

Kathryn Glynn, by Julie M. Luker

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Kathryn Glynn

Narrator

Cole Steinberg

Concordia University, Saint Paul

Interviewer

Thanh Huynh

Concordia University, Saint Paul

Transcriber

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Minnesota

CS: Cole Steinberg

KG: Kathryn Glynn

CS: This is an interview conducted as part of a larger faculty and student research project initiated by Dr. Julie Luker of Concordia University, Saint Paul. Today is July 26, 2023, and I'm here with Kathy Glynn. My name is Cole Steinberg, and I am an undergraduate student at Concordia University, Saint Paul. Today, I'll be talking to Kathy about what life was like growing up in the Twin Cities. During this interview, I'm going to ask you to reflect on your childhood life experiences as they relate to a variety of social topics from that time period. For the purposes of this interview, we have defined childhood as birth through 17 years of age. To begin, please state and spell your full name, including a maiden name if applicable.

KG: Okay. My full name is actually Rita Kathryn Glynn, R-I-T-A K-A-T-H-R-Y-N G-L-Y-N-N. My maiden name is Laramy, L-A-R-A-M-Y.

CS: Please identify your race and gender.

KG: Female. White.

CS: Please state your date of birth.

KG: June 5, 1954.

CS: Finally, please share where you grew up, such as the name of the neighborhood or nearby street intersection. Include any major moves you made during this time period.

KG: The first house I lived in was 1020 Bowdoin, though the intersection was roughly Cleveland Avenue and Magoffin and Highland Park. In 1960, we moved from there to 1216 Bayard. Bayard and Griggs was the intersection, 1216 Bayard. I think the biggest intersection would have been probably about a half a mile away and it would have been Randolph and Hamline.

CS: Thank you. I would like to learn more about your family life. Let's begin with the memories you have for immediate and extended family. Please share some memories that you have about these relationships.

KG: I grew up in a home with both mom and dad. I actually came from a rather large family. I have five brothers and sisters - three brothers, two sisters. I think for the most part, we were pretty close to my mom's two sisters and a little bit with her brothers, but mostly with her two sisters and their families. They also lived in the Highland Park neighborhood, along with my dad's family. He had a brother and sister. We spent holidays with them, of course. My mom actually grew up in the Frogtown neighborhood of Saint Paul. But my dad, for the most part, was in Mac-Groveland or Highland. We did a lot with my mom's two sisters and their families, as far as extended family. Like picnics and things like that. 4th of July holidays, my uncle often times would stop by with, you know, just treats and bring some candy over. It was just kind of the way he was. He always had a little treat for us. We had a fairly active lifestyle. Of course, I was born long before Title IX was a thing, so there were really no sports for girls. There were a few rec type things, but nothing like some of the big parks, but nothing major, nothing really truly organized. And so, I didn't play sports, but my brothers did. So fairly active on going to baseball games, football games, things like that. I went to kindergarten at St Theresa's in Highland Park. And then first through eighth grade, I went to Holy Spirit in obviously Highland Park. And then I went to Durham Hall High School for High school, at that time, it was all girls. Now it is combined with Creighton Durham, so it's boys and girls. But when I was there, it was all girls. We did a lot of family activities for the holidays. I'm trying to think. What else? My grandparents, my dad's parents had a lake place just outside of not Taylor Falls; St Croix Falls in Wisconsin. So, we did spend some time up there in the summers. And I think one of my fondest memories of-my grandpa died when I was only four-but my oldest memory was walking on the dock with him, and I had a little toy boat on a string that we would walk back and forth up and down in the water. And so, but obviously that's about the best memory. I have them because he died when I was young. I think that's all I can think of right off hand.

CS: That's okay. I have questions for every category to help if you need some prompts. But did you have any family pets? If so, can you please describe them?

KG: We had one puppy when... Oh gosh, I was probably about three or four. No, I was probably a little older than that; Maybe five. But it didn't sit well with babies in the house. My folks had a new baby. And so, we didn't have that problem for very long. And then when I was in high school, we had another dog and she lived to our ripe old age until she was just too old. She ended up getting sick, though. She must have been... She must have been 12 or so when she finally passed away.

CS: How were household chores divided between members of your family.

KG: The boys did most of the outdoor chores. The girls did most of the indoor things. Being that I was the oldest girl, I did help my mom with all those siblings, and I did help my mom with things like ironing and dishes. By that time, we had a dishwasher then it was certainly loading and unloading the dishwasher. Vacuuming, dusting, and like I said, most of the things for indoors were for the girls. But then the boys did most of the outside work.

CS: Okay. Thank you. Next, please describe the ways in which your family's economic status influenced your childhood.

KG: Early childhood, it was what I would call comfortable. You know, we were never in need of food or anything. As I got older, things became more comfortable. Definitely middle class, maybe a little upper middle class. Later, as I got older, we all were given the opportunity to go to private schools. And so, you know, that was kind of a big thing.

CS: In what way has your family's financial circumstances shaped your spending habits today?

KG: I tend to think long and hard before I make any big purchases. I think that's what was instilled as a child or even a young teenager, that you don't overspend, that you spend what you have and what you know you can afford. So, I want to say I'm relatively frugal when it comes to bigger expenses and things like that. I think long and hard before I do it. I think that in a lot of ways it was something my dad instilled in us and that you don't overspend, and you don't spend more than you make and things.

CS: Who in your immediate family was employed and what did they each do for a living?

KG: My dad was a manufacturer's representative, so he had numerous lines all in the paint, sundry type categories from sandpaper to paint brushes, paint rollers. He had multiple clients, hardware stores. We didn't have big box stores back then, of course. So, Home Depots and things like that didn't exist. It provided him with a very comfortable life for all of us. My mom did not work until the youngest child-who's 11 years younger than I am-until he was in high school. And then she just had a part time job at a small local variety store. I can't even think. I wish I could remember the name of it, but it was like a small gift shop. And so, she did that for a few years. They ended up closing and she had a love for porcelain dolls, so she found a job with a small company in downtown Saint Paul that sold porcelain dolls. And so, she worked, like I said, she didn't work until the youngest was in high school. We all had jobs as kids. I worked as a waitress in high school, my brother... Two of my brothers actually worked at the old Mets Stadium for the Twins in concession sales. All of us worked in high school.

CS: Now, I'd like to know about your experiences with religion, such as Catholicism, Lutheranism, etc... Describe what you can recall about your family's religious practices when you're growing up.

KG: We were born and raised Catholic. Went to 12 years of Catholic high school. 12 years of Catholic school. And actually 13 when you count kindergarten. We went to church every Sunday, every holy day. Back then there were quite a few more holy days than there are now. We were very observant of the rules. Back when I was very young, we did not eat meat on Fridays year-round and we would very much adhere to that. I think if I had to put it in one way, my parents were very pretty staunch Catholic.

CS: As a child, how important or irrelevant did you find religion to be for you?

KG: I think it gave me a solid foundation for. Integrity and respecting others. Yeah.

CS: How important or relevant is religion to an adult?

KG: It's still important, while attending weekly mass is not necessarily something I do all the time anymore, especially since COVID. But definitely still feel that there is a very strong relationship with God, everything and life in general.

CS: Now I'd like to learn more about the neighborhood in which you grew up. If you move during childhood, you may wish to reflect on more than one neighborhood. This is fine to do, but please indicate as you do it. Then describe what comes to mind when thinking about the neighborhood in which you grew up.

KG: The first neighborhood which was, it's the part of Highland Park off of Magoffin and Cleveland. It was a very young neighborhood. The houses were just being built. In fact, we ended up... We were staying with my grandma for the first couple... I feel right after I was born, I want to say maybe a month or so. We lived with my grandma while the house was being finished, but it was a brand-new area. Everybody who moved in was young and had children. My folks developed

lifelong friendships with these neighbors, and they would have numerous neighborhood parties. I can remember a Western party where somehow... We lived on a dead-end street. And so, we had things like saddles and all the neighbors were dressed up as cowboys and things like that. Back then you could do that, but it was a huge neighborhood party. There were picnics all the time. Obviously, we spent a lot of birthdays with the neighbor kids. Like I said, they were lifelong friends. After we moved to 1216 Bayard, they stayed friends, and they still have parties like a circus party where everybody had to come as a character from the circus. They had one. This was back on Bowdoin, the first neighborhood. It was the Winter Carnival theme. My dad was very involved in the winter carnival. We had just had neighborhood get together as frequently, and it would be just being with the neighbors. Wonderful neighbors, like I said, lifelong friends with my parents.

CS: As far as transportation options, how did you typically get around town?

KG: Walk [Laughter] But I'm trying to remember... I don't remember much about going to and from kindergarten. We were a little bit further away and there wasn't a bus that I remember. I don't think there was anyway. So, I think my mom probably drove us. Elementary through high school, we walked. I was only about six blocks from school. And so, we walked. If once I got to the age where it was okay, I would take busses downtown for shopping, but that would be more like high school age. Midway Center was actually pretty big then, too. There were a lot of shops there. But if it were like Highland Village, I walked even from my home on Bayard. It was only about a three-mile walk. And then once I had a driver's license, I did have to share a car with well, first I was my mom, my brother and I. We shared cars. But then, because it was getting a little hard. And so, my dad bought a used car for my brother and I. He always got first priority because he was a boy, and he was older. But there were times, obviously, that I was able to drive to and from work once I had a driver's license.

CS: Describe what you can recall about your home, such as the layout or other features that might.

KG: The first house was a three-bedroom rambler, and it was kind of an interesting layout in that when you walked in the back door, there was... It was a smaller kitchen, but there was a room off to the left side of the back door. It could be used as a bedroom or as a dining room, depending on what your family needs were. It was kind of interesting in that, we obviously used it as a bedroom, but it was a fairly small... It wasn't terribly small, but when you have five siblings, it got to be too small there. So, we moved. The second home was a four-bedroom, two-story. My dad actually ended up building on or adding a detached two car garage. The garage was too small for many... It was built when there were smaller cars, so the cars didn't necessarily fit in that garage. So that was actually converted into another room on the main floor, a much bigger, much bigger layout. Two stories. That had one full bathroom and a half. The idea of multiple bathrooms was nonexistent then. Both very nice houses. What I remember of the first one. The other one I do remember very well, and it was a great house.

CS: Next, I would like to learn about the values shared by your family and your neighbors. Values are principles or standards that help guide behavior. What memories come to mind that demonstrate what these values were for your family and your neighbors?

KG: I think they instilled a lot of loyalty because they were very close as groups. I think they instilled honesty and respect in us. Gosh, that's a tough, that's a tough question. But I do I think I think my parents especially instilled, you know, honesty and respect, and loyalty. Like I said, they remained friends for life.

CS: In what way were your values similar to or different from others who lived in your neighborhood at that time?

KG: You know, for the most part. I think they were quite similar. I just think that there was a lot of respect. The kids respected the elders. Everybody was Mr. and Mrs. We didn't call people by their first names or our friends' parents or our neighbors. They were always Mr. and Mrs. I think that there was a lot of respect taught not only by my parents, but even with the neighbors.

CS: I'm going to ask you all about leisure time. Describe some of the ways in which you, your family and your neighbors engaged in leisure time when you were growing up.

KG: Picnics. We played outside almost all the time. Bike riding. Not that I remember my parents riding bikes, but we had a little, you know, we rode our bikes together as groups, with friends. Ice skating in the winter. Snow skiing had not become really popular until I was a freshman in high school. But for the most part, as neighbors and family, we did a lot of outside picnics, bike riding, like I said. Swing sets were popular. I think just playing house was a big one for the girls especially. I can't think. You know, it's hard to remember. What did we do as kids?

CS: Can you recall if your family ever took vacations? And if so, to where we might?

KG: My dad and mom, we've gone. We went to Duluth a few times. We went to the Black Hills of South Dakota twice. We went out all the way to New York. My dad had a sales meeting in Massachusetts and instead of flying, he took the money for the airline ticket and took us all. Well so we could do it was a two-week trip. Then we got to see all the historical sites just about from here to New York City. We spent four days in Washington, D.C. We spent some time in New York City, and a few days outside of the Boston area. We went to Gettysburg. So, it was very wonderful. It may have been even a little longer than two weeks, but it was a phenomenal trip. Then we spent time up at my grandparent's lake place just outside of St Croix Falls.

CS: Was there a local hangout spot in your neighborhood where you could be with your friends?

KG: I think we just all met outside. During the summer months, I think we just all kind of congregated outside. I don't remember one person's house being any more popular than the other.

CS: Which bands or music genres were your favorite?

KG: Yeah. Oh, that's funny. Well, musicals were very popular. We listened to a lot of musicals as far as like Camelot and My Fair Lady and Oklahoma and all of those types of shows. All those types of movies, those soundtracks. But obviously once I got older, then it was certainly Rock and Roll. Beach Boys were very popular, Jan and Dean, then The Temptations and The Motown was also very popular.

CS: As an adult, have you kept in touch with any friends from your childhood?

KG: Two. Both were grade school friends, and we did drift apart after high school, but we have recently reconnected. And so, I do stay in touch with two friends from grade school and high school.

CS: Next, let's discuss your experience with schooling. Please describe what it was like going to school as a child.

KG: I remember it was... Grade school was sometimes a struggle. Just simply, math was never my strong suit. As far as I remember it being a great experience. High school was a good experience. In grade school, we had more nuns than we did lay teachers. High school we had kind of an even mix,

some nuns, but probably 60/40 lay teachers in high school. By the time I got to high school, I learned to appreciate wearing a uniform, and I did not have to decide what I was going to wear every day because they decided for me. So that ended up being a really good experience. I still have my saddle shoes from high school. It was overall a good experience. It was a smaller school, and I liked the fact that it was a smaller school. I only had 106 in my graduating class.

CS: The school lunch hour has changed over the years. Can you recall how your school handled the lunch hour when you were a student?

KG: In elementary school, we went home. We had a long enough break in between morning and afternoon that we could go home for lunch. So, we walked home for lunch. If it was raining or very, very cold, then my mom would pack a lunch. Holy Spirit did not have a hot lunch program when I was there, and so we had to pack cold lunches from home. Derham Hall was supposedly on the cutting edge, and they had an automated cafeteria. So, if you were buying your lunch, you bought sandwiches and even hamburgers out of a cold vending machine, and they had a microwave. One of probably one of the first ones that I ever knew of. And you heated your food in that, or you could bring a certainly your cold lunch. We did not go home during lunch at that point. When I was a junior in high school, we had open camp or open lunch hour. So, if you did not have classes from 11 to 1, you were allowed to leave for lunch. And then most of us would find someplace else to go eat. The automated was not very, very good.

CS: Which teacher stands out to you most in your memory and why?

KG: One of my second-grade teachers. She was absolutely phenomenal. I loved her. I always think of her. She was probably in her mid-sixties, but she was always so sweet and kind. Our grade school principal was also wonderful. The high school principal was great. Loved her, too. She was a nun. But she was wonderful. I also remember my third-grade teacher. She was a nun, but very sweet. I was not a part of the group that everybody talks about. Well, you know, the nuns, you know, with rulers and things, never happened. Either I was really good, or the nuns or Holy Spirit didn't do that because I was never, I don't I don't recall anybody being hit with rulers in school. Which I know that people always laugh about that with the Catholic education, but I don't remember it ever happening. High school teachers. Oh, gosh. I guess I don't really, other than the principal, I don't really have a favorite.

CS: For a final topic, I'm going to ask you to reflect on local and global issues such as war, poverty, discrimination, social unrest, etc... In your opinion, what were some of the biggest local or global issues affecting the people in your neighborhood when you're growing up?

KG: I don't remember politics being discussed by families in that context. Of course, I remember times around the dinner table. We ate together as a family every day unless somebody was working, but we ate as a family. That was a big part of our life. Growing up, obviously, of the Vietnam War was a huge topic. While I understand the dissent and not people being against it, I also was not a fan of draft dodgers because I feel like we have an obligation to our country. If we're called to serve, we are called, and we should fulfill that obligation. So, I but I remember a lot about the protest and all of everything that was revolved around the Vietnam War. Obviously, I remember John F Kennedy, his assassination when I was in fourth grade. And I remember that just being very heart wrenching for so many. So, I do remember that very well. The moonwalk was also a very was a big deal in 69. I think I'm 69, right? I think 69. So that was also a very big change. But again, it wasn't something like that... As a family we talked about them, but it wasn't like neighbors got together and discussed politics. That just didn't happen. Not that I remember anyway. Equal rights was just really coming to the helm. And obviously there is a lot of things that are very positive that came out of the Equal Rights Amendment, of equal pay and things for jobs that are co-shared either by both men and

women. But I think really, for the most part, Vietnam was the biggest discussion. Later at the table and things.

CS: Do you remember seeing a lot of those events televised, or was it discussed between your family?

KG: During newscasts, there were some you know, they didn't have instant streaming like we do now. So, what you would see could be 2 to 3 weeks old by the time it gets over here from especially like during the Vietnam War, those things. So, the newsreels and things that were being sent back. You'd catch them on the news, you know, the five, the afternoon, afternoon news or evening news. We didn't have... We didn't watch TV a whole lot. I think we had three channels; you know, we had four or five and 11, I think, was it. So, we didn't have a lot of, there wasn't a lot of access back then.

CS: Okay. Are there any other local and global issues that sort of stand out to you in your memory?

KG: Mm. I can't remember anything that was really local. I don't remember anything local. I think Vietnam was probably the biggest global issue that as a teenager I faced, you know, late sixties. Early seventies.

CS: Okay. This is the end of our interview. Your responses are invaluable, and we really appreciate that you took the time to do this today. Thank you so much for participating.