival.

B: What was that?

K: The Family Fun Festival was the annual fund raiser for the Family Resource Center, once it was ongoing. That was a big Family Fun Festival at the Oaks

Mall. We actually had a carnival inside the Oaks Mall.

B: Oh, was that at Halloween?

K: At Halloween. Everyone came in costume, and it provided a safe environment where families from all over the county, [from] out in the little rural communities as well [as Gainesville], could bring their children and have a safe and fun Halloween.

I am trying to think what some of the other things were that we did that year. We adopted the Kirby-Smith History Room that year as a full-staff project. That was where Junior League members had worked with the school board to actually replicate a school room as it would have been in the early days of Gainesville. The provisional class that year actually made the pinafores and the little collars and ties that the children put on when they go to the history room. So they dress and become more like the children in the early part of this century.

B: So you mean the league selected or donated the money to pick the furnishings? What did the league do for the history room?

K: Well, some of both. We donated some of the money, and some of our members who were very much into historic preservation and who knew where some of these things were. worked to get the furnishings identified and either donated or purchased an awful lot that was [used in the room]. The school desks, as I recall, had been in storage. They were actually here from years past. And we bought *McDuffy's Readers* – of course, they are reproductions – and the little lunch pails and those kinds of things. So it was a combined effort on that.

We worked on an internal basis. In addition to working with the computer in the office and that kind of thing, we worked hard to revise the provisional course to make it a little bit more flexible, because by that time more and more of our members were involved in full-time careers and jobs outside the home. Many of them were coming to us already having been very experienced in volunteerism in the community and more and more aware of community life, community organizations, [and] the leadership within the community.

B: Now, this is the information you told me that you had been using to train your provisionals in the past?

K: Right. And it was still the training program, but we revised that a little bit. Colleen Cullen (and I do not remember who else) worked with us. We gathered from a number of other leagues copies of provisional courses that they had been doing and looked at ours, and [we] put together a little different manual that allowed some flexibility and that tried to meet the needs of those women who were coming already very aware of community life, having been involved in

volunteerism. From their standpoint, [we were] trying to give them more information about the Junior League – the Junior League structure, the Junior League's philosophy, program priorities, and that kind of thing – [while] at the same time, [we were] trying to provide enough information about the community and volunteerism and that kind of thing for those younger league members who maybe were even new to the community or who had not been so involved.

B: Now, that is the question I want to ask you next. What do you think changed about the league, the community, or life in general that brought about a different person who was in your provisional class, this different person who had that experience already?

K: That is a complex question, and I am not sure I have the answer. I think part of it is that more women, certainly, are just going into the work force today. More and more women are having their own full-time careers. Women have postponed having their children until later to get into the career field. At that point the age of the provisional was getting older. In fact, it was during those years in the late 1980s that we actually raised the admissions age. I am almost certain that when I came into the league, thirty-four was the oldest that you could be. By the late 1980s we had changed that to be thirty-nine of January 1 of your provisional year. So women were getting older, and just by that they had been involved; they had been out there doing something. They have been out there being involved in their community in different ways and that kind of thing. So I think it is a combination of just the changing profile: more women are having careers, are having families later, and are involved in other things before they came into the league.

B: Do you see a correlation between more women being in outside-the-home careers and more women being more knowledgeable about the community?

K: Absolutely. I do.

B: They get this knowledge through their careers?

K: I am not sure. I think to some degree they do. I am not sure how all of that comes about. I think a lot of times women are involved in a lot of other volunteer activities in the community now before they come into the league. I think women weigh very carefully whether they want to come into the Junior League because of the time commitment and the projects that we have. People do not come into the league today because it is a social club. They have been involved in a lot of other things, both social clubs and service clubs, through college and through their early and mid-twenties. They have done this, I think, through their careers, but certainly through their other experiences as well.

B: You said that people do not come into the league today because it is a social

club. How would you categorize this organization?

K: I think it is very much a service club. I think the social aspect of it – the friendships that you make, the relationships that develop as a result of league membership – are one of the wonderful bonuses that come with league membership. And I think people weigh that. But certainly that is not the reason for joining. I think that people become involved in the league today because they see it as an organization of dedicated women who are well organized, who are well focused, and who have a very good reputation in the community for getting things done and getting them done well in an expedient way. I think people, by and large, join for the right reason: because they want to be involved in something that is good, that is giving back to their community.

B: Do you think that in times past the league was viewed as a social club, and, if the answer is yes or no, do you think that was detrimental to what the club was trying to do? How was that viewed?

K: It probably was. Being a newcomer – not being a native of Gainesville (having been here eighteen years I do not feel like so much of a newcomer now) – I do not know what it was like in the early years. But having been to national conferences and that kind of thing, I certainly do not think that the Junior League has the image of the social club and the white-glove image here that maybe still exists in a few parts of the country, though I think that is certainly on the wane. But certainly there is, I think, a stereotypical image still in some places that the Junior Leaguers are all wealthy, upper-middle-class white women who are in this for the prestige and the socializing as opposed to the service. Certainly I think that is a view of the minority, and I do not think there are very many people in Gainesville who have that opinion at all. Maybe in years past it was. I do not know.

The league was formed by a group of women of some status in the early years who had the means to do good things in the community, and I think that is really important that those women had the means and the opportunity to do it, and they did it. They provided some very, very good things. Maybe in the past the league has received criticism for that, but they made things happen. And certainly I think it has changed now. I do not know of any leagues across the country that still have the white-glove image.

B: Talking about changes, would you address the changes in the admission system? You said when you first came into the league it was a secret system. Have there been changes there also?

K: Oh, absolutely. Now it is what is called an "informed candidate" system so that before an application is ever filed or anything like that, the candidates have had

this discussed. Someone from the league has discussed this with her, so she knows that she is a candidate for membership.

B: So you mean there is still the situation where somebody in the club puts up a prospective member.

K: The name comes before the membership, yes, but rather than being voted on or anything of that nature, now once a member's name has come before the league by a member, it is discussed. If that person is interested in being a member of the league, then they file the application and go through the provisional course. Their entering into the league is really based on whether or not they have chosen to fulfill the requirements of the provisional course, meeting the membership requirements, participation, and that kind of thing. So the responsibility for membership is really put on the provisional now, as opposed to being put on the proposer.

B: Can the person who is a proposed member be the one who initiates the inquiry about membership, or does it have to be begun by a member?

K: Well, I think many times, probably, people have asked members. They have expressed an interest in the league: "This is something I would like to be a part of. What is the procedure?" I think this probably happens a lot of times now. Still, someone in the league is the one to actually say, "This person meets the requirements for membership." Basically there are just two: age and having exhibited a commitment to volunteerism. I guess we still have a one-year residency. I am not sure if that has been changed or not. But as long as they meet the age and commitment to volunteerism, certainly they are eligible for provisional membership. So it really still comes, technically, from the member, but the candidate can express an interest, and then a member is going to pick up on that.

B: So the candidate really needs to know somebody who is a member of the group in order to gain membership.

K: Exactly.

B: You mentioned earlier that the provisional class seemed to be getting older as a group. I think you said that at one time thirty-four was the oldest you could be, and now you can be thirty-nine. How does that affect the active period of time that you serve in the league? Is there a ceiling as to how long you can stay active or how early you can be active but still not give up your membership entirely?

K: At this point, at forty-five you are no longer eligible for active status, and you can become a sustainer. At forty you become eligible to become a sustainer. What

this does is if you come in very late in your thirties, then it gives you a very narrow window of potential of active time before you become a sustainer. Certainly you can stay in, as some of us do, until close to forty-five. But it does shorten the period of time for active membership.

B: Tell me a little bit about what it was like preparing to be and being president of the Junior League. I am interesting in knowing what kind of a time commitment it was, what you feel was offered to you in the way of training, and what you gave during that period of time.

K: It was an intimidating experience to think that I was going to follow in the footsteps of those other women. I had served on the executive committee twice in the past and had served on the board, so I had an idea, I thought, of the time commitment. Little did I know! The Junior League really does an incredible job of preparing members for whatever job is at hand. And I have said this to league members many times who are intimidated by the opportunity of leadership and who hold back because they feel like they do not have the ability or the skills, they do not know what is expected or how to do the job. Even back in the early days, you are an assistant committee chairman many times before you are a committee chairman.

B: They do not do that anymore?

K: There are a few chairman that do not have an assistant, but most of them do, so that you have that year of preparation and you have someone to follow and to learn from. Serving on the board and that kind of thing [provides similar experience]. But as the president-elect, you have already served at least that year on the executive committee. Then [there is additional preparation] with the training conferences. I guess my second or third year in, I was asked to go to a cluster meeting that was down in Orlando; it was a training meeting. It was my first of several opportunities to attend training meetings. So I felt the league had offered me a number of those kinds of opportunities, and I hope I have benefited from them.

But it still was a scary experience to take that gavel and to think that that year was in my hands. I often thought, "I hope the ship does not sink during my year." But it was a whirlwind year. It really was a full-time job for me. I think the league presidents have gotten really good lately – better than I was – at managing time, because we have league presidents now who are able to manage full-time careers and be league president as well. I did have a part-time job that year, and I was one of the first who had done that. It was a very busy year. My husband and my children, I am afraid, suffered sometimes for that, but they were wonderful. But it was a heavy time commitment.

I learned a lot about shuffling papers. I learned a lot about delegating and prioritizing. But it was a really exciting year. I got to experience some things that I would not have gotten to otherwise. I got to know a lot of people. It was a good year for me. I hope it was a good year for the league.

B: I am sure it was. You said you had a part-time job that year?

K: Yes.

B: What were you doing?

K: I was coordinating Walk America for the March of Dimes three days a week – supposedly – from September until April.

B: Are you still affiliated with that organization?

K: I am.

B: What do you do now?

K: I have gone from volunteer to part-time staff member to full-time director now of the north-central Florida chapter of March of Dimes, which encompasses a seven-county area.

B: That sounds busy, too.

K: It is. [laughter]

B: Well, Lynda, you have told me a lot about the league in Gainesville and what it has done for the community. One of the things I am interested in learning about is how the league, how its membership, and how its perception in the community has changed. Can you comment on that? I realize you will be talking about from 1979 to now.

K: I do not know. I am sure others can do that better than I. The membership we have talked about certainly has continued to get a little older, certainly more career oriented. A few are in positions like I was when I came in – at home taking care of children. I think they have gotten better at time management because they have had to. The league has certainly gotten a lot more flexible with its placements [and] with its time commitments, because it has had to in order to meet the needs of the women who are there. And I think that has been good for the league, and I think it has been real good for the community. The league has changed. It is much more externally focused now, I think, than it was when I came in.

B: Could you expound on that just a little bit?

K: You asked me what the league was involved in community-wise. When I first came into the league I do not remember some of that, I am sure, because it has been a lot of years and because I was new to it. But I do not really remember the league, as a new member, being a league that had lots of choices for community placements, for choices in community projects. The year 1986-1987, when Martha Sedayo was president, the league made a conscientious effort – it was really a very focused decision – to place 70 percent of its membership in community placements. That was a significant change. I do not know what the percentages had been before.

[End of the tape]