

AL 134

Interviewee: Elizabeth Pound Alsobrook

Interviewer: Connie Lazenby Bieber

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B: This is Connie Lazenby Bieber interviewing Elizabeth Pound Alsobrook. Today is February 12, 1991. We are at her home in Gainesville talking about the history of the Junior Welfare League in Gainesville. Good evening, Betty.

A: Good evening.

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

A: I was born in Lexington, Kentucky.

B: In what year were you born?

A: I was born October 14, 1942.

B: Your parents' names were?

A: Anne Richardson Pound and Addison Pound, Jr.

B: Where were they from, Betty?

A: My mother was from Kentucky, and my father from Gainesville, Florida.

B: How did they happen to be in Lexington, Kentucky?

A: My father was in the navy, stationed in Pensacola [Florida] at that time, and I was supposed to be born in Pensacola. Mother's doctor passed away, and she returned to her home in Lexington just prior to my birth. So she, in essence, went home for my birth.

B: Right. In order for you to be born.

A: Right. And I lived the first six weeks of my life in Lexington.

B: And then?

A: Then we returned to Pensacola, Florida, where my father was stationed. Then when my father went overseas, Mother and I lived in Atlanta for a couple of years. Then we returned to Gainesville when I was about three years old.

B: Now, was this at the end of the war?

A: I think so.

B: So your father was coming home to you.

A: Yes, he was returning to Gainesville, his home.

B: So have you lived in Gainesville since then?

A: I have lived in Gainesville ever since.

B: Where did you go to school in Gainesville for grammar school?

A: I went to grammar school at J. J. Finley [Elementary] School from kindergarten through sixth grade, I believe it had a sixth grade at that time, or maybe it was through fifth grade. Then I went to junior high school at what was then known as Buchholz Junior High School on University Avenue. Then I went to Gainesville High School for my freshman and sophomore years, and then I went away to a boarding school for my junior and senior years in high school, Stuart Hall in Staunton, Virginia.

B: I see. Going back to your early childhood, what is the earliest thing you can remember?

A: I really do not know.

B: Well, take a minute. Think back. What is something that stands out in your memory vividly when you were small?

A: I remember being in Atlanta with my mother. I do not really have any memories of Pensacola, but I remember living in a little house in Atlanta. We had a wonderful cocker spaniel dog that I grew up with and [that] lived until I was fifteen years old. I think Mother and Daddy got him shortly after I was born, so I truly grew up with him. I remember my grandmother, my father's mother, coming to visit Mother and me there in Atlanta. She had a wonderful blue-velvet bathrobe that I thought was wonderful.

B: And that must have been before you were three, you say?

A: Yes.

B: That is pretty early. You do have a good memory. Tell me a little bit about what you remember about Gainesville [when you were] growing up. I am interested in

lots of different things, like what size the town was [and] what it was like to go to school in Gainesville.

A: Well, at that time J. J. Finley was a neighborhood school. I lived on Northwest 7th Lane and walked to school every morning. At the time there was a sort of little alley, I would call [it], behind some houses that a number of us walked down to get to J. J. There happened to be a vacant lot on the corner of 22nd Street and 7th Lane, and we used to play every afternoon in that vacant lot. There were probably ten or twelve of us, some boys and girls of all ages that lived sort of along 22nd Street and 7th Lane and 6th Place. We were all just good friends, and that is how we spent every afternoon. It was very different than it is today. I was probably involved in some activities. I used to ride horseback; I took dancing as a little child; I played the piano for a number of years. But it was not this constant being taken one place and another for one activity after another. I was in Brownies for a while. But I do not remember being organized every afternoon.

As we grew older, I do not remember a lot of activities for teenagers, although we all did go to the recreation center.

B: Where was the recreation center? [It is today known as the Senior Citizens Center.]

A: On Northeast Boulevard, which is still there. That is where we had teen dances. It looks very much like it did then. [laughter] We went to the movies. The Florida Theater on University Avenue was where we went most of the time. There was another theater on South Main Street, the old Lyric Theater, but it was not a nice place to go, and nice people did not go there.

B: How far down on South Main [was the Lyric Theater]? I do not know where that was.

A: I am trying to think. Maybe it was not on Main Street. Maybe it was up from where the post office was, which is where the Hippodrome Theater is. In that area. I did not go there very much. [laughter]

B: Well, it sounds like you are describing Gainesville as a smaller [town than it is now].

A: It was much smaller, and you had the feeling that you knew a lot of people. It certainly was a much smaller town than it is now. I mean, it was a town, not a city. There was very little interaction between the university community and Gainesville at that time, although my family certainly had friends in the University community and with the presidents of the University at different times. Some of

them are still our best friends, going back to the [John J.] Tigert family and the J. Hillis Miller family.

B: In talking about the separation of town and gown, which I think is what you are describing in Gainesville at that time, can you pinpoint any reasons for that?

A: Any reasons I would give would be reasons from a very different perspective than at the time. I really cannot.

B: But would you say, then, that you feel that the University and the town have a closer relationship now than they did then?

A: Oh, much more.

B: Could you tell me when you first had the sense that it was becoming more integrated, or looking back, can you pinpoint?

A: It would be difficult for me to say when. I think I remember, and I am trying to think whether it was in the late 1950s and the early 1960s when some professors began to run for public office. There were some trying times at that time, and the 1960s were not easy.

B: In what ways are you referring?

A: Well, both as students [and as faculty]--and I happened to be a student at the University during the first half of that decade. Of course, we were dealing with the Vietnam War at that time. I was a student in the early 1960s, so I did not feel like I was a part of student unrest.

B: But you are saying that student unrest did exist.

A: It definitely was [there]. After I graduated from the University I worked with students in one capacity or another, and one of them happened to be as an advisor to a sorority on campus. So the latter part of that decade, the 1960s, and into the early 1970s, I was working with students in that way. It was a very difficult time. [There was] a lack of respect [and] little seeming purpose on many students' parts, and yet [there was] a desire to be in school, for whatever reason, I am not sure.

B: Did you feel that the student unrest spilled into the community?

A: I do not have an opinion on that at this point.

B: So you were telling me that when you finished high school you went to college

here in Gainesville, at the University of Florida.

A: I first attended Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia, a women's college, for my freshman and sophomore years. I returned to the University [of Florida] for my junior and senior years.

B: What did you finish school in?

A: My degree is in political science.

B: Have you used your degree?

A: Not actively.

B: When you finished college, then, what did you do?

A: I was hired by the Florida Development Commission and went to New York City and worked at the World's Fair as a representative of the state of Florida in the Florida pavilion area.

B: That sounds interesting.

A: I worked in New York until about mid-October, and I returned home and was married at the end of December.

B: And you are married to?

A: Al Alsobrook.

B: Is he from Gainesville?

A: No, he is from Jacksonville. He was born in Jacksonville.

B: Tell me a little about your family with Al.

A: We were married in 1964 and have lived in Gainesville ever since. We have two sons. John was born in 1969, and our younger son, Cannon, was born in 1972. They are both in college at this point.

B: That is good. Tell me when you were invited to join the Junior Welfare League of Gainesville.

A: I was invited to join, I believe, in January of 1966.

B: Since you had grown up in Gainesville, were you already aware of the existence of this organization before your invitation to join?

A: Yes, I was.

B: How would you say the League was perceived in the community at that time?

A: Are you asking from the standpoint of other people, non-league members?

B: The community as a whole. How did they view this organization?

A: It would be difficult for me to speak for people that were not in the Junior League. Other women probably wondered how one became a member of the League if they were interested in it, because at that time the Junior Welfare League had a secret admission system. The Junior Welfare League was active in the community. It was probably best known to community members for its Follies which are held every four years, involving non-league members, but not to the extent that we do now. I would say some people in Gainesville had to have known about the good things the Junior Welfare League did, but certainly not to the extent that they are aware of now.

B: So it sounds to me like you are saying that the knowledge of the works of the organization was maybe not very well-spread.

A: The knowledge of the works of the organization was not very widely-known throughout the entire community. Certainly different segments of the community had to have been very aware of the league, both the public school system, because the Junior Welfare League had always been involved with school children in different ways, and certainly the health providers of the community, because the Junior Welfare League was involved in various projects, beginning with the well-baby clinic. So there were a number of health providers--doctors, nurses, hospitals--that were aware of those aspects.

B: Would you say, though, that it might be a reflection of the policy of the league toward their "good" works that the community was not any better informed about what they had done? How would you respond to that statement?

A: I would think that the Junior Welfare League probably was not concerned, necessarily, in tooting its own horn in the early stages. It was mainly interested in training young women and providing services through different projects. Its main goal was not to make itself known necessarily. I do not think it was trying to hide itself, but it was not trying to publicize itself, so it did not.

B: All right. Of what was known in the community about the Junior Welfare League,

would you say that it was viewed as a social organization or a civic organization?  
What [did] people see its thrust as being?

A: Probably early on it was perceived by non-members as being more social, perhaps. I would think that early members--from the League's inception--knew they were very civic-minded, because they worked very hard. I believe from the League's inception that members viewed it as a service and training organization for young women.

B: You are talking about those women that served hot lunches for eight years.

A: Right, hot lunches for eight years and a myriad of other things, because they worked very hard for long hours. Of course, most women at that time were not professional women, so they were at home. I remember hearing many stories. One lady had an appointment at some project and she did not have anybody to take care of her children. League members took care of each other's children, and it was a very supportive group to be sure that the league's work was completed.

B: You mentioned that the league operated under a secret admission system in the 1960s and earlier. Could you tell me about that?

A: The Junior Welfare League had an admissions committee that was elected by the Junior Welfare League members. It was the committee's job to meet prospective Junior Welfare League members to assess their availability and ability to fit into the Junior Welfare League program. They would then vote prospective members into membership.

B: By the fact that it was secret, you mean that the people that were being considered did not know that they were being considered?

A: The people that were being considered did not know that they were being considered, and the whole membership of the Junior Welfare League did not necessarily know every other person that was being proposed in any one particular year. They might have known some of them because they might have been involved in the proposal, but prospective Junior Welfare League members were "introduced," as it were, to the admissions committee normally through social means, whether it be dinner parties or coffees or luncheons. After the fact, [after I was invited to join] I remember going to [a social event]. I believe it was a luncheon at an older sustaining member's home--she happened to have been a close friend of my mother--and there were probably two or three of us there that day who were being proposed. There were a number of other active league members who were also that much older than I was, so it was not a group that I was normally with at that time. I did not really know what was going

on at the time, but after the fact I realize what was going on. [laughter] I looked back and I realized.

B: So you said you were invited to join in either 1965 or 1966. What happened at that time? You accepted your invitation, I take it.

A: Yes. We had a provisional course, and I think there were probably seven or eight in our provisional class, maybe eleven or twelve. I cannot remember. We went to regular provisional meetings. There was a provisional chairman and an assistant provisional chairman. Cissy Donigan was my provisional chairman, and Sue Duncan Wise was the assistant provisional chairman. We were expected to do certain things, which we did. Then we were league members a year later.

B: So at that time you entered regular active membership status in the league.

A: Right.

B: Now, when you became a member of the league, did they operate under the seven-year active plan?

A: It is hard for me to remember. It was never available to me because I was active for twenty-two years. [laughter] I think it had ceased or had ended before I was asked to join, but maybe there were some league members that were grandfathered in, so to speak, that were able to become sustainers after seven years. It was close enough that there were certainly a number of league people that operated under that seven-year plan.

B: And the seven-year plan is that you would go in and be active for seven years, and then you automatically became a sustainer, no matter what your chronological age.

A: Absolutely.

B: It no longer operates like that.

A: No, it does not.

B: Did they have meetings during the day or in the evening?

A: Meetings were both in the daytime and in the evening. General membership meetings, you are referring to?

B: Yes.

A: Both daytime and evening.

B: And you could choose which one to go to?

A: I do not believe so. We went at the time the meetings were scheduled. I remember some night meetings in the room above what was then known as Guaranty Federal Savings and Loan; there was a meeting room upstairs.

B: That was for the general membership?

A: Yes. It is now Florida Federal [Savings Bank, 220 N. Main Street]. Those were in the evening, I believe.

B: Did they have separate evening meetings for those people who worked?

A: Yes, there were separate evening meetings for working members, and they were usually in other members' homes. Sometimes in the early years they had a covered-dish supper prior to "professional" meetings. At that time I would think there were probably sometimes ten to fifteen women attending those meetings.

B: How does that relate to the active membership of the league as a whole?

A: At that time?

B: Ten or fifteen out of . . . What was the active membership?

A: Probably close to 100.

B: So you are saying 10 to 15 percent of the people who were members of the league were working.

A: Approximately. The league membership was probably a little bit smaller than that at some times.

B: I am trying to get some idea of how the proportion of women who worked in the league has grown over the period of time. As you and I both know, since then it has grown significantly.

A: I would say it is probably closer to 75 percent professional now.

B: I would agree with that. What projects was the league involved in at the time when you were invited to become a member?

A: Well, we still had the well-baby clinic at Alachua General Hospital.

B: What was that like?

A: Two or three league members helped man the clinic clerically; they kept records. They did not do any nursing per se, but they helped keep records of mothers bringing their infants in and worked with the doctors. I think the clinic might have been open three days a week to begin with.

B: I believe that is correct. It was later moved to five days.

A: Right. The Thrift Shop was the other main project, which I worked on a number of years. I feel quite certain we had the children's theater going at that time, and shortly after that we instituted a suitcase museum. But the main projects were the well-baby clinic and the Thrift Shop.

B: Tell me a little about the Thrift Shop.

A: Well, I thought it was a wonderful way to meet league members. At that time we did not have any paid staff, so the shop was manned totally by Junior Welfare League members. There were at least two or three there each day. In fact, I believe it was the main way that I truly got to know so many older gals in the league. I was one of the youngest people in the league, and I worked very closely with a lot of older gals at that time and felt like I became very close friends with them.

B: What is the purpose of the Thrift Shop?

A: The purpose of the Thrift Shop has always been to help raise funds to fund other projects of the Junior Welfare League in the community. And it also has always provided salable household goods and clothing to citizens of the community who perhaps cannot afford to shop at other stores.

B: So there is a two-pronged purpose to the shop.

A: Absolutely. As far as I can remember, the Junior Welfare League and the Thrift Shop have always also provided clothing, either through churches or other organizations, at no cost to different people who have had crises in their lives. When someone has had a fire and has been burned out, [we would provide them with clothing and household items]. I remember [in] the early days perhaps the health department or somebody would send a family over, and we would give them clothes or whatever. That has been done [for] a long time, and it is still being done.

B: OK. You also mentioned the suitcase museum. I saw where the suitcase museum was a project, and the medical museum was a project. Are those two

separate projects?

A: Yes.

B: Can you tell me about each of them?

A: The suitcase museum was before the medical museum. In the early stages it was manned mainly by our professional members, because it was the kind of project that they could work on during the summertime and in the evening. The suitcase museum was an attempt to gather artifacts and information on a subject, at first usually on countries, for instance, England. In that suitcase would be articles that represented England or had been brought back from England, from stamps to postcards to coins to other things that were English. Usually there was a written narrative provided with it. The suitcase museum was "housed," I believe, at least sometimes, at the Alachua County School Board office, and different teachers in the public school system could go check out a suitcase and take it to their classroom and use it in the classroom.

B: So it was an enrichment aid for the classroom.

A: Yes.

B: OK. Now the medical museum.

A: It was started after that, in 1968, and was sort of on the same idea except I believe league members actually went with different parts of the medical museum to the classrooms.

B: So it was more specifically oriented as to subject matter.

A: Yes. [For instance,] part of the medical museum might have been the study of the eye. But I believe that league members went with those . . . they were not quite like suitcases, but whatever they carried their things in to the classroom.

B: So they traveled.

A: Yes. The medical museum traveled to Alachua County classrooms.

B: OK. Where did the Junior Welfare League get the funding for these projects, Betty?

A: Funding in the early stages came from the Thrift Shop and the Junior Welfare League Follies, which were held every four years.

B: For the record, can you define what the Follies are?

A: The Follies have been a continuing entertainment cabaret. As long as I can remember, we have contracted with a company in New York City, Cargill, that has provided us with directors and costumes and some management know-how. The Follies have usually been held either one or two nights every four years, and the profits have been used by the league for its community projects.

B: So the league sold ticket to the Follies and made money that way.

A: And the league also sold advertising for its program, and usually the advertising raised more money than tickets. As long as I can remember, there have been different forms of advertising, but early on it was advertising in the program. Tickets were sold on a general admission basis or to patrons. Patrons' tickets have varied in cost through the years.

B: The community generally supports the organization by placing ads in the program and buying these other forms of advertisements and tickets.

A: Right.

B: Has the community done this just on the good name of the league with a free hand to do with the money what they will, or has it been a situation where the community has wanted to know what they were contributing their money for?

A: I think early on there was no attempt by the community to know what the money was necessarily being spent on. I think in more recent years the league itself has wanted to have a goal in mind, thinking that it would attract more people in the community to giving to the league through the Follies if they knew how the Follies money was being spent. So perhaps in the last two Follies such a commitment has been made. I may be wrong on that. I do not believe the league attempted to say that all the profits would go to a specific project prior to the last two Follies.

B: We talked a little bit about the projects that were underway when you became a member, and then we talked about the fund raising through the Follies and the Thrift Shop. Moving on into the 1970s, can you tell me about some of the other projects that the league took on during this time when you were actively involved? I am especially interested in learning about how the league became involved with the Historic Gainesville, Inc., (HGI), and the Thomas Center.

A: Well, I remember when I was vice-president [1973-1974] walking with Carolyn Fouts, who was then the president, around the old Thomas Center Hotel and being aghast, [and wondering if] we could ever do anything with it. Just previous

to that time, I believe the Thomas Hotel had been used by Santa Fe Community College for students. Door knobs were off; windows were broken; it certainly was not being well-maintained. There truly was a coordinated effort between the league and other members of the community. The University was involved, the school of architecture was involved, and an awful lot of work was done to bring it to its present status.

B: So it was not being used for anything at that time? It was just sort of abandoned?

A: My recollection is that is the case, but I do not think it had been sitting too long that way. I really am not sure.

B: Can you tell me a little bit about what happened in terms of how it got restored to its present state? At the time that you were making the tour, had the city purchased it yet?

A: I really cannot remember. Probably so.

B: And you were there as a representative of the league, and the league was interested in the project at that time, and the league did make a commitment to the Thomas Hotel restoration. Were you involved in the two period rooms that the league decided to restore and donate?

A: Not directly, because that was the same period of time that we were going through the process of joining the Association of Junior Leagues, and I was more heavily involved in administration at that time.

B: Well, that is another topic that I am very interesting in learning something about tonight, so let us talk about that now. I understand that the Junior Welfare League had approached the association in the 1960s about membership, and at that time they were not invited to join. It is my understanding that that was because this particular league did not have a large enough membership and was in a community that did not have a large enough population. Is that your understanding also?

A: That is correct. I was involved at a committee level at that point. I believe that Betty Riker was one of the early chairmen of one of the first committees attempting to join the association. At that time the [Association of] Junior Leagues wanted each Junior League to have an active membership of 100 and wanted the community in which a league was located to be considered a standard metropolitan area, which needed, I believe, 150,000 population. Maybe it was 100,000. I am not sure. We did not qualify in the 1960s, so we moved toward increasing the size of our membership. We had to wait for the

1970 census to not only be completed, but to be published, to prove that we were a standard metropolitan area. So that took a year or two. It is not always ready on [the first of the year, such as] January 1, 1970, so it took several years for that to be published. Then we proceeded to apply to the Association of Junior Leagues for membership.

B: And you were involved in this?

A: Yes, I was.

B: Starting at the beginning, what can you tell me about it?

A: The applying process was lengthy. It required two or three or four years. The initial step was to complete an application in which we had to answer numerous questions about our league, about our membership, [and] about the city of Gainesville. We had to give a list of all our members, where they were educated, [and] their ages. We had to answer numerous questions about Gainesville, the kind of community [it was], its economic base, [and] its relationship with the University of Florida. All of this was typed up in booklet form as professionally as we knew how to do it at the time, and submitted to the Association of Junior Leagues. We waited probably for several months and then received word that our application had been accepted; the questionnaire had been accepted.

The next step was that we were to receive a visit by some board members of the association. The year was 1972. I believe [they were] members of their admissions committee, which were board members. As any board, they had subcommittees, and board members served on the subcommittee. So we dealt with their admissions committee.

The next step was that we received a second visit from the association and we presented Education '73. We were to design an educational course that was to benefit our members--active, sustaining, provisional, and non-resident--and to be open to any member of the community, which meant that we had to design the course and to hold the different sections of it in places in Gainesville that could hold not only league membership but other people as well. So under the association's guidance, we developed an educational program and had six sessions. It was spread out through a Junior League year, which was, I believe, during the 1973-1974 league year. I am not sure. Every member of the Junior League had to attend the actual educational session or they had to make up the session, which certainly was a strain on everyone. I am not sure it could be accomplished today.

B: What were the sessions like? What did they deal with?

A: The sessions dealt with a variety of topics. We had brought in the Oslo State Theater troupe as an enrichment area of the arts. The Oslo State Theater is located in Sarasota, and the troupe came to Gainesville to do a production.

One of the sessions was on economics of the future. Dr. [Robert] Lanzillotti [professor of economics, dean emeritus, College of Business Administration] from the University of Florida did that one. Another was on the changing role of women, I believe, and Dean Betty Siegel [Academic Affairs for Continuing Education] did that. Another was on child welfare. Another was on the environment, and I remember Dr. Julian Conrad Jergensmeyer, an environmental attorney, I believe, [taught that session]. As it turned out, his wife had gone to school with me at Stuart Hall in Virginia. I did not even know they were here, somehow it ended up that he was doing the program for us.

B: It is a small world.

A: It is a *very* small world.

B: Well, that is a broad spectrum of topics. Why did the Junior Welfare League want to join the Association of Junior Leagues?

A: I think the Junior Welfare League wanted to join for a number of reasons. One, because they felt that the association had a lot of know-how and expertise that would help us better train our members for community service. There was certainly the aspect that the Association of Junior Leagues provided a national scope for us, and heretofore we had been locally involved only. It also provided transferability of membership. Members could transfer from one Junior League to another Junior League without going through an application or invitation process. This was billed, certainly to our sustaining members, as an important reason for joining. That appealed to a lot of sustaining members as our society became more mobile and as our sustaining members watched their daughters and daughters-in-law move to other communities. They wanted them to have the same kind of volunteer training experience, and this ensured that they might be able to do that. The Junior League offered education and training opportunities for our members to travel to conferences in different parts of the country, which we had not done. Then our members who did attend these conferences were able to bring back new ideas, new projects, new ways of doing things.

B: So you held this education forum in 1973.

A: I think it was through the 1973-1974 year.

B: And this was to the satisfaction of the association, I assume.

- A: At the conclusion of that, we had to submit a report outlining everything we had done and verifying that every member of our Junior Welfare League who wanted to join the association had attended every session or had made up every session. We also had to provide a non-resident course, sort of like a correspondence course, for every member of the Junior Welfare League who did not live in Gainesville, whether she was active or sustaining. If they wanted to join the Junior League, they had to take our correspondence course. The topics were similar to the topics that we were exploring in live fashion, so to speak.
- B: That sounds like a rigorous setup.
- A: It was rigorous, it was extensive, [and] it was something that we probably could not ever do again.
- B: Did the association choose the topics, or did you all choose those?
- A: No, we chose the topics, and I imagine we probably at the time told them what we were doing. We were instructed that they should be broad and of interest to a Junior League and to the community, because we were also inviting anybody in the community to come to these sessions, also.
- B: So from what you are saying, I take it that even the sustaining members of the Junior Welfare League had to attend every session if they wanted their membership transferred to be a sustainer of the association.
- A: At that time we also went back and asked if there were members that had resigned from the Junior Welfare League who wanted to be reinstated and become a member of the Junior League, [because] they would have to go through this training session. In fact, that was the only way they could be a sustaining member of the Junior League.
- B: So they could rejoin.
- A: They could rejoin the Junior Welfare League and take the education course and become a sustaining member of the Junior League when we were accepted in the [Association of] Junior Leagues.
- B: So you were accepted into membership of the association.
- A: Yes, in March of 1975. We had another visit in February. After our report was sent in on the educational year, we received another visit from several members of the association. We had several sessions learning about the association management process. It was to help us better plan our activities and [plan them] in a cycle that we could handle.

B: Is this the program that is sometimes referred to AMP?

A: Yes, Association Management Process. We also had been given [a list of] some things that the association wanted us to change in our bylaws and in our rules and procedures, and when they came back for that visit, we were sort of in a position to let them know where we were on these various things.

After this visit, the ladies that had visited us from the association went back to New York and attended another board meeting, and it was at that time that they reported to the board our accomplishments. At that time we were accepted into membership, and they notified us by telegram.

B: That was quite an undertaking for you all to have set out to become a member of the association.

A: It was a very long process and a very involved process. [It was] a growing experience for all of us. Some of us definitely spent several years focusing on the process of joining the association and being sure that our bylaws and standing rules were approved by the association. All of that took time.

B: Did you have to make substantive changes in your bylaws as an organization in order to be part of the national group?

A: Yes, we did have to make some substantive changes, some of them having to do with our admissions system. This was a gradual process; it did not occur all at once. But there were a number of changes that we moved to. One of them with the admissions system was moving toward a more open admissions system. It was not accomplished all at once; it was accomplished in steps.

B: Did you make changes to the goals or the missions of the group in order to become part of this [national organization]?

A: Our purpose did change; the wording changed.

B: Was that a substantive change, also?

A: I do not think anybody viewed it as terribly substantive. The verbiage changed.

B: If you had to make two sentences, one of which described the purpose of the Junior Welfare League and the second to describe the purpose of the Junior League of Gainesville, how would you characterize those two?

A: It would be difficult for me to do it at this point.

B: OK. Do you see that process and that interaction--I can see that you did spend several years working on this--as a positive experience?

A: Very much so.

B: Do you think that the majority of the league members have that view?

A: During the process I am sure some league members--and probably there were maybe many--felt burdened by the process. But the goal had been to join the association, and we were prepared to work through what we needed to do in order to join the association.

B: Was there opposition by your membership to joining the association?

A: Not much. Not enough that I can remember. There was certainly opposition by some older sustaining members to the thought of changing the admissions system, and there were some people that felt, at the point of joining, that they did not want to necessarily be told what to do. But there were many positive things about joining, and during the process we were more focused on those aspects that we felt were positive than we certainly were on anything that might be construed as negative.

It was not "fun" for members to have to make up an education program. It did not make any difference whether you were sick or out of town or your child was dying; you had to make up those sessions, and I know that was difficult for some people. There were older women who had walkers and canes. One of our sessions was in the Center Theater, as I recall.

B: So you do feel that your independent club did give up some of its autonomy in order to join this international association?

A: Oh, very much so, because ever since, every time the association meets, there are certain things that you must change in your bylaws that you do not vote on.

B: What percentage of that autonomy do you feel the club lost?

A: It would be difficult for me to put a percentage on it. It would vary. If you happened to be a league that is very much in sync with everything the association is doing, you would not feel like you gave up anything. If there are times when you are not in sync, you would feel like you gave up much more. I think that has fluctuated.

B: Over the course of time.

- A: Yes. Right after joining I would say we were very, very enthusiastic. The opportunity to send members to the national conventions, to the various focus-area conventions--from child advocacy to career development--all of these things [were exciting]. We trained members, brought them back, and spread their knowledge throughout our membership, and it was a very positive thing for many members, I felt.
- B: Do you see much of a difference in the day-to-day working with the community, or maybe I should say the year-to-year working with the community, in our community, of this organization as a result of membership in the association?
- A: Very much so, because one of the focuses of joining the association is to develop projects and to maintain them for two or three years and to turn them over to the community. The Junior Welfare League had not done that, and that was one of the big changes for us. We had held on to things like the well-baby clinic and children's theater for many years. As a matter of fact, we still have the children's theater, I believe. [laughter] We were urged to turn some of these over, to let someone else do them, and I think in some cases we have been very successful in turning over projects and letting another group maintain those projects. In some cases it has not been easy to do. That, I believe, is one of the main reasons the association, at the time we joined, insisted that the community be of standard metropolitan size so that the community was large and had a diverse enough base, both economic and educational, to receive and to be interested in receiving Junior League projects so that the Junior League did not hang onto projects indefinitely.
- B: What is the rationale of the association for that?
- A: I think part of the rationale is to enable league members to train and be trained in a variety of areas, and that the Junior League should have a leadership role and a managing role, and that we should not do it indefinitely, and that we need to move onto other areas.
- B: So are you saying that the project serves that purpose to the membership in providing leadership training in addition to what good it is doing in the community?
- A: Absolutely.
- B: What has been the success of the group in finding another group to take over the projects?
- A: It has not always been easy. In fact, at a certain point in the early years, as we developed new projects, right from the outset, we as a new Junior League were

supposed to be planning with other people or have an idea of a group or people that could maintain it or take it over right from the beginning. Now, I would believe that some of this we probably are not as locked in quite as much now, because it is very different. Many times we do not have as many hands-on opportunities now. We went through a period of being sure that we had many league members on community boards, which certainly was not the case before we joined the association. This linked many league members with non-league volunteer opportunities in the community.

B: Did that take place about the same time that the shift to a role as an advocate occurred in the Junior League?

A: Probably. For a long time the Junior League did not want to give money to a particular board or another volunteer effort unless we had some connection, usually through a board member or volunteers working on it. We spent many years saying, "If we have volunteers, we will give money," or "We will give money with our volunteers, but we are not just a United Way where we dole out money."

I do believe the league at this point, and for a number of years, has gotten into giving money through what we call mini-grants. In many cases we do not have a link with these groups, but we are asked by many, many groups in the community for specific funds to help other community groups in volunteer areas. We have committees that study those and make recommendations to the membership. I think in the budget each year we set aside a certain amount of money for these mini-grants, and once we have given that money or allocated that money, they do not keep going back to the board asking for more money.

B: I see. So it is a one-time deal generally.

A: Maybe one time this year. I assume that we have helped groups perhaps a second year.

B: But it is a one-time commitment?

A: Yes.

B: We have been talking a little bit about what changes and differences you found as a result of the Junior Welfare League becoming a part of the Association of Junior Leagues. What other changes or differences have you seen that have resulted from our becoming a member of this international organization?

A: Certainly our members are better trained. The Junior League of Gainesville is a much more professional organization. I would say there were changes both

internal and external. Many changes are the result of the changing role of women, not just because the Junior League has changed. But I do believe that the Junior League--on a national level and on a local level--has adapted and has been willing to change itself as the role of women has changed. So I believe the Junior League has maintained its relevance, whereas sometimes other national organizations maybe have not maintained their relevance.

B: Can you give me some examples of what you are alluding to?

A: Career development is one that came along certainly before 50 or 60 percent of our members were working. Career development, I believe, has been a real help, certainly to women all over the country, and it certainly was in Gainesville. I know many women in Gainesville who participated in the training, and it gave them the background and the help, from resume writing to "Yes, you can go out and secure a meaningful job." Many times it is your volunteer experience that will be the basis of your resume.

B: So it sounds like you are saying it goes along with the general raising of the awareness of women about women's changing role in society, and it is a service that the group has provided for its membership.

A: That is accurate.

B: How would you say that these changes within the organization--which may not all be as a result of joining the association, but we are assuming tonight that many of them are--were perceived by the community?

A: Oh, I would think the community has been very, very positive and very receptive to the Gainesville Junior League. I believe that we are considered at the forefront of many things. Our members are used, and I say that not derogatorily at all. Our members have taken leadership roles in many aspect of the community. A number of our members are now involved in public office in one way or another. They have served as the president of many other organizations. They have begun other volunteer organizations. I believe it is the foremost volunteer training organization certainly in Gainesville, and probably in many communities across the country.

B: I am interested in talking just a little bit about the changes in the membership profile of this league. Let us not just start with where this welfare league became a part of the association. Let us go back to where your experience with the welfare league began. You told me a little bit about the membership at that time. Let us talk for a minute about how that membership profile has changed, say since the mid-1960s.

A: When you say profile, do you mean the types of members?

B: Yes. I am interested in things like the age range, were they largely people who had grown up in Gainesville?

A: When I first joined the Junior Welfare League, because membership was a selective and using a secret selection process, most of those who were being asked to join were either daughters, daughters-in-law, or friends of people in the league. There was not an attempt to reach out to people that one did not know. Certainly that whole profile changed with the joining of the association, [which required] the change in our admission system. There is an attempt every year to reach out to women in the community in many cases whom most of the membership does not even know. Membership now does not require that a prospective member know a great many of the members. It is quite easy for a person to join, although there still is a process that one goes through. But it is an informed process, and I think it is important that young women know everything they can about an organization before they join it.

B: When you say an informed process, could you tell us what you mean?

A: When I say informed, it would be knowing what the Junior League does, what its purpose is, what its goals are, how it operates, what its rules are, the projects that one might be involved with, how one might impact on the Junior League, what one as an individual might gain from the league, because it is a two-way process. I perceive that most of our members today not only have a lot to learn but also have a lot to give to the Junior League and, through the Junior League, to Gainesville.

B: So I believe you are saying the group is no longer as homogenous as it was.

A: Very much so. The group is not homogenous. Since I am no longer an active member, it is hard for me to relate to that. I imagine that in the early days when I joined that I had many more close friends within the Junior Welfare League at that time than some of the new members do right now because we worked together. We were mainly non-professional women at the time, and we spent a lot of time together working on projects and working on committees. That is not quite the case now. I think you give up some things to gain others, and our lives are very different now. I am grateful for the experiences I had as a new young member.

B: You said you are no longer an active member. What is your membership status at this time?

A: I am a sustainer. I was eligible to become a sustainer when I was forty years

old. I believe at that time the national rules had altered so that a Junior League member could extend her membership by two years at that time to age forty-two if she so desired. Because I had been an active member of the league since my early twenties--I think I was twenty-two when I joined--I felt like it was time for me to become a sustainer, and I chose sustainer status the June after my fortieth birthday.

B: As a sustaining member, what is your role in the league?

A: My role, as I view it, is to support the active membership. As a sustainer, I have served on boards in the community. I have been a liaison between the active membership and the sustaining membership. I am currently on the sustaining board of directors and will be chairman of the sustaining group next year. I have in recent years, for instance, worked as a liaison between the active membership and the Friends of the Library, through which the Junior League is securing its new headquarters. So there have been ways to continue to be associated with the active membership, and there are certainly many more ways. Sustainers work rotation appointments at the thrift shop regularly and can be involved in any volunteer experience that the actives are involved in. They just do not *have* to. I still contribute things to the thrift shop regularly. That is another way that most sustainers still participate.

B: You mentioned a little bit earlier the Association Management Process that the organization became introduced to as a part of joining the association. Can you tell me a little bit about this: (1) its purpose, and (2) a little bit about how it works?

A: Yes. I did not think I would ever forget. The Association Management Process was mainly a process of setting goals and working towards the achievement of those goals, and then being able to assess at each step along the way where you are in the process. It is also cyclical in that we began to forecast. The Association Management Process was to work through every committee in the league. As we got into using in, say, the financial area, we began to forecast future budgets and look two or three or four years into the future and not just be dealing with the present. I really cannot remember each step along the way right now.

B: So it was a business management tool.

A: Absolutely, and it made our league much more business-like from the outset. When I was president of the Junior League--I had served both as the last president of the Junior Welfare League and a few months as president of the first Junior League--we did not have an office, [and] we did not have a secretary. I did have an extra phone line that the Junior League put in my home, which I think I was not the first but one of the first few to have, which did enable us to not

tie up our own personal lines quite so much. I spent a lot of time on the telephone, and a lot of time at night talking on the telephone to other league members. We waited until our babies were in bed. But we did not have a secretary, [and] we did not have computers. I did a lot of typing of reports on my own typewriter at home. We are a much more professional organization than that now. [laughter] I had file cabinets at home that belonged to the Junior League that I operated out of. The office was in my home.

B: So the office sort of migrated from one person to another.

A: And we used to laugh, because we wondered under whose guest-room bed the suitcase museum files were. [laughter] It was very difficult. We always kept reports, and we have always passed them on to the next chairman. I think the Junior Welfare League was very good at that, and we have certainly become more professional. But it is easier to work in and out of an office. We probably do not lose as much.

B: And the organization does have an office now, I take it you are saying?

A: Yes, in our new 430 Building on North Main Street.

B: I understand that you share that with the Friends of the Library.

A: Yes.

B: There are two other projects that I want to ask you about. One is the *Gator Country Cookbook*. I understand that was undertaken in the 1970s.

A: Yes. We used that as a fund-raiser, or its goal was to be a fund-raiser. We had two sustaining members, Gretchen Brill and Kitty Kitchens, who headed it up and helped to secure and test recipes. We had actives working with them. I think we were very successful. I think we probably reprinted two or three times. I am not sure when, but it has been in the last three or four years that we decided not to reprint it. It became increasingly difficult to market the book. There are many Junior League cookbooks all over the country that we all run into. We thought ours was great, and it has been good, and I am sure many of us still use it. But we found that it was difficult to maintain committees to continue to market and sell it. There just was not that large a market. I do not think we ever achieved the national base for it that a few other Junior League cookbooks have achieved.

B: The other project I wanted to ask you about is the children's book fair. I think it was called the Festival of Books. There seem to be so many outlets for children to buy books today. I am just speculating, but it must have been more difficult at that time [to purchase children's books]?

A: Yes. As I recall, the Festival of Books was held in the schools.

B: I thought it was at the [Gainesville] Women's Club, and part of the time it was co-sponsored by Goering's Book Store.

A: I was going to say Goering's was involved. Now the book stores have gone into the schools, so each school has a book fair. This was probably a forerunner to those times. It was not used as a fund-raiser by us at all. It was a matter of trying to get books into the hands of young people as cheaply as possible.

B: Did you know Aunt Carrie, and by Aunt Carrie I mean Mrs. J. H. Palmer [Caroline Julia La Fontisee McCollum Palmer], who started our Junior Welfare League?

A: Yes, I did know her, but I would not say I knew her well. I met her on several occasions.

B: Was she still active in this organization when you were a member?

A: I would not say active. I would say we called on her to come, perhaps, to what were then June dinner meetings. I do not even remember what year she passed away.

B: Is there anything that you would like to tell me about either the Junior Welfare League or the Junior League of Gainesville that we have not already talked about tonight? We have kind of popped around and touched on a lot of different subjects, but is there something that I have missed that you would like to add or to make a comment about?

A: I think the Junior League continues to be a very viable organization for women. Its role has changed somewhat. Our active members in many cases do not put in the time, the sheer number of hours, that we used to put in, and that is probably self-limiting just mainly because so many women are working these days. I believe that many older members of the Junior League that worked seven years felt that they worked those seven years almost full time, and they looked forward to their sustaining status after those seven years of active service. I believe that we are still viewed as an organization that accomplishes what it sets out to accomplish and always completes the task in a very efficient manner, and that has been something that has been important to the Junior Welfare League and the Junior League.

I think there have been different times where it may be difficult to continue some projects just because women either change what they are interested in [or the body of members changes]. Membership has a high turnover. We have a number of women who transfer into the league and who also leave our Junior

League by transfer, so our membership changes more quickly than it used to, and I think we have attempted to stay on top of what our membership wants to do, because if they do not want to do something it will not be successful. [laughter] But I think it is not always easy for women to spend as much time as we used to, both on league committees and on projects. Many members, because of their lifestyles today, want to do volunteer work, but at many times it may not be on a large committee. It may be within a smaller group.

B: Thank you very much, Betty.

A: Thank you.