

Jim McGowan, by Julie M. Luker

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Minnesota

JL: Julie Luker

JM: Jim McGowan

JL: 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 Monday, August 7th, 2023, and I am here with Jim McGowan. My name is Julie Luker, and I am an assistant professor of psychology at Concordia University. Today, I'll be talking to Jim 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've defined childhood as birth through 17 years of age. So, to begin, please restate and spell your name.

JM: Jim McGowan. That's J-I-M M-C-G-O-W-A-N.

JL: Please identify your race and gender.

JM: Caucasian and male.

JL: Please state your date of birth.

JM: July 30, 1936.

JL: And finally, please share where you grew up, such as the name of the neighborhood or a nearby street intersection.

JM: I grew up in Saint Pau. I would call it the Capitol Hill location.

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

JM: Well, I lived with my mother and father and my brother for the first nine years of my life. And my sister was born. And at that time, we pretty much lived in that neighborhood around the capital ever since I was like two. We had moved from Minneapolis. I don't know all the details of that. But when we lived in, Well let's see-one, two, three, four, five-five different apartments as I went through high school in that area. But primarily we lived in one apartment on Cedar Street, 772

Cedar Street. And as soon as I left for high school, we moved out to University near Rice Street. All the time, we lived in apartments all the time, never owned a house. My folks never did. And my dad had a variety of jobs, as my mother did, too. My mother worked as a waitress from time to time, and my father, most of the time I knew him, worked as a cattle buyer down in South Saint Paul. As far as my neighborhood went, it was a very family friendly neighborhood. At that time on Cedar Street, where we live between Sherburne and Charles and actually down to Como too, it was two blocks, it was mostly family homes. So, there were lots of kids. And on the south end of that area near Sherburne, there was a big vacant lot where, I think, there were mansions that had been there and I think they had been mansions that ex-governors or governors lived in. That was on the south side of the street. But I know I'm going to get too complicated here, but there were still two mansions left on the corner of Cedar and Sherburne that were now apartments. But down at the east end of Sherburne, where there's a cul-de-sac, there was still a mansion that was lived in by the family. And I'm sorry, I can't remember their names right now. They were people who owned a liquor manufacturing. What do you call that?

JL: Like a brewery?

JM: Yeah, like a brewery. It was more of a whiskey, I think. That's the way we knew it anyway. Which meant because of this big vacant lot. We had a natural playground for our block, which was fantastic. And that's where I really grew up with because the policy there were no adults involved. Adults are all working, or they just sent us out the door. It was a matter of the big kids, taught the little kids. And I think that's one of the reasons I grew up really loving playing softball, because we played softball every day during the summer. And it was the big kids that taught us how to play, how to bat, how to run, the rules, all that sort of thing. And as we grew, we became the big kids and we taught the little kids.

JL: As far as your family goes. Were you close to any of your brothers or sisters?

JM: Oh, yeah. My brother and I were very close for just a year or 15 months apart, and we shared the same room and we both have great memories of that room because we had a back window, and we could look out our back window to downtown and the First National Bank was in sight. And we had the, you know, how the light goes around three times? We had it down patent and how that light would show up. So, we would sit-this is this is before television obviously. We didn't have a radio at that point in our room. We would sit there and watch the lights go on. And as soon as we went off, we would start called in one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. And that I still do that myself today. When I see that light up there. I like to see if it's still times out the right way.

JL: How about in your family? Did you ever have any pets? I know you said you lived in an apartment. Did they allow anything like that?

JM: We never had any pets. Fortunately, oh, I should say in the summertime, a lot of times we would be shipped out to my aunt and uncles. So, we did spend a lot of time out there, too. They owned a resort out on Lake Sierra, west of the cities, and they had pets. So, we grew up with dogs and some feral cats, too. Out on Cedar Street, I don't remember there being a lot of pets, for some reason. I think it's because we all lived in rented apartments and maybe it wasn't allowed. I'm not sure.

JL: You mentioned specifically your dad was a cattle buyer, so that's actually my next topic. I wanted you to describe the ways in which your family's economic status influenced your childhood. Perhaps you could talk about what he did with a little more detail, how that supported your family and maybe your mom's role, too.

JM: Yeah, well, I think typical of a lot of kids back in those days. We weren't very affluent, but we never felt like we were poor. In fact, I had kind of an image of living up on Cedar Street. We were sort of on top of the hill and we looked down on all directions downhill. And I always kind of felt like we lived in the more luxurious part of town. I had a lot of friends down on Rice Street and that area, too. And I have no idea what their financial situation was. But I know that we were not... We didn't have a car. Never had a car before I went to high school. And that was the time when television was just coming in and we didn't have a television. My next-door neighbor did, so he became my best buddy.

JL: How did you get around town without a car back then?

JM: Walking, busses. My dad, who worked in South Saint Paul, took the bus down every morning. And he would get off at the city limits at South Saint Paul, and then hitch ride the rest of the way because that cost an extra token to go to South Saint Paul. Yeah. And my mother, I can't recall. My mother wasn't working then. Not what we were that young. So, we're depending on my dad's salary, which was minimal at that time. It wasn't, I don't know what his salary was. I seem to recall was like 3000 something a year which and this was in during the war and all that stuff. But I never felt poor. We had such a good life up there with the kids who were no better shape than we were. Well, we didn't have many, let's say, extras. I got my first bike when I was like 12. I think so.

JL: But do you ever get to go with your dad to work to see what that was like?

JM: Yeah, I did. He would take us to work once in a while on a Saturday. And we'd go down there. It was always with the promise that we might be able to ride a horse. And as I recall, I don't think we ever did ride a horse, but we had a lot of fun down there. Just in those big [gates?]. Strange thing, because many years later... Oh, while I was in college, I worked in the stockyards. Not because of that, but because my father-in-law was the manager. But yeah, so I always had kind of a close feeling about South Saint Paul, too. Yeah. Even though it wasn't that much a part of my life. What we liked about going down there was because you weren't usually-he worked for a commission company down there. So, we had to spend a lot of time in the office too, and we got to play with a typewriter, which was really fun. So, we'd sit and take notes to our mom or something. Yeah.

JL: And as far as your mom, her jobs as a waitress, was she pretty close to home with her restaurants that she worked at, or was it hard for her to get to?

JM: When she did work at the restaurant, it was down on Rice Street, The Stahl House. But like I said, I can't remember her when she went to work. I don't think she worked while we were growing up that much. No, but she worked for many, many generations as a waitress up until the end of her life almost.

JL: Do you feel that any of the experiences you had growing up with your social, socioeconomic status, do you think that that could have affected the way that you handle things as an adult economically?

JM: I hear my wife saying this once in a while because we grew up-I don't really like to the word poor. But, you know, we didn't waste much as kids. We had food on the table; we had to eat it. And I hear my wife was excusing my need to finish the meals, not waste things because I grew up poor. And I don't know if that's true or not. I think I'm just a very practical guy and I don't like to waste things. But she likes to use that. Like I said, we never felt poor, and I think I hear that from a lot of a lot of people my age. We grew up the same kind of situation. So those years were tough for a lot of people.

JL: Great. Now I'd like to know more about your experiences with religion, such as Catholicism, Lutheranism, etc... Can you describe what you recall about your family's religious practices when you were growing up?

JM: Yeah, sure. I grew up in a Catholic family... Well, my mother wasn't Catholic, my dad was. Good Irish Catholic and he insisted that we get to church on a regular basis on Sunday mornings. And that was probably the closest experience I had with my father was going to church because we lived up on the hill there. But we went to church down to Assumption downtown and coming home from church, we always walked-it wasn't that far-but we walked home, and we always stopped at the little grocery store on Wabasha. My dad would buy us a pop and I still crave Dr. Pepper because of that. That's my biggest memory from Dr. Pepper. But no. So, we went to Assumption Church and then for my, I think it was my third and fourth grade, we went to school at Assumption, at the parochial school. Other than that, I went from kindergarten to second grade or whatever we went to public school, Scheffer school. And then we went back to Scheffer after the third grade and finished up in public schools there. But then while we were public school and it's interesting that my dad was not a very real active guy in our family. But my mom was the boss, and she's the one that kind of ran things, got things done. Much like to visit our house now. [Laughter] And she. And my dad, I think, wanted us to be confirmed even though we were not going to public school. It would have happened naturally if we stayed at Assumption. But it was my mother who got us into religious instruction, down at St Vincent's. And I still remember going into the priest office with her and her giving us... Oh, I guess we had first communion there, too. So, I don't know if we call it confirmation at that time, but we I do remember for sure that we went there every week for religious instruction. Yeah. You know, I think that the religion part of it all wasn't emphasized, real hard in our family. My mother, I asked her one-time what church she grew up in. And she didn't know where North Minneapolis at the time, and she said, well, I guess we went to the church that could help us the most. So, she said, "The Salvation Army." So, my mom was not involved with church at all because she never went to church with us.

JL: But is there a reason why you only went to the private school through Assumption for two years?

JM: Well, I don't know. I've often thought about that too, because it costs a little money to go to a parochial school. And it may have been a financial thing. I'm not sure.

JL: Could have been.

JM: Yeah. I don't think there was because we loved that church. We named my sister Connie when I was nine years old, so that would put me in fourth grade. So, yeah, she was born then, and we actually named my sister Connie after one of the nuns, Sister Constance. So, yeah, so it was it was a happy relationship with the church.

JL: That's good. In what way has religion shaped your adult life?

JM: Well, this will be great. [Laughter] You're going to love this. I went into the Navy after high school. When I got out, I went to school, and the only school I could really get into was where I had some help to get into it. And it was a Lutheran school, Augustana in Sioux Falls.

JL: When you say help, do you mean financial help or remedial help?

JM: What does remedial mean? I did not have a good high school record. My high school was limited. I had more fun than I had learning. Anyway, it was a great... I had a great high school

experience. So, I went to Augustana and at Augustana I met my wife. Let's see where we're going with this. Oh, my religion. So, we got married and finished up our year at Augustana because that was expensive, too, and went up to Aberdeen where her folks lived. And I finished at Northern State College and then that first year after that, we moved to Marshall, Minnesota, where I sold insurance for Lutheran Brotherhood. All this time I was not very involved in the church. Well, I shouldn't say that. No, I got to go back on that. When we moved to Aberdeen, Maryland, of course, was Lutheran, and I thought, well, I'm start to go-we just had our first baby-and I figured, you know, it's best of the family if we're both in the same church. And since I'm kind of a nominal Catholic, I'm going to the Lutheran Church was fine, and I got really involved. I started teaching. Sunday school. Not right away. And I got to know the pastors pretty well. Anyway, so when I finished college, we went down to Marshall and got a job with Lutheran Brotherhood. And while I was doing Lutheran Brotherhood, I was traveling around Lyon County meeting all these pastors. And the intern at our church was a good friend. And about a year of selling insurance, Roland and I were fixing the bed one morning and I said, you know, I think I'd like to go to seminary. So, we moved down to Saint Paul, and I went to Lutheran seminary. Yeah. Yeah. So. So I spent four years doing that and then served as a pastor for about 25 years.

JL: Oh, my gosh. So, it really did sort of make a full circle. And you, just like your own father, you ended up becoming very involved.

JM: Yeah, it was. And it was a good life. I enjoyed being a pastor. And I enjoyed retirement, too [Laughter]!

JL: Well, now I'd like to learn more again about this neighborhood in which you grew up, and you started to describe it a little bit. So, let's go into a little bit more detail there again. Just describe what comes to mind when you think about that neighborhood in which you grew up. And I have a couple of additional questions I'll ask about that, too. But just what comes to mind right away? More detail.

JM: Well, my first thought is I thought I think it was a fantastic neighborhood to grow up in because of the relationships I had up there. Like I said, there were lots of kids, some really big families up there. Every day we were involved in something. I don't think a day went by when we weren't out doing something. So socially it really helped us grow that way. We were still young because we were... I suppose we left there when I was like 13. So, up to those learning years. And learned how to get along with a lot of kids that way. Never had. I don't remember ever having a fight or anything with any of the kids in spite of the time we were playing ball. Whether normal little arguments or stuff like that, I don't remember any real uncomfortable moments. Then, of course, got to meet some girls a little bit. That helped. It wasn't very serious at that age.

JL: Was it a safe area to be in?

JM: Oh, yeah. Yeah, actually, you know, and I think you'll hear this from a lot of people my age. My mom could send us out as soon as we wanted to go out and we lived about a block away from what we call this the lookout there, that big vacant lot. And can you picture that area?

JL: I think I know where you're talking. Is it near [what is now] Regions Hospital at this point?

JM: Kitty corner from there. On the north side of University, where the bridges that go over the university on the east side of the capital. When you get to the north side of that bridge, you're at the lookout. And that was like two great big empty lots. And it was a kind of a woodsy area down there. And these great hills for sliding. And up on top room to play ball. Oh, I didn't mention this too. But

across the street, directly across from the Capitol was the old science museum. And that was very much a part of our lives.

JL: That was in an old mansion, right?

JM: That was one of the old mansions that was still there. And we this was so great for the kids up there, because every Saturday morning, 10:00am, they had movies for kids, free movies. And they weren't junk movies, they were about science and about nature. I still remember how the moon got its spots, with an old, old Indian legend. But that was a wonderful part of our neighborhood because and we used it. I mean, almost the whole neighborhood to be over there. There can be a couple hundred kids going in there for the movies. Yeah.

JL: Did they show the movies inside or outside?

JM: Outside. Ah, no, excuse me. Inside, in a nice theater in the back of the mansion. So that was a big part of our life up there, too. Other than that, there wasn't anything organized. Well, I started out by saying we'd go out early in the morning and mother would call us. We lived about at the far end of Cedar, but she could still go out the back porch and just yell, Jimmy, Tommy, and we'd come in for lunch. And you hear mothers calling their kids like that. And we go in for lunch. And you know, lunch-just in the summertime of course-and we'd go right out again. And same thing until she calls in for supper almost. And after supper, we would all be outside again playing games. You know, nobody's organized in this. We just get together and play, kick the can or something. And a lot of the time I was we spent up at the lookout at the corner of Cedar and Sherburne. You can still see it, there are some big cement rock corners there. We would sit around on those things, on the walls and stuff. And talk and talk the talk. Play a game, play games. But oh, I know, one of our favorite games was Truth, Dare, or Consequences. And for kids, that was a silly game. I dare you to kiss Judy. [Laughter] We always waited for that one. But so, the social life among the kids was just fantastic. And like I said, there was never any animosity of any kind. Never saw a kid fight another kid up there. And the big kids were great for the little kids. A lot of those kids became our heroes in some ways. They were going to Mechanic Arts just down the street and we knew that someday we'd be there. And so, when we walked into our high school, which is only a block away from the Capitol. We were old hands at the place. We knew all about it.

JL: Oh, wow. Well, now I'd like to learn about the values shared by your family and your neighbors. Values are principles or standards that help to guide behavior. So, what memories come to mind that demonstrate what these values were for your family and your neighbors?

JM: Hmm. That's interesting. Well, I think I could say the same thing for the adults in their neighborhood. A lot of good people. I don't remember anybody. That I didn't like as a kid, which, you know, is kind of interesting. And during the war especially, we knew of families where the husband was off to war and the mothers were home alone. And my mother, one of her best friends, was right across the street from us. And she would come over, her name was Agnes. She would come over and sit with my mom, cry a lot. And I remember when he came home, his name was John [Rorschach?]. They ended up moving to Wisconsin. And he started the J.R. Restaurant over near Hudson. You've probably never heard of it. I think it might still be there, I'm not sure. Anyways, J.R. Restaurant. There were others. Our next-door neighbors, the Fasteners, she and my mom depended on each other. Both of them smoked, but and couldn't smoke unless you were drinking coffee. And so, she would come to our house to drink coffee and smoke. Oh, everybody smoked at that time. And I never even thought about it my whole life, which is interesting. Oh, my best friend right next door was my friend, Myron Berkovits, a Jewish family. To this day, I think I still have some interesting memories of that. We were in the same school at Scheffer. Then we would come home. First, we'd play right away. Mike, we call him Mike, Myron. He had only just

barely got home and do whatever he got to do and the bus for Hebrew school showed up. And it seems to me like every day the Hebrew school bus showed up and he had to go back to school. I always felt kind of bad for him. [Laughter] But an interesting thing occurred to me one day. I know my dad was a good Irish Catholic. Said to me, can't you find another friend? And I had never thought about it until I got older. Hearing him say that. But I think there was a little thing about it. And I don't say that to shame my father at all, because he was a loving, caring guy. But he was caught up in a yeah. And he would never have done anything. It never, never went any further than that. Yeah, but that's kind of an interesting part of my dad I really don't know much about.

JL: In addition to that perception, what was the demographic makeup of the people in your neighborhood? Were they mostly white? Were they? Was there a lot of diversity?

JM: Pure white, far as I can tell. I think in all directions, because when I went to Scheffer School, which was down four blocks west of us. That was all white kids as far as I know. But when you got to the seventh grade there, we had to go over to Jackson School for eighth grade and then the high school for the next four. We knew that when we went to Jackson, there would be black kids there. And I think that some of us who are a little worried about that because we never dealt with black kids. But it was a great year for us because we really got close to black kids, too. And then, of course, when I got to Mechanic Arts, we had a nice mixture of kids there, Mexican kids and the black kids and Jewish kids with a Mechanic Arts High School, where I went to high school was a super school for that reason.

JL: Now I'm a dip back into leisure time, which you started to talk about all the fun things that you did when you were growing up. If you could go into a little bit more detail there, you could talk about the neighborhood activities that you did. Maybe you can talk about some of you mentioned someone in your family who had a resort. You go on vacation up there. What comes to mind when you think about leisure time?

JM: Well, basically, it's the kids. You know, all the fun we had as kids. All I mentioned already that. There were no adults involved in our leisure time. And I'm thinking specifically of summer. There was never an adult. The oldest person there would have been a 17 year old high school kid. Oh, one of the things that we did almost every week, especially before I turned 12, was and I can't I'm trying to remember if it was either Saturday afternoon or Sunday afternoon. I believe it was Sunday. We would go downtown, walk downtown, which wasn't very far for us, and go to the movies. And at that time, downtown Saint Paul had eight theaters. Yeah, I can name them right off the top three of them. But we would the kids would primarily go to the Lyceum Theater or the Garrick Theater because they showed three movies that were kind of kid movies, you know, Tarzan or Red Ryder, Roy Rogers, those kinds of things. And before you turned 12, at that time, it only cost \$0.12. I learned later in life that it really only costs \$0.10. But there was a two-cent tax. Well, I start paying taxes early. So that was a big part of our week because we went almost every week and we only got the \$0.12 too. My brother and I went down one time to see Snow White. And it was not going to be at one of the other theaters. So, she had to give us a little extra money, I think, to go to the to see Snow White. And we went down, went right into the Paramount Theater, and started watching it, and it was a kind of a love story or something going on. And we tolerated that for an hour or so because back then they used to just rerun the movies. So, we thought, well, maybe this was over, and Snow White would start. We sat there and watched it, and it came around again and we realized we were in the wrong theater. We went outside and right across the street at the Orpheum Theater was Snow White. Well, we went home. Told her mom we didn't get to see Snow White because we went to the wrong theater. And she said, well, that's your problem. She would not give us another quarter or whatever it was to get in there.

JL: So, you're saying that you would leave the house with the money your mom may or may not have given you and you would go to the lookout, or you would go downtown? Saint Paul? Absolutely unsupervised as a child.

JM: Oh, yeah. I never went to... I'd go downtown with my mom if she wanted to go shopping for shoes or something. But. No, she never. They never went downtown. And that was common. When I got older, we would ride our bikes downtown and on the corner of Eight and Wabasha. At that point there was kind of a triangle where Eighth and Ninth came together and kids would just leave their bikes there. They didn't lock them. Just leave them there and go to the movies, come back and here's your bike and go home. Really, I'm very serious about that. I don't remember. There may be a time. There may be a time we put locks on. I'm not real sure, but I know I knew my bike would be there when I got back anyway, But that was later. Because I didn't get my bike until my last year up at Cedar. So that was one that was part of our week was going to the movies. And there were some interesting experiences there, too. Because we get out of the movie late in the afternoon and downtown St Paul would be buzzing because there were a lot of nice little bars down there and all that, especially on Wabasha. And in one corner, The Salvation Army had a band going and that was always fun. I know one time too we were walking up from Wabasha on 12th or so on and the police were there, and they had just raided a house of ill repute. We found that out. [Laughter] and they're pulling people out of the car. So, we stood and watched them bring them. And all the way home to Mike Berkovits, my brother Tom and I would go to the movies together and on the way home we would play the characters that were written most of the time. And at that time, they were just starting to tear down a lot of buildings that were going to become part of the capital approach. Down south of the capital. They used to be all tenements down there and they were turning these down. So, there's a lot of buildings over halfway up and we would play in those things. I lobbed a rock over one of the walls. Hit my brother outside with a brick, hit him in the head. He's still alive He's never been the same. No, I didn't mean that. He's bright. He was a German teacher. Teacher of German, anyway. So, we would play these roles. And since I was the oldest, if it was a Tarzan movie, it's in, I'd be Tarzan. Tom would be a boy and Mike would be a cheetah, something like that. So, we learned from that. So, movies on the weekends was big time for us.

JL: And what about the resort that you said you had in your family? What was that like?

JM: Well, that was that was really good for us too. Our uncle needed us. He needed help out there. And my mom, I think, was anxious to get some time off at home, too. The only thing wrong with that is we missed part of our summer. At home too. Time at the lookout and all that. Working for my uncle. And we were pretty young when we started working there. We had jobs mowing lawns and picking up round the picnic area and cleaning boats and stuff like that. So, we had jobs. To the point where we ran away a couple of times. We didn't like all the work we were getting, but they were so good to us. My aunt and uncle were wonderful people and they really were generous for us and living at the lake at the time we didn't know what a good deal we had. I think we swam every day. I don't think I wore shoes all summer.

JL: Did they put your sisters to work too, or just the boys?

JM: No. I got to tell you about my sister. That's a sad part of our lives. But that happens when I'm in high school. None of... Are we that far up to my...

JL: Yeah, go for it. We're going to talk about schooling next. But you want to jump right into that. That'd be okay.

JM: Yeah, well, we moved over to University Avenue away from Capitol Hill, just on the other side of Rice Street. 263 University and it's also been filled. By the way, I should say. I lived before

I got to high school. I think I've mentioned doing one, two, three, four. Five. Seven, seven, seven different houses. Before I got out of high school. University Avenue is where we ended up with my family. So, I think I was just going into my senior year at the end of my junior year, I don't remember exactly, but my sister was now seven years old, and she got sick, she had encephalitis. And she had such a high fever, it burned up the use of her brain. So, she became very dependent. She can live with my folks for a while. But then she got... She was hard to handle. She ended up having to be institutionalized. And so that and I went into the Navy just about the same time that was all happening. So, I wasn't really part of the initial time. I was aware of it all the time.

JL: Do you remember where she was institutionalized? Was it nearby?

JM: No. Well, she started out at the old Anchor Hospital. I remember going down to see her. She was a beautiful little girl, little blonde. And I remember going down to see her at the old Anchor Hospital. The old Anchor down on Seventh Street and she was in a war. I don't know. I picture it now. There were up to 50 beds down there, probably about eight beds, I don't know. But I had walked by a couple of other beds. So, I saw kids there that were really in bad shape physically, too, as well. What's enlarge the head, water. What's that called?

JL: Oh, yes. Hydrocephalus, or something like that.

JM: That's right. And I remember seeing these kids kind of deformed. That was all startling for me. Got my sister been she was laying there. And it was almost like it was a sunbeam on her. And I just have this beautiful image in my mind of my sister.

JL: That's very sad.

JM: Yeah. Well, anyway, she ended up for the rest of her life being institutionalized. She spent a little time at Cambridge and a little time at Faribault. That was not good news for her, either. I think she was mishandled there. I know she had a broken nose, and she had a terrible swell. Anyway, she was physically, she was banged up by somebody, somewhere along the line. My mother and dad visited her all the time there. My mother would wear her waitress white outfit, but when she went to see Connie. So, that Connie would initially think she was a nurse. Because she didn't, she didn't know who anyone was.

JL: How long did she live?

JM: She just died a couple of years ago. And the last part of her life, in spite of her situation, was really pretty good. I mean, very comfortable for her. And all my kids got to meet her. She was in a nursing home up in Northholm, Minnesota. It was a regular nursing home with a ward in there for special cases. And that place, although, they closed down a special ward. And there were some people there that really liked my sister. So, they wanted to build four place group home. And they wanted to guarantee that Connie would be in one of the rooms. And it all worked out beautifully. And I think it worked under LSS-I've been involved in LSS too. And so far over the last 20 years or better, we would go up to see her. I think the first time we saw her up there on her way back, we found this resort that we thought was so nice. So, we started renting that resort almost the whole thing and had our whole family there. And we have five kids. And so, we would take over quite a few cabins. And then the kids had a chance to go into Northholm and meet Connie and so that really worked out great.

JL: Well, that's good. That's really good. Good. All right. Let's talk a little bit more than about schooling. And you had mentioned the schools a little bit where you went. Can you describe what it

was like going to school as a child? Because over time, things have changed. What was it like for you?

JM: Well, I think I'd have to say I liked going to school. I don't think I ever rebelled going to school, even using the Catholic or public school. And I had a lot of teachers I really liked.

JL: Anyone in particular?

JM: Well, I always mentioned Sister Constance because she was the one who taught us Latin for being altar boys, that kind of thing. And she was like, I don't know if you remember them, Bells of St Mary. Ingrid Bergman and Bing Crosby, you know. She reminded me of Ingrid Bergman coming out into the playground to play with the kids and all that. But when it gets to regular schools. I remember a lot of them. I don't think I had a big relationship with anyone that well.

JL: But it was a positive experience for you. It sounds like.

JM: I liked all my teachers. I don't think there was anybody I didn't like. But like you said, when I was in high school, I was pretty chintzy when it came to the classes. I took the easiest things I could and I was the first in the family to finish high school.

JL: You were the first in your family to finish high school. That's great.

JM: Yeah, neither one of my parents did. And then I was the oldest kid. And college, to go out and think about, even though I went in the Navy. That was after the Navy. Yeah.

JL: One of the things that people like to ask about is the school lunch hour, which has changed considerably over the years. Can you talk about what your experience was like with lunch and how that worked out at your school?

JM: Well, I never went through a lunch line. No, never. We didn't have. Well, in grade school, we always went home for lunch. We'd get up and have to walk all the way home, have lunch, and walk all the way back, which was a great experience. I got to listen to Cedric Adams. But then in high school. At that time, we had moved out to Cedar Street or to University. My brother and I, our normal things, we get up in the morning, we would make ourselves an egg sandwich. Just a fried egg and a couple of pieces of master bread, white bread. Wrap it in wax paper, whatever. And we could put it in our pocket because we never took books, and we never took books off of school. I don't think I ever did a minute of homework. All the way through high school. But then so at lunchtime we pulled out these egg sandwiches and by then they were about that thick because the white bread had kind of melted or whatever, and they were cold. That was our lunch. The only thing I spent money on that at school was they made a great ice cream sandwich that was about an inch thick. And a lot of times it was big vanilla things with butterscotch or something. My buddies and I would all buy one to see who got the most butterscotch. But I never had a lunch at a lunch counter. And they said they did have one too. But a lot of kids did. I never thought about it. I just thought it was because at my school, too. We have three lunch periods, I think at 11:30, 12:00 and 12:30 or something like that. And I think it worked out so that you'd get out for your lunch period and then you had some free time. Down in a gymnasium, they would have music playing on so kids could dance or whatever. So, we had dances every noon. Which was a very popular thing in high school. It was good. I did have a couple... I had a couple of moments in high school where I got involved in a couple fights. Which was kind of strange when I think about it. I mentioned that we had a variety of kids from the neighborhoods. I never saw a fight, or anything seriously go wrong between any different races. There was never any as far as I know, there was no racism involved at our school. Although I have to mention something. I was talking to a couple of ladies at our church which are

Black. And I was telling them this and I was trying to, you know, pretend that there was a real liberal guy had no racism in me and all that. And they said, in fact, I went to the school, we had black kids, all of those there. And I said, as far as I was concerned, they were doing the same thing and they were living in other places. They did the things they did or whatever, and I said their lives were as good as mine, as far as I could tell. And one of the ladies said to me, did you ever ask them? No, I guess I never really did, because they all lived over in Rondo and in that area. In the. But I was still good friends with several.

JL: Well, that's a perfect segue because for our final topic, what I was hoping you could explore a bit more would be issues like that, global or even local issues. Does anything else come to mind for you that your neighborhood dealt with? Or maybe what was going on during those times growing up for you?

JM: Well, my general feeling would be that it would have been a pretty liberal minded street. Although, I know it was during the war and Roosevelt was president for most of it. And he was doing all kinds of wonderful things for society. As far as I know. I know our family was benefiting from it. And I don't I don't recall anybody ever talking too much about politics. I know when Roosevelt died. My mom sobbed. And when the war was over, we were on the street celebrating. A lot of that going on. Excuse me. Yeah, I can't really speak too much of that. Everybody were good people, hardworking people. It was anybody on my block that I think was living on welfare or anything like that. If they were I didn't know about it. Because I think about my friends, all were working.

JL: And did people get the health care that they needed when they needed it?

JM: Health care. Yeah, I guess so. Part of our neighborhood was Bethesda Hospital. It's right there. And we were kind of closely related at the hospital because it was so close to us. And the boys were really excited about the fact that the nurse's office was right there, too, and all those pretty ladies were there. [Laughter] But my sister was born there. And two my grandkids now too. Now it's gone. They tore it down. Yeah, You know, I don't. I don't recall there being any problems with health issues. I mean, obviously people got sick, and people died over there. In my own family, other than my sister, we were pretty lucky in terms of health.

JL: That's good.

JM: Yeah. Measles or not measles, but tonsils taken out. Stuff like that. I don't know where that happened. All I know is they promised me ice cream.

JL: One of the issues perhaps a little earlier than when you were born was tuberculosis. Was that ever something that was an issue in your neighborhood at all?

JM: No, not that I know of. I think I remember. Being frightened by the thought of TB because of the iron lung. I think they earn like a lot of iron lung in my mind was such a terrifying thing to be trapped in. But I don't know anybody that was ever in it or ever had TB.

JL: That's good.

JM: Yeah.

JL: All right, well, this is the end of our interview, and your responses are. Yeah, your responses are invaluable. And I really appreciate that you took the time to do this today, so thank you so much.

JM: Can I tell you one more story?

JL: Yes, you can.

JM: Real quickly. When we lived on University, we lived upstairs of a guy that lived downstairs, had a shoe shop. And so upstairs we only had one bedroom. Everyone else also only had one bedroom. My brother and I always got it, we were lucky.

JL: Well, where did everybody else sleep?

JM: Well, my sister up on Cedar Street had kind of an alcove that she lived in. And my folks actually, we turned the living room into a bedroom. So, we did have one room, kind of the dining room for our living room. But when we were on University, my mother also had us involved and laundry day was always a busy Sunday or Monday, Saturday. And she had to do the laundry in the bathroom. She had a ringer kind of thing and said to use the bathroom for the rinsing and all that. So, she did that. Wash it and put it into a basket. And my brother and I, our responsibility was to take it upstairs into the attic and hang all the clothes. So that was, that was and we did the dishes every night too, anyway. Okay.

JL: As far as that goes, it sounds like your apartments were in homes. Is that correct, or were they in buildings?

JM: Well, apartments were usually in. Four six apartment buildings, four or six units. Industry was four. The one before that was three. Then the one on University was just one including or two, I guess one down in Minnesota. That was probably six or eight. When we moved in, I was just a little kid. We moved into the basement apartment first. I was just the baby and my mother hates bugs. So, she said, we got to go down there, and we moved up to like the third floor and then she would tell the story, but she'd go to the grocery store taking Tom and I with her and the little red wagon, and she'd get to the front door. And then she had to decide, do I take the groceries up first or take Tom up first or do I take Tim up first? She had to make that decision. Yeah, we all lived through it. So, I guess you must have made the right decisions.

JL: Well, thank you.