

Beth McAdams

Interviewed by: Sherry Boswell

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2nd Oral Interview

Seattle, Washington

Sherry: This is an interview recorded with Mrs. Beth McAdams, recorded on January 11th, 2001. The interviewer is Sherry Boswell for the Southwest Seattle Historical Society. And the interview is being conducted at Mrs. McAdams home in West Seattle.

Now tell me, we were talking about the mud hole, so tell me about the mud hole and where it was and how--

Beth McAdams: Well, the mud hole is in Lincoln Park and it's on that little, it's at the opposite end from where the ferry boat is, so that it would be towards the north end of Lincoln Park. It actually, if you were to enter it coming south off of Beach Drive, you'd walk along the water there, I mean you'd very shortly get to it. It was just a natural, sort of swampy I imagine, and also probably when the tide came in, the water came in. Whose idea it was to turn it into an old swimming hole, I honestly don't know. But that's what it became. They dug it out. And I think it was the City that must have done it. Dug it out. And put in a sluice, I guess you would call it, kind of a gate that would go up and down like that and they could let the water, when

the tide came in, it filled with salt water. And then when it was full, then they'd put the gate down and just kept the water in. It warmed up, it, just basking in the sun. And it was a wonderful place. It was very popular. This must have been in the mid-twenties, I would say, that it was there. And it was there all the way through my high school days and into the '30's. My children, were just barely remember it. So it must have been in their life time too. And I believe then it became the Olympic sized pool that's there now. And that was probably about '41 or '42 when it was built. But the mud hole, and of course, it's very lovely compared to what we had. Just old beat up shacks for dressing rooms. And probably the most we had were life guards that sat up in.

Sherry: Oh, there were life guards.

Beth McAdams: Yes, there were. Because I believe the City must have run it. And how far the Health Department tested it to see if it was healthy or not, we didn't ever come down with [laughs] any mad cow disease or horrible things. I think salt water in itself is rather cleansing. And it was muddy, that is to say, it was murky looking. But, to my knowledge, there were no accidents down there, or anything. We just played and swam all day long. There was a diving board and a shallow end and a deep end.

Sherry: Did they line it in anyway?

Beth McAdams: No. It had no lining, no nothing. It was a mud hole. And I don't know what basically the, someone with more knowledge than I could give you more specific details on it. You know how you are as a kid, it was just water. And the swimming was wonderful! [laughs] And I think I mentioned to you that at the same time as we had that, there was also the Coleman's who lived at the opposite end, clear down to what would be William's Point. They had their own swimming pool that was cement. Not beautiful blue tile, just plain old cement. But they used to let the neighborhood children in about once a week and that's where we swam. But I *think* possibly after the mud hole got going, the Coleman's didn't entertain us.

Sherry: Maybe that's why they decided ultimately to donate the pool. You know they figured--

Beth McAdams: I think that it is called the Coleman Pool, isn't it?

Sherry: It is called Coleman Pool.

Beth McAdams: So they must have paid for it, yes, uh-huh.

Sherry: Now, would you just go down by yourself? You parents felt comfortable with you going there?

Beth McAdams: Oh, yes, yes. A whole bunch of us went down there and we could be there all day. We'd book(?) our own towel and I think that we probably changed our clothes when we got down there. I don't know, if there were adults around, I

certainly wasn't looking for them [laughs]. We were just, we just swam and it was a gathering place. And I suppose there were boys that were smoking up in the woods [laughs]. I don't remember, but I think they did.

Sherry: So it was pretty much all wooded around?

Beth McAdams: It was very wooded around there, yes it was. You know, Lincoln Park, when I moved out there, wasn't a park originally. It was just a lovely great big expanse of wooded area, with probably paths through. It was all the trees and shrubbery and the blackberries. The little old kind of blackberries, tiny blackberries, that made the jelly. And it had, oh, ferns, and oh, it was just a beautiful place! So then, when it became a park, they made it into a lovely park. It kind of shocked me when I went down a few years ago to see how worn out it is. It has a very weary look to it. But you can't have hundreds of people coming through there all summer long and beating down the grass with their baseballs and their kids and everything. It does look worn.

Sherry: I think it's better--

Beth McAdams: Maybe to be used.

Sherry: I supposed it's better to be used.

Beth McAdams: Oh it is! Oh, oh, absolutely! When I looked at it and felt that sense of shock on it, then I had to reflect back to the fact, it

couldn't stay the same. It, the City hasn't had the money, I don't think, to keep up the parks. I thought the tables and benches have looked beat up and the picnic stoves and the things like that. But again, it has, it must be a lot of demand for it. In the summertime it's just a very busy place.

Sherry: Now, tell me, living in Fauntleroy as you were growing up, did you frequent the Alki beach area much or was that someplace that you would go either on your own or with your family?

Beth McAdams: I don't recall going there at all to speak of, because it would have meant from Fauntleroy you would have had to take a streetcar up California Avenue and probably clear to the Admiral District and then have transferred to the Alki, that would go down Admiral and be down the beach. Well, that would be a long way to go down and sit on the beach, when I had one in my own front yard, you might say. So, I don't recall, if we'd had cars and that. My own children grew up on Alki Beach, because we lived closer to it. And that was, anybody that was anybody, that's where you went to see what was happening. But, no, as a child, I don't recall going down to, my husband recalls taking that ferry boat that came from Seattle over to Alki and then you got off the ferry boat and took a kind of a trolley or whatever that went up Ferry Avenue and came into West Seattle. But, I didn't do that because, I think he did that in probably either 1919 or 1920. Or maybe even '18 or something like that. I don't remember.

Sherry: Did he do it to go to--

Beth McAdams: To town, to Seattle. That was one way of going to downtown Seattle. I think you had that West Seattle history book that gives you a good description of that.

Sherry: So, Luna Park wasn't a feature a lot of people that grew up--

Beth McAdams: A lot of people went to it. A lot of people. It was a fun place to go to. And sometimes the kids'd go there. I don't recall going there a lot. I know we did go there, I think probably with my parents and then probably with some of my friends. And it was always fun to go there. I can just remember going in that steamy place [laughs] and all those tanks, the ladies tank and the men's tank and the big tank for all the people and the one for the beginners. It was great! You know, quite different than what you see today. And there was slides and things like that. And it smelled. And I don't know what it smelled of, salt water, or, I don't know if they used chlorine in those years, they must have used *something* in those pools. I'm sure. And, one thing that might be kind of interesting in this history story. At one time, and this would have been, I believe in the late twenties, my sister trained to go on, they had some kind of a contest to swim from Alki, Duwamish Head, I believe, across the Bay, to oh, I guess it would be downtown Seattle. And it was, the fleet was in. There were *all* these, and it was something to do with that. And it was just a contest to see could win that. And she trained for it and my mother went along with her. They had to have their row boat and a young man rowed the boat and then mother was in there to rub her. I

remember rubbing her all over with grease and everything. But anyhow, she did she made it, she came in fourth. She did *not* come in first. But she came in number four. And she won a Jantzen bathing suit. It was the highlight of our whole year. But she got, she just barely made it. She just turned kind of blue with cold by the time she got there.

Sherry: No wet suits or anything like that back then.

Beth McAdams: *No!*

Sherry: She just had to do it on her own.

Beth McAdams: Yes, that's right. And I think that's why the grease. To keep their bodies. Yes. But, and I couldn't tell you who won it. But I do remember that we could hardly wait for the morning paper to come the next day. And it was the *P-I* and we rushed out and picked it up off the front porch and jumped in to bed together and opened it up to read about. We knew how, what she'd come in, but it was all written up and her picture was in the paper.

Sherry: Oh great! I was going to say, I bet we could find it in the paper. What year was that?

Beth McAdams: Well, I would want to say, [pause] she graduated from high school in 1928 and I think this was before she graduated. Must have bee '26, '27 something like that? 'Cause I'm sure she was not, she wasn't out of high school, she was still in

high school. She did have the paper, she's long gone, but, I think that exact date of it. But it would be in the *P-I* in their archives some place.

Sherry: Sure, yeah, you can get the old papers. It was probably during the whatever the --

Beth McAdams: It would be like our Sea Fair today, but what we called it in those years was, what on earth did they call it?

Sherry: Sea Days, or something? I kind of remember when--

Beth McAdams: Looking through other things, uh-huh. Well, I kind of forget what it was. But always the town was just *filled* with sailors. And you know how it was. You were a naughty girl if you went out with the sailors. And they said in this article that was written up about Nancy, that she waved to all the sailors. That she could have done better, but she stopped and waved to all the sailors! [laughs] 'Cause they were lined up on their boats watching these swimmers go by.

Sherry: Now, did Fauntleroy ever have its own sort of festivals or annual events of any kind?

Beth McAdams: Not that I know of, I don't recall anything like a farmer's day or a festival day or anything like that. No. I think as I've told you before, that your community affairs centered around the church. That's where all your activities were, really, between, not only just church activities, but the fact that the Y had a

branch there. And that they had this, what's it called, [pause] Mechanical Training? Or, where the boys would learn to do things with wood and stuff like that. And that really was what the activities were about. And of course, we had the school was there and you went to school until you were in the eighth grade. But I don't, I think the church did have some big picnics or something like that. But as a community, I don't recall ever seeing the people get together as a community. We had, in the Fauntleroy District, and I think I mentioned, we had a grocery store and a barber shop, and a real estate office and I think, a drug store. Whether there was a bakery, I don't remember. But the real estate man, Mr. Adams, was quite active. And he, somehow or another, some paving put in at one time, earlier than other places. So we had a place to skate on. Real estate was very slow in those years. It was very, very slow. 'Cause this was well it was after World War I and things were very slow in America, at that time. It wasn't very good. And people depended on their vegetable gardens [laughs] and whatnot.

Sherry: You mentioned too, though, that as a family you'd make trips on occasion to Seattle. I think we talked briefly about Woodland Park. So, tell me a little bit more about that. Was that a big event to go to Seattle?

Beth McAdams: Oh yes, absolutely. Oh yes. It was a big event. You had to transfer and go into town and then transfer to the streetcar that would take you out to Woodland Park. Only you didn't really think anything about it, because that's what you did.

Woodland Park, of course, is much smaller then than it is now. And animals were not as well taken care of as they are now. But yes, *many* times we would stroll down there and look at the bears. I don't think we had a giraffe, or anything like that. We had a lot of bears. What else would they have had in animals at that time? Elephants, and they had elephants, and oh, the monkeys. Oh, the monkeys, we had *lots* of those. [laughs] And always the ducks and the chickens, and, you know, the fowl. They since have had buffalo out there, but I don't know that I can remember them as a child. But it was a wonderful place for a Sunday afternoon for a family to go. I think *many* people did that. Just from all over. You could your picnic basket lunch. Of course there was always, I think if we could buy a hot dog, that was heaven! [laughs] Oh, and I don't know if they did it that way, I guess it was the circus where you got the spun sugar. But they also had ice cream out there at the little stands along the way.

Sherry:

Now, were there other similar kinds of Sunday or Holiday events like that in Seattle that you'd go to?

Beth McAdams: Well, I think the thing I remember the most is going to parades downtown. And there was one huge parade that we went to. There were two that I remember very well. I do remember the animals going through the streets of Seattle. I want to say the Knights of Columbus or the, it may have been some kind of a Masonic Order that had this parade. And there were horses and there were animals and then there were all kinds of, and there was the music and everything. And /

thought *that* was pure heaven. And then the other things, there was a parade, they weren't Seattle parades, as I recall, like what we have with our Sea Fair now. But they were parades and they were pretty showy.

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But the other thing my parents took me to was the Pantages Theatre downtown. And they had all kinds of stage shows in those days. I always remember the year that they, I think called them pygmies. They were the little people. I suppose it was advertised and Dad would talk about them, we're gonna go see them. And it was *just* fascinating. All those little people. And tumbling acts that they did. I wish I could describe it, all I can say is that I can remember looking forward to it and *not* being disappointed. It was every bit as, you know, it was a child's dream! [laughs] And we did not think, we weren't making fun of them, as being little people. Although, I couldn't understand how a grown man could only be so tall. It was just fascinating to watch them. [laughs]

And then, later on, I think this too, was at the Pantages, they had a series of Shakespearean plays. And Mother, being English, was very much into that. And I got dragged to at least two or three Shakespearean. Which was, actually, I liked it. It was very good. I think it was the *Merchant of Venice*, not *Romeo and Juliet*, but a couple of others of the Shakespeareans.

Sherry:

Were there any movie theaters in West Seattle at the time?

Beth McAdams: Yes, I think there were. There was a movie theater at the main Junction in West Seattle at California and Alaska. I forget, we were talking about the other day, I forget the name of that one, but it was, I think, the Apollo might have been the name of it. I never went to it. If my father took us to a movie he took us downtown to the Liberty Theater. And that was on First Avenue. I forget what it is now, but it was right on First Avenue near Pine Street. It was one of the nicer theaters in town. And he took us there. There was also a theatre at Admiral that was called the Portola(?) and then [pause] in probably the twenties, they built the Grenada Theatre, which, of course is gone now. But it was a Spanish style theatre with loges in the back that as soon as the lights went out and the movie started those who had, even if you didn't had, you had to pay extra for the loge. You just sneaked in back and sat in the loge. And they had an organ. *That* was the place to go, and that was when I was in high school that we were going to that. So there was that kind of entertainment. I think they did have a few films that they showed up at the Fauntleroy gymnasium. That would have been black and white and it would have been silent. Because they didn't have the talking shows on. And I can remember hearing the very first talking show that came out which was, oh, that famous singer.

Sherry: Al Jolson?

Beth McAdams: Al Jolson, Al Jolson was the one. And it was down at the Blue Mouth(?) downtown and I went with a girlfriend. The Blue Mouth(?) was not a big theatre but it was on Fifth Avenue and

I think it's long gone, I'm sure. But it was a wonderful movie and he sang through the whole thing and talked. I remember definitely coming out and saying, "Well, that's okay, but they're not going to keep up that. They can't talk that good." I really believed that, you know, that we wouldn't still have a narrative on the screen. We wouldn't have to listen to these awful voices! Because the sound systems weren't perfected and voices were not that good. And it was hard to get used to. But I think from then on, most of the movies were equipped with sound.

Sherry: So, you really thought it wasn't going to--

Beth McAdams: I was very naive. I was a very naive child. [laughs] No. It was. And after a while of course, then you forget, how did you ever watch a black and white movie with no. The only thing you had in the way of sound was when the organ would, "Hi-ho Silver" and then galloped along and you could hear them. [laughs] Do you happen to remember the radio shows or was that, you're too young for that.

Sherry: No, I don't directly remember them.

Beth McAdams: Like, "One Man's Family" and--

Sherry: No, I remember discussion about, when I was growing up, that radio was no longer important and, I mean a lot of those had sort of gone by the way side.

Beth McAdams: Well, television changed that. It changed the whole thing. But that was, actually I was married. We had, the first thing we bought when we had a few extra pennies was a Silver Tone Sears radio. Sunday evenings we sat and listened to the shows. It was certainly better than going to a movie theatre. And you just imagined. You used your, I could just see the whole thing. I suppose there was some good in that. But then, on the other hand, there's an awful lot of good in the narratives that they show us, now. The educational ones.

Sherry: Well, I'm not a great movie fan, particularly, but I certainly appreciate that. I know what you're saying. There's nothing wrong with using your imagination.

Beth McAdams: Well, I think that's one of the things my generation feels very fortunate about, is that we were born before, cars were here when I was born, so were airplanes, but they weren't developed. Nor were telephones or all those things. We've watched all of those things come through our lives and go from very humble beginnings into very much part of our life. And who could have, *no one* could have convinced me that I'd ever be in a plane and fly across the ocean to another land. I could *never* have thought that I would ever do that. So I think our generation, maybe all generations think that, but I think we have been especially blessed with what the Twentieth Century gave us. It really was quite remarkable.

Sherry: Yes. I would think it fairly clear that there have been more changes in the way people live probably in the last even eighty years than there have been in any other--

Beth McAdams: In any other, I think I've read that. That the changes have been so rapid. Of course, you're coming along even more so now. They're so high tech now. And of course, even little grade school children can sit and play on the computer. They're not waiting until they grow up to discover all this. It's there, so it's not *new* to them. Where everything that came to *us* was new. When I was in grade school, was when they found the tomb for King Tut in Egypt. And it just hit the papers, oh, my, all over. And I teased and begged and begged until I got a pair of sandals that had straps that would lace around, you know, like an Egyptian sandal. They were horribly uncomfortable. But I managed to get [laughs]. And it was things like that that we had that were, then I guess girls today have to dress like Madonna.

Sherry: Sure. That's interesting. So that King Tut had such an impact that it actually filtered out to a variety of things.

Beth McAdams: Oh it did, yes. And it seemed so remarkable to us to think of this tomb. I didn't fully understand it, but how old it was. And then, years and years later, when the display came to Seattle and I did go out to see it. I have *never* seen anything that was more overpowering. It's just absolutely unbelievable, what they had there. And I appreciated it more, because I wasn't I looking at sandals, [laughs] I was looking at the jewelry, at the

hand work, the carving. It was very, very remarkable people. Just very remarkable.

Sherry: Now, we've talked a lot about your growing up experiences, a little bit about high school. But tell me a little bit more. I know you went to West Seattle High School and the transition to that and anything particularly stick out that was unusual or different about West Seattle High School.

Beth McAdams: Well I suppose as a turning point in my life, as it is in most children's life, to go from grade school into high school . Especially since I only ever went to, one grade school. And I went first grade to eighth grade. I started in the third grade there, but nevertheless it was the only school that I knew that I went to. So that when we reached, I can remember when we were in the eighth grade, they brought us all these forms to fill out before we were to enter high school. And having to decide what we were going to take when we went to school. And whether it would be a college prep or business or whatever it was going to be.

And then the big transition of course, was walking in that huge building. Compared to our little grade school. And I was personally *terrified* and *knew* I was going to be lost and never found again. [laughs] But I had a friend that was more courageous than I and I made her promise that she'd walk down the hallway to me where I had to go to Geometry and I had to go up the stairs and it was right there. But when I got through she'd been down the stairs, *meeting* me when I got down there to the next class so that I wouldn't get lost. But it

didn't take long to get over that, it really didn't take long to get over that.

And of course, there were men teachers, which I'd never had a man teacher before. And I think we had left ink wells behind by that time and gotten into fountain pens. And then we had the school assemblies. And of course, there you have a huge number of youngsters from all over West Seattle. And I actually left behind many of the friends I'd had in grade school. Because if you didn't have the same courses they had, or you were taking something else or there was more than one room for Algebra I and so forth, you ended up in a room with nobody that you knew. So I did get to know people from, actually, from the Gatewood area, a lot of them that I got to know.

West Seattle High School was a nice high school in those years. I started in 19-- [pause] I think the winter of '27. And it was built in 1917 so it was only about ten years old, when I went there. And now, of course, it's being torn down. But it was a nice school and we had a nice principal. And I, like everybody, I joined the Fairy Godmother's and the Big Sister's and there were two or three organizations. The Stage Crew, that was my favorite. You know, the ones that opened the curtains when they were going to have a [tape stops].

[End Tape One, Side One]

Sherry: So, they had almost like a club for people who wanted to help with-

Beth McAdams: Yes, it was like an organization. And we had, I think is rather unique. That we had Mr. Hanniford(?) for our advisor. Mr. Hanniford was new to West Seattle when I came in the first fall, not that first half a year. And he was fresh out of Normal School, young man, I would dare say Mr. Hanniford couldn't have been more than twenty-two or twenty-three years old. And he was good looking and *all* the girls just adored him. Maybe that's why I joined the Stage Crew. [laughs] I don't remember. I don't think it was, no, I don't think it was. But anyway, he was our advisor and with us all the way through high school. And with us for years afterwards. Our little Stage Crew group got together as long as we could. In fact, up to probably twenty years ago. Yes. And he wasn't always able to come to our reunions, but he ended up, that was the *only* high school that man ever taught in and he ended up to be the principal when my children went to high school. He was Pop Hanniford to me, Mr. Hanniford to others. And he was their principal where he had been my very good friend. Yes. I think it's really unique to have lived a place and get to know somebody that well. And years later when we had a gathering, this is the time by we're all married and all of our children are grown and I think had grandchildren when we got together with him. And of course, he did get married to his college sweetheart and he did have three children, but not while we were in school. Because he couldn't afford to. You know teachers in those years didn't make a lot of money. But he made school very interesting for us. And that was the one organization that, we used to

have parties, too. There were Stage Crew parties, but it didn't have anything to do with the Stage Crew, it was just a party. [laughs]

Sherry: Now, you mentioned also the Fairy Godmothers, what was that? I never heard of that.

Beth McAdams: The Fairy Godmothers, oh, they must have had a purpose. What did they do? I think they might have made things. I think probably we got together to do things for people in need. But not that I remember much, doing much for, it. You know, it was difficult when you have children from all over West Seattle and if you had a meeting and you were in the school, well then everybody had to, you broke up and went your own ways. Well, we did have a meeting once at some advisor's house and that was a big thrill to be able to go to a teacher's house and see where she lives. But I have to confess I think probably my heart and soul was not on doing good in the world, but getting acquainted and having fun! I don't think I was alone I that. [laughs] But there were people, there were girls that, who I always set up as my heroines or whatever, that would you know, they'd get to be elected most popular girl in the class and president of this and vice president of that. And they were very clever and very capable and I thought it was, I admired them. But I never aspired to be one.

Sherry: Now, what about academically? Did you find that, generally speaking, the West Seattle tried to steer its students to

college at all or was there a real difference between male and females in terms of the expectations of the students as they made their way through high school and beyond?

Beth McAdams: As far as college was concerned, I think that they were oriented towards steering children towards college. And I took a college prep course. I wanted to go there, and so did most of my friends. But not everybody got to go because of, you know, the economics of the time. But many did go and many didn't go right away, but they worked a year or two and then they went to college. So college was very much a part of the picture. And it was known then, even as it is today, that college was a necessity for success in life.

A teacher, being a teacher, was one of the highlights, or I don't mean highlights, but it was high on the list of jobs to look for. And of course, in those years, you would go two years to Normal and you could teach in the grade schools. And I had some friends that did that, many friends that did that, and ended up going onto college and becoming high school teachers. And as far as the difference between boys and girls and boys doing things that girls didn't, I'm sure that it was that way, that I have no doubt. But because it was so taken for granted, I didn't give it much thought. All I do remember is that a teacher could not teach if she was married. A *man* could be married and teach and have a wife. But a teacher who was married, even if they had no children, she couldn't do that. They couldn't have two incomes in one family. I think the reason for that was the economics then, because there were so few jobs, that they

tried to keep the jobs for married men, if they needed them, or for people, for single people. Now, if you were a widow, then I dare say you could, but all my teachers were Miss. And a few of them did go out and get married but they were all Miss in those years. And as far as what the boys were headed for, I think college was the same for them as it was for the girls. And it was, sports were all, girls were in sports too, depending upon what kind. I don't remember a girl's baseball team, but they were in, well, tennis, and [pause] some kind of hockey that they played.

Sherry: Field hockey?

Beth McAdams: That was it. That must have been it. Because I was not the very, I couldn't throw a ball very far. I never turned out for any of the sports. But many, many people did. And of course, we all wore our black bloomers and, well, I think we got into shorts that year I went. And I had a zipper my first zipper. And I thought that was the, I suppose the shorts came down to my knees. They were wonderful. Because before that the gym teachers wore, kind of navy blue or black pleated bloomers. And white middies and tights(?). That's the way it was. And there was the girls gym and the boys gym. I'm told, I did not know this at the time, that the boys used the girls gym sometimes after school when they couldn't get in the boys gym, because some other sport activity, so they'd send them up to the girls' gym to do their practicing. When there were two or three activities going on at one time.

But, school was, I *liked* school, I really liked it. And, I had the funniest feeling, but I have a feeling that it's not any different today. When you graduate from high school, you are faced, for the first time in your life, "What am I going to do?" Maybe you know. But, many don't. And it was, I remember thinking that summer, between, after graduation and going to business college, "What am I going to do? I *have* to do something. I have to earn a living." And that was very much on my mind.

Sherry: Did you have certain dreams, what you thought you wanted to do? What would have been your ideal goal at that time.

Beth McAdams: I did have dreams, yes, I think everybody has dreams. I was going to be a reporter, I was going to be a journalist. That was always the highlight of my, and I did work on the high school paper, for a year or two. I think I went out and sold advertising. And oh, and I worked on *Head Lights*, I got to do a few *Head Lights*. But I never, I don't think as far as my writing was concerned, I don't know that I ever got an article in the school. I waited until I was in my fifties and went back to that same high school in the evening and took creative writing. And I enjoyed that very, very much. But that was my dream as a young person. But the business part of it, doing the typing and shorthand, that and being a secretary, that also sort of didn't sound bad to me at all.

Sherry: So, when you graduated, what brought about that decision then?

Beth McAdams: To go--

Sherry: To go to business school.

Beth McAdams: My mother, actually, had some influence on that, because she talked with some friend of hers who had a daughter that didn't belong to West Seattle but, that had a daughter my age and was going through business college. She had that four hundred dollars, you paid it down all at one time, you get six months of business college. And that was down in downtown Seattle and, on Fifth and Pike, across from where the old Coliseum Theater was, called The Seattle Secretarial School. There were two or three business, there was the Griffiths Business College and I don't know, there was other ones. But she happened to hear about it and so I had almost exactly a hundred dollars in my school bank account and we took that out and paid a hundred dollars and from then on I got up in the morning. I *did* go with two other girls from West Seattle and we took the streetcar down and every once in a while we skipped school and went to a movie. But not very often, not very often. [laughs] And one girl quit before her time was over and went back to Michigan to relatives that lived way in the forest, like in a ranger's station. And they had two little children who needed tutoring. And here was Mary, with, eighteen years old Mary, going back there to be their teacher. Because you could do that in those years. She got books and papers and all the things that she needed and packed her trunk and

went back there for a year and taught school to little. She never came back to business college.

But, I finished my six months and pounded the pavement for a couple of weeks looking for jobs and couldn't bear not having anything to do. So I went *back* to business college with the understanding when I found a job, I'd pay the balance of my tuition. So, that's what I did and it turned out that I got a job in the same building as the school was. It was a new little life insurance company from Spokane and they had moved over and opened a new office in that building. And they just, when they got ready to hire people went up to the secretarial school and goodness, sixty dollars a month was a fortune. That's what I went to work earning, my sixty dollars a month.

Sherry: And did you continue to live at home while you were working?

Beth McAdams: Yes. I did, uh-huh. Oh, yes, I lived at home. I gave my mother twenty dollars a month for her and that left me forty and I bought carfare and carried my lunch. Bought my own clothes. Somehow, well, five dollars went a long way. And I saved money, too. Because I'd learned a lesson about saving while I was in grade school. So I had saved a little money and in 1932, I think it was '32, when the banks all closed. And this was, you know, a terrible thing that was happening. And I was working for the cashier at the insurance company. And she whispered in my ear, "Beth, the banks are closing. And if you have any money in

Washington Mutual, you can leave now. They'll let you off to go get your money."

So, I just popped out of there, as fast as I could and walked down to the Washington Mutual. And it was just jammed with people so close together that you could hardly, you couldn't *move*. And all the tellers windows were open and they were lined up, but I don't know, you could hardly tell where the line began. And some men would keep saying, "Now, don't worry. Your money is all right. The money will be here tomorrow." And he kept emphasizing this. And I'm standing there, and I'm thinking, as I told you, I was naive, and I was more or less looked on as a Pollyanna attitude. I said, "Oh, for goodness sake, this is nonsense. My money's still gonna be there, I'm not going to stand in line." I went back to work. And I didn't. I suppose at the most I might have had fifty dollars in the bank, I don't know what it was. And my money was all right. They closed the doors for a little while but then they opened the doors. But it was in my belief that when you put money in the bank, it's there for you! [laughs]

That was one of my memories of those bad years, and it was shortly after that that Roosevelt came into the presidency that he put in this NRA, the National Relief Agency, I think. And this out of my sixty dollars a month, I had to pay, and I will say, a dollar, maybe a dollar and sixty cents a month out of my little, that was, I remember thinking to myself, "How can they do that? How can they take that money away from me?" It must have gone into a relief fund that was through the country and there were *bread* lines,

there were people that were *starving*. And I'm sure that it, but from my point of view, with as little as I had, I thought, "Well, there must be somebody had more money than I do, [laughs] to take their money away from."

Sherry: What about around Seattle? Was it your sense that there were a lot of people who were experiencing problems?

Beth McAdams: Yes there were. Oh yes, there was a lot of it. They had a Hooverville and that was because of living in West Seattle and going home on the trolleys at night and seeing the Hooverville from above on the, not viaduct, but the trestle. There was just shacks. I don't know how many hundreds of them, just crowded in there on the flats, on the water front.

Sherry: Sort of now where the Port is, the Port of Seattle, in that area?

Beth McAdams: Yes, in that area. I'd say from oh, I don't know just where it was, but it'd be south of Yesler Street but beyond that. Yes, where all those big ships are. And what they did is, they'd picked up whatever scrap lumber, whatever tar paper, whatever bit of anything and they'd build themselves a shack. And then it probably have a tin barrel or something for a fire and cook their soup or do whatever they could over that. And I'm *sure* there were people that were hungry. They must have been. I mean it was a *filthy* place, there was no sanitation there. I don't know what they did for, you

know, it was pretty bad.

Sherry:

Now, what about in West Seattle? Was it apparent to you that there were either families or individuals who had, say, lost their jobs?

Beth McAdams: Yes, there were people who were. When we first for married, we didn't have very much. But we never had to go to a bread line, we never were hungry, we didn't do anything like that. But we knew what it meant not to have two nickels to rub together. In other words, we were very, very careful with our money. And I remember one winter, when I got holes in the bottom of my shoes. And I remember going to the ten cent store and buying these ten cent little insoles that you put in, so I wouldn't get wet when I walked around the. And I remember the lining in my coat one year one out. And it was ragged and I thought, "I don't like this." So I just cut it out, didn't have any lining in my coat. laughs] But I was never cold, or never hungry, or never, there was always a nice home to go home to. So I can't, and I don't think I knew anybody that was in the bread lines. There probably were people.

Sherry:

I know your parents loved their gardens and everything anyway, so did, I know that some people you know, began to use gardens instead of buying things, and things like that. But did you see your parent's lifestyle change at all during that period?

Beth McAdams: Not a great deal. My father always had a job all the way through those years. They were hard pressed because they had had, because mother had had some very serious illness and they had had to borrow money from his company to pay the hospital bills. And once you get behind in something like that, and they weren't making a great deal anyhow, they were *a/ways* behind. And in our household, Mother had this expression, where she picked it up, Daddy'd come home and she'd say "Did the ghost walk?" and he'd say, "Yes." And she was saying "Did you get paid today?" [laughs] I don't know where she, but that was her expression. And he would come home sometimes and he would have a box of chocolates and maybe he'd been to the Market and he had all these things that we had, so that when they *did* have it, they spent it on very good food. And then when it got down to the end of the month where the "Ghost hadn't walked." [laughs]

Of course, they did in the summer, they always had the fresh vegetables and Mother had the chickens on Sunday. We had many a fried chicken dinner. So there was *a/ways* food on our table. My mother was a rather extravagant cook. I think part of that was her English background. And I think she came from a fairly large family in the old country and I think she just didn't *know* how to cook. 'Cause when she bought beef, she didn't buy a pot roast, she bought a big *beautiful* beef roast. And I kinda grew up wanting to do the same thing, but I couldn't.

Sherry: Was your job ever in jeopardy?

Beth McAdams: No. My job wasn't, because you see, I got it in 1931 and I quit in 1934. And from the time that Roosevelt came in, he did all that he could. And I didn't approve of him at the time, but I look back and I think what he did was right. Because he did all that he did to help the poor people. You don't remember, you couldn't, but there were so many people that were living on poverty row. So they had the CCC's for the young men to go off to. And their, all their work is all the way even through Lincoln Park, they built some of the sea walls that are there. And the trails that are there. And then, they also had, I don't know what category this came, you could get schooling through, like, not mail order, but you could send away for the lessons for all kinds of things. It could be writing, 'cause I remember I tried taking up my creative writing then. I was married by that time and still, had a couple of children and thought, "Well, I'll just take advantage of this." And I had fun doing it. And I think they even take piano lessons. What they were doing was paying teachers to send this out to people. You wrote in for these lessons and it didn't cost you anything. But the teachers were getting paid, who provided this. It gave *them* a job. It gave them a job.

Sherry: It was another one of the sort of New Deal programs.

Beth McAdams: Yes it was. It may be through the NRA that came. They had so many initial things in those days. [laughs] But, yeah, and I, well, I think I may have had some classes. I believe they

did because I think I went up to that Gatewood Grade School and took a class in something. I forget now, what it was. But, I think I've forgotten more than I remember.

Sherry:

I realize that there was one other thing I want to ask you about. And sort of transition from high school to going to business college, and that was because it fascinated me that you could graduate early when you were in high school. Were there requirements that you had to leave early?

Beth McAdams:

The requirement was thirty-two credits, which I think is the same today, I don't know. And as long as you have the thirty-two credits, you could have graduated in three years. I had a friend who went out at sixteen. I was just *barely* seventeen when I got out. And it's just that you had to have. And I just simply took five subjects all the way through and that meant giving up one study hall. Well, see you took four subjects and had two study halls. And one of those study halls went to gym twice a week, or whatever it was. So that when I gave up my one study hall and went to gym also, I went to gym because I didn't mind it. And also, they had showers in that gymnasium and I didn't have a shower at home. And I *loved* that shower! Every other girl I know would whisk in and out there and didn't bother to get wet. I loved it! I never would have admitted that when I was going to school, but I basically, in my heart, that's part, I liked it! [laughs] But the credits that you get, I think 'cause it's only twice a week, you don't get a whole credit, it takes, maybe

you get a half a credit? So part of my thirty-two credits was what I had from gymnasium. But, anybody could do that. And I was by far, not, there were many of my friends that started school with me and graduated at the same time I did.

Sherry: So, it wasn't really a Depression related circumstance that people would graduate early?

Beth McAdams: No, no it was not. they abandoned that mid-term. It was really because of the awkwardness of being a mid-termer. You were neither a freshman or a sophomore. You were always, you had to be a freshman almost for a whole year before, you had to decide what class you were going to be in. Eventually, as I say, they abandoned that, letting people start in the middle of the year. If your birthday came in January, you started in September and that's the way it is today. No, it didn't have anything to do with the Depression.

Sherry: Now, tell me about how you met your husband.

Beth McAdams: Well, I didn't meet him until I got out of high school. That's what seems so funny 'cause we went all the way through high school together. Then, I had gone to business college, with this girlfriend that I mentioned, and she was going at the same time. And she had a boyfriend. And I didn't. And she, I was suffering from a broken heart, a terrible broken heart. [laughs] One of the Stage Crew. But anyway, she said, there was a dance going some place and they asked

him if he'd like to be my date. And he went home and looked me up in his year book, I think I told you that, decided I was okay. That's how we met. We went together for about three years and got married and stayed married, we have been married, I'm not quite, almost fifty-eight years when he died. So we had a *long* time, a long blind date!
[laughs]

Sherry: Just tell me a little bit about his growing up, 'cause he also grew up in West Seattle.

Beth McAdams: I guess he was actually born, his parent were living right over here, near the Kenney Home, there. Well, he was an only child of parents that were probably pretty close to forty when they got married. And I'm most sure they assumed they couldn't have a child, because his mother told me they were quite delighted when he was born. But his father died when he was only six years old. So that meant that he was raised by a widowed mother and no other children. But she didn't, she had a little money, not much. She was very careful. She was far more frugal than my mother, which I had to deal with. When we did get married we lived with his mother, she never lived alone. I *thought* when we got married, very shortly, we would be alone and she would be alone. But it took three years for me one day to say, "Oh, that's not what's gonna happen." [laughs] But it wasn't a bad relationship.

But, to get back to him, he went to Gatewood School and then he went to high school. But he did not finish in three

and a half years, like boys are. He took that other, and graduated at mid-term. And then after he graduated, I think he took the Spring Term out at the UW. It was his mother's dream that he would go to college. And he just went that one half year. And then, really she didn't have the money to send him to school. So, he went to work. He worked at the library.

Sherry: At UW?

Beth McAdams: No, downtown library. That's where we used to sit and hold hands. Of course, it's not there anymore. There was a *lawn* in back of the old library. And on the sunny days, when I was working, this was before we were married. And I was working and he was working in the library, we could go up and sit together on the lawn by the library. [laughs]

Sherry: Well, that's nice.

Beth McAdams: Yes, it was nice. But he was active in De Malay(?) and I was active in the Rainbow Girls, or so I think I told you, our Masonic Order. And that was really a lot of our social life in those years was dances that they had and picnics that they had. And that was a lot of our friends. But having *stayed* in West Seattle all of his life and most of mine, we kept people, friends from way back. It's only recently, at this age [tape stops]

[End Tape One, Side Two.]

Sherry:

This is Tape Two in an interview with Mrs. McAdams on January 11th, 2001.

Did he continue in the library?

Beth McAdams:

No, no he didn't. He took, he looked desperately for better jobs and eventually he took a test, a civil service test for the Post Office. And my husband had a really sharp brain, if I do say so. He came out very high on the test. And we were thrilled to death when he was hired as a temp, as a sub, to begin with. But it very quickly worked into permanent employment. And I think he probably was averaging about two hundred dollars a month, which was a fortune! It was just a fortune. And so we thought we were doing very well. And I think it was 1936 and he was twenty-three years old. The War came along in '41, and of course, that hurried the picture up, because people were off to war, and the ones that were left, were the ones that eventually got chosen for supervisory positions. So he did get a supervisory position when he was very young and sort of worked his way up to a good position. But he *liked* his job. He was a clerk when he originally started on the floor of the Post Office, sorting mail, and so forth. And then he went into being a clerk on a window, and eventually into being the supervisor in a station. He did that for, and he ended up in Public Relations, he was Superintendent, but I don't remember the title now. But he did enjoy his, it is a totally different picture today. You know, you had such pride in your jobs. And then when the

picture began to roll over and they mechanized things, and they put in all kinds of changes, people lost [pause] their, they lost their connection with what they were doing they didn't have the pride in it because it didn't make any difference. I think that's kind of, I saw it, and especially in the schools. When they started allowing the schools to go wherever they wanted to go, when students from West Seattle went to Cleveland and Cleveland, well where is your, what is the word that I need for that, loyalty, where do you belong? You live in West Seattle and West Seattle's the only high school you'd think of going to! Well, but then you go to Cleveland or you go to Ballard or you go to Lincoln, but that's not where you *live*! So it's not the same feeling. And it happened that way in business in a way, too. Some of the.

But, no he liked his job. He retired very young, he was only fifty-eight when he retired. And had twenty years of a very good retirement. And that was nice.

Sherry: Did you like your job as much? Would you say, looking back, that you enjoyed your job, too?

Beth McAdams: No. I don't think I liked it. But I was just so happy to have a job. That at that particular age of my life, I don't think I stopped to analyze it. If I had gone on in that job, but I suppose I basically knew I was slated for marriage, and being a house wife and a mother. Which is not a very, it's just nothing girls, just thought that's the way it was. So we didn't really feel of ourselves as being the wage earner or

the big, you know, growing up into being into management. I am *sure* there are girls that did. I'm *sure* there were. And they did that, too. But, I did not think of it that way. Where for a man, it was important for him to do, at least to do something that he liked. What I do think, because jobs were so scarce, that most men did hang onto their jobs, even if they didn't like them. But, now, that has changed and maybe that's good. Maybe that's maybe you should not have to work with poverty breathing down your shoulder. Better to be able to look for something else.

Sherry: Did you work until you had kids?

Beth McAdams: Yes, uh-huh. And then I quit when the first one was born and in those years, you didn't think of going back. And I remember going down one time and taking one of my fat little babies down to show all the girls in the office my baby and everybody admiring it and probably thinking, "Oh, that poor girl, she's stuck at home with this." But I felt sorry for them! [laughs] I was perfectly happy.

Sherry: Did you ever consider living anywhere else but West Seattle?

Beth McAdams: I don't think that we did consider that, I really don't. I think that was never in our mind. There was never any other area in Seattle that I was familiar with nor was my husband. And everything we knew was right here, and everything we

wanted was right here. And I know that people that didn't live in West Seattle thought that we were isolated out here. And "Why would you want to live in West Seattle, what's there?" But the picture changed as cars became more popular. And now look at us. Here we are, we're only ten minutes from downtown Seattle. If we could just get rid of the traffic on the street!

Sherry: During those years, your early married life, so you lived all the time with his mother?

Beth McAdams: Yes, we did. For seventeen years, we lived together. We lived down here near Lincoln Park for about seven years and then in 1941, without knowing a war was about to come, we bought a house up in the Admiral District. And, of course, we bought it and moved in in March and in December the War had started. And I *did* go back to work in those years for a while. Because the children were in school, the two girls were in school, I didn't have any others. And it was *necessary*, they were *needing* people. And my husband was not called into the Service. He stayed in the Post Office the whole time. But I did go to work. My mother-in-law, was, became ill, after I had worked for less than a year for a bank. And so, I had to stay home. And when I went *back* to work when she got, I thought I could never go full time to work, because she was not strong enough. And I took a Post Office job, right in West Seattle and I worked just part time. I was home in the morning and went to work in the afternoon. And *he* got home before *I* did,

so that he worked at the Post Office, too. But he went early in the morning and I went in the afternoon. So it worked out that we did that, and I worked there 'til the War ended. At which time a, well by the time the War ended, he was on his way. And just, Terry was born November 26th, in 1945. So he's a baby boomer, I guess, or whatever they call it.
[laughs]

Sherry: So now, how many, you had--

Beth McAdams: Four children.

Sherry: Four children.

Beth McAdams: Yeah, we didn't plan on that next one that came along. We had another on in '48, so then, we had two boys and two girls. And, not the most perfect arrangements for having a family, but I don't think, it's had some plusses to it. I've always had somebody young around. Except I thought I'd never get through taking kids to school. [Laughs]

Sherry: Now, tell me about bringing them up in West Seattle. What were some of the, were there anything that stands out than being a real difference than when you grew up here? Either they enjoyed or--?

Beth McAdams: They enjoyed West Seattle. None of my children stayed in West Seattle as we did. So they have a different, but they did much of the same things that we did while growing up.

As soon as you were a teen ager and can go to the show on Saturday, that's the thing to do. And, of course, by that time, they were teenagers, the pool at Lincoln Park was there. And that was the place to go even though they had to go clear from Admiral Way. Peg was telling me the other day, that they used to walk one way and ride the other to save their money to buy... something. Something to eat, I guess. But the girls--

Sherry: So, they'd walk all the way from Admiral Way?

Beth McAdams: Yes they did. I didn't, it seems like a *terribly* long distance. From here right where I am to the Junction is about a mile. So, and then from the Junction. It was a good two miles, maybe a little more than that. But you see, there were a whole bunch of them, all walking together. It must have been fun. [laughs] Time goes by quickly. So that was one of the things that they did. They went to the dances at the Y, which was not there when we were growing up. But my husband had worked at the Y when he worked for Normandy Brewers(?). Many years when the Y was active here in West Seattle. This I think was his mother's idea, that because, being a widow, she thought that he would learn all that he needed to know about being a boy and growing up at the Y. And it wasn't a bad idea. He and he, eventually, he spent most of his summers up on Orcas Island in their camp, the Y camp there. And he went as a counselor. So, when our boys got old enough, and one of our boys went up there that was a real high light for him. He was so tickled

to have his son, kind of follow in his footsteps. I always remember Terry came home from his ten days up there at Orcas Island with all his dirty underwear and his, and he said, "Oh, Dad, they told us this ghost story," he said,

"They built this big fire and we all sat around there." And he started to tell his dad, and his dad was sitting there nodding his head. He said, "Uh-huh. They told us that when we went there!" So, the girls went to Scouts and Jan went to the Brownies camp and Peggy went to the Girl Scouts over on Hood Canal, I think. And she was there when the War ended in '45. And, of course, we didn't have any gas in those days, you couldn't get it. And the War ended and we bought gas and went up to camp to see Peg. And she told us they'd given her liver for supper and she couldn't stand it. [laughs]

Sherry: Did she want you to bring her home?

Beth McAdams: I don't think she really did like camp too well. I think she only went that one year.

Sherry: Was Admiral, kind of comparing it to your own childhood, was Admiral a similar kind of family neighborhood?

Beth McAdams: Yes, it was. It was a little more, a different, Fauntleroy was almost like a little country town, in the fact that it was so isolated. And they were still paving the streets and so forth when we moved there. Where that part of West Seattle was the first part of West Seattle to be settled. And there were

more established homes there. And, Lafayette seemed like, now my girls and David, three of my children went to the Lafayette Grade School there. The girls went to it, before the earthquake that destroyed it. And I think they were not in it, they were not going there, but I don't know if you'd ever heard the story how it was destroyed in 194--, it would have been '48 I think, when it was destroyed. 'Cause it was the year that David was born and that's why I can remember it. But they were out of grade school by that time.

Sherry: That's something, I haven't really read about it, were people injured, you know, when the school collapsed?

Beth McAdams: It was a miracle. It was at Easter vacation. There was no school. And it happened about noon. And it was a *terrible* earthquake. I think there were two deaths in that earthquake in Seattle. One I think at Fisher Flour Mill and one some place else. So, it wasn't a terrible, that kind of an earthquake, but it did have big chunks of our buildings in downtown Seattle came off. And I know at the time that it happened I was out taking care of my mother who was ill. And I'd left David, my baby, and my children at home. And her house was not very well constructed and I thought it was going to collapse. It didn't but I thought it was. It was a bad earthquake.

Sherry: But your house was all right?

Beth McAdams: Yes, my house that I lived in--

Sherry: Your kids were in one place and you were in another, that must have been quite scary.

Beth McAdams: It was, oh, yes, yes. My oldest girl was baby-sitting somebody and she was alone with children. And she said it was scary for her, terribly scary. My other daughter was home with David and Grandma and Terry and she said, "Nana went in and picked up David and held him. Gee, I don't know what good it did. But we all had to do something." We've had some pretty good earthquakes in Seattle. I hope we don't have another one. Probably will. But not much you can do.

Sherry: In terms of, did they make as much use as you did of the water and the, you said earlier, that they hung out a lot at Alki.

Beth McAdams: My boys that spent a lot of time at Alki. I guess the girls did, but you know, those both when they were in high school, got after school jobs because they had an allowance, but it wasn't, with four children, we were awfully tight. You know, watching our pennies. It wasn't like the Depression years, but we weren't, they loved things like cashmere sweaters and Joy(?) shoes. And I can remember saying to Jan, you can't have a new pair of shoes. "But I'm not going to buy you Joy shoes. They cost too much!" She was horrified. But anyway, they got a job at a bakery down at the Junction there. Peg had it first and worked there a couple of years

and when she quit it and was through with school, why Jan got it. And they both worked in the bakery there and it gave them the money to buy some clothes for themselves and some.

They, I think a lot of their, Jan was, followed in my footsteps and was very active in Rainbow. Peg didn't. She never was an organization person. But she had other activities. They had sort of like sororities up in the high school, which I totally disapproved of, but which my daughters both joined and were active in. They were fine. The Stardusters or something like that. But the girls, I wouldn't say, if you want to compare their high school, yes, according to their generation, they did the things, but not that *totally* different than what we had done when we were youngsters.

Sherry: Did you see the character of West Seattle generally change during that period?

Beth McAdams: Well, I think it is just a gradual change. I think the thing that I could notice the most was California Avenue, which when I was a youngster, all of California Avenue was lined with pretty homes. They were lovely. Even these houses that were across the street, they were there then, but they were newer and fresher. And as years went by, then I became aware, and I think this was probably after I was married, that these houses were getting very shabby looking and then in time, all of a sudden, there were little, something would be torn down and an apartment building go up. And that is where I did notice the changes in it. And of course, then

they had put in at one time they had trackless trolleys in West Seattle. Took out the streetcars, I don't think anybody missed seeing the streetcars go. Not really.

Sherry: Really? Because people now talk very nostalgically about streetcars.

Beth McAdams: Oh, yes, and about riding the old cable car. And I used to ride that old cable car, I didn't think very much about it. But those were the changes and, of course, then the businesses at the Junction, it changed, and that's still true today. There were some that stayed there forever. But they had a Piggly Wiggly there, and that went. And then they had a Van De Camp's and that went. And a Manning's and that went. And the Post Office was what's, it's moved now, a little bit north of where it was. And all kinds of, banks would come in and then there was a hospital at the West Seattle Junction and that's where David was born. Well, that was on the second story of the building that's on the south east corner of California and Alaska. It's an empty building now, I think, or was, maybe they've got an exercise place in it. It's been empty for years. But there was a second story on that building. And that is where there was a hospital. A full hospital. Yes. And then it was so crowded that they had to take it down and they built another out in, off of 35th. And it no longer is in use either.

Sherry: Certainly, before cars, but even after, you would be, if somebody was injured or very sick, you would be pretty--

Beth McAdams: Well, actually, there was a hospital that was here when we came to West Seattle. It was right down here at Morgan Street. There it was right here, there's a restaurant there now, I forget what it's called. I think that, just in back of it and up, there was a kind of a, I think it's been leveled off since then. There's kind of a group of store fronts there and taverns and things like that. Well, on the bank, before those other things were there, was a hospital. It was a privately owned hospital. And in fact, one of my dear friends, her sister was born in that hospital, I think there were two or three doctors.

And you talked about accidents. When I was in grade school, a friend of mine was playing on the beach down at what we call the old sand pit, which was an old sand and gravel place that was no longer in use. And while she was down there with a group of children, some boy had a rifle, or some kind of a gun, that he'd apparently taken from their home. And she was shot, right in her, above her heart. it went right in her. And she, it was, that sand pit is quite a bit south of here and *that* is a hospital. That is the only place they could get her to. They had to, I don't know, the fire men came down and carried her up and took her there. We didn't have 911 or anything, but that was a hospital. You were mentioning where would you go? We didn't have anything to go to. Really.

Sherry: Was she all right?

Beth McAdams: Yes. Yes, she was. She was in the hospital for months, or weeks. And she bankrupt her parents. She was an only child. But they were buying a home and of course, the young man that did this, although he got in trouble, I don't think he did it on purpose, he was probably aiming at some targets or something. He was being foolish. And I don't think he meant, but it was a horrible thing. But it filled, her lungs filled with blood. And of course they didn't have antibiotics. So she was in the hospital for weeks. And when I went to see her, I thought she'd grown, she was home by then. Well, she grew and then she was thin. She'd lost all her pudginess. I think she was about in the seventh grade or something like that. Yes, it was a very sad thing. I envied her all the attention she got. I thought, "Oh, everybody was going to see her and taking her presents." And then she was so pale and thin and I thought, "Oh dear, I'd like to get pale [laughs]." After a while, I ceased to envy her. It was a terrible thing to go through and terrible for her parents to go through.

Sherry: In all those years that you were living in the Admiral area, did you ever consider moving any place else?

Beth McAdams: No, we stayed in the house that we first bought at 39th and Stevens and that was where Terry was born. And it was not large enough, but by that time, there were, there had been five us, there were now six of us. And it was a two bedroom house. So we *had* to move. So, when we moved, we found an old, old house with two stories. Probably was built before

the First World War. And it was very well built although it was kind of drafty in the wintertime. But it was a *beautiful* house. And I *loved* every room in that house. Walk-in closets, and a fireplace and a den with a bay window that was like a library, you know, built in bookcases. And the girls had a room of their own and Terry had a room of his own and Nana had a room of her own. And Hugh and I took the downstairs bedroom and thought, "Hah-hah! We have our bedroom back to ourselves!" And nine months later, we had David. So that took care of that. But I loved that house and we lived there until the girls, by the time, I've always said that house had memories. Because Nana died while we lived there, the two girls got married and we had a baby and we became grandparents. So then we looked for a smaller place. But we did not consider living out of West Seattle. We moved to a smaller house and stayed there forever. I was the one that left there after my husband died. But, no, nothing ever beckoned us to go out of West Seattle. I really, and other friends of ours did and I felt sorry for them. [laughs]

Sherry: And you said that a lot of your friends remained friends all during this period in West Seattle. You know, amongst them, a lot of them did stay.

Beth McAdams: Well, we kept track of each other, too. West Seattle High School, I don't think there's anything unique in it, but I think it's very aggressive and it has always had reunions. And they have a reunion committee that functions all year long.

And they have scholarships that they raise, and so forth. And through those reunions, you'd be surprised that you, if you went, and since we lived close by, we would go, frequently. And somebody would come and maybe they'd moved to California or Arizona and you hadn't seen them, but you'd get to touch bases again. But also, people that you did know, and knew well, you kept up with them. So, we, yeah, there were *a/ways* friends of ours, and even I think, in my Christmas cards that I received this year, I can name at least five or six that were high school chums. And I think this kind of, because nowadays, people are more mobile than that.

Sherry: But, your children, they don't live here?

Beth McAdams: No. None of our children stayed in West Seattle. They got married and Jan lived on Vashon Island for almost twenty some years. Peg moved to the North End and eventually to California, but now she is back in West Seattle. I have one child in West Seattle, and I'm very grateful. And then, well, my son lives in Federal Way and the other son lives up at Snoqualmie in one of those old mill town houses that's a hundred years old. He's a bachelor. And he wanted a house and this fitted his pocket book, I wish he'd move. He will some day.

Sherry: And in terms of your own, sort of activities, obviously raising a family is a lot in and of itself, but were there other kinds of

organizations or groups that you or your husband were,
continued to be involved in?

Beth McAdams: Yes, there were. One was the church, which he had been raised in and I, he took me there. And he was active and then, inactive for a while. But I was very active in my church. Especially after the children all got in school and reached the point where I could give that much time to it. Also he was very active in the supervisor's organization from the Post Office. And I consequently was active in the women's part of it. So we were both fairly active in that and used to go to conventions and so forth. I would say those two things, oh, he did, for a number of years, he was a, he had a Hi-Y group. I don't know if you're familiar with that.

Sherry: I'm assuming it's associated with the Y.

Beth McAdams: It's to do with the Y, uh-huh. It's a boy's organization and is considered, it's considered an honor to belong to that and he'd belonged to that as a young man. So he, became a counselor for that. And when David was born, some of these kids that were in his group all came up to West Seattle Hospital. All they had to do was walk up to the Junction and run up the stairs and come up to the nursery and look at this, get their, their son, it was a blast! [laughs] Their counselor, or their advisor, maybe that's what it was, the advisor, they had a baby. And that was kind of funny.

[End Tape Two, Side One]

Beth McAdams: Robert Utter(?) who became a judge. Uh-huh. He was was a very sharp young man. He gave that up after a couple of years, because they had too many other things going. But he was a treasure for the St. John's Church forever it seemed like. He was also treasurer sometimes for the Post Office activities, but he was also a president for their group. And one year, because of his activities we, he was sent back as a delegate to a national convention in Florida. And we were, probably at the time, forty years old, and we had, Jen was in college, Peg was married, she married quite young and had two children, and the two boys were there to be taken care of. So the two girls, Peg moved into the house with her husband and two children. And Jan was working between college. And we went to Florida and had a wonderful time. Not many, at that age of our life, to do something like that was the most thrilling thing we could have possibly. We drove. We drove from Seattle to Florida. And Miami was lined up with hotels. Oh, I was so, you know, Seattle isn't very big when you get back to something like that. It was just, all those hotels, that would have been, that would have been forty-seven years ago. What would that be, now? Oh, my, must have been in the '50's, sometime in the '50's, yeah, maybe '54, I think, '54. And I didn't know that ocean water, you'd asked me how the Sound felt. I didn't know that on the Atlantic, down there in Florida, it's warm. You could just lay on your back and float forever.

Sherry: I bet you liked that! You were daring enough to be in the water all the time!

Beth McAdams: Oh, I did. It was, yes, it was, we stayed, before we got down to Miami, we stayed up at, it's Fort, I'm not talking about Fort Lauderdale, I'm talking about another, the old, old, Spanish fort.

Sherry: Augustine?

Beth McAdams: Augustine, St. Augustine, yes, St. Augustine. We stayed in St. Augustine and went to visit the Fort. That was really very remarkable trip. That was, we called it our second honeymoon. And we came home to a very tired daughter from having managed our household, two of daughters and, while we were gone. And I've never ceased to try and make it up to her. She ended up with six children. So, I have sort of helped.

Sherry: Part of this project originally also was to work at sort of diversity in West Seattle, and I don't know, that's kind of a general question. Did you notice, over time, or would you even consider West Seattle a fairly diverse community, in terms of--

Beth McAdams: It wasn't a diverse place to begin with, because it was very, very much, nothing but a, it was, I think you went from the wealthy to the middle class to the probably some people that were pretty poor. But basically, a kind of middle class

neighborhoods and we did have some Japanese, I believe. And we had no Black people here when I grew up. And I don't believe that we had them noticeably until probably the War years, where you began to notice there was a difference in that. And, from then on, I think like all parts of Seattle, we have become, we are now, I think it's kind of sad, but it always happens that when one culture moves in onto another culture, they have a tendency to stay together. So, obviously, your Asians have all stayed together and your Black people have ended up being centered in High Point, which is not, it's changing, I think, it is changing. It's very slow. The time will come, I expect, that it will, I hope it will come, when we can live side by side with whoever is our neighbor. But I don't think that, this is my own *personal* opinion, it's what I see from what I see. Riding the streetcar downtown is totally different than riding a streetcar, riding a bus, than taking a streetcar. Because look at all the different people you see, from all over. It's just so different.

Sherry: I took the bus yesterday and you know it is amazing. And I live on Mercer Island which isn't noted particularly for it's diversity either. And you know, just all different kinds of people. Totally diverse, which is wonderful.

Beth McAdams: That's one of the things that my generation, didn't have a lot of experience with. In fact, when the Civil Rights issue came along, I didn't, I tried desperately to understand it and didn't know until that trip that we took to Florida, I had never seen a sign over a faucet, "Blacks only" or "Whites only." And in

theaters, a black entrance and a white, I didn't know those things existed. I was just totally unaware of that. I think that's because of growing up in an area where we just weren't exposed. And I would have said that we were totally nondiscriminatory. Well, we're *not*. We have discriminated in our own ways. Because people are afraid they're property will lose value if they mix the neighborhood. It's *got* to change. Someday. But that is true, what you're saying. I think West Seattle was very *slow* to become diversified. But. It has changed. Over here, we're sort of a mixture around here, I've noticed. We have two little teen agers in our building. They bring home their playmates and they're all colors and all sizes. [laughs] And everybody frowns because this is a building that's strictly elderly people and these are the only two youngsters living here. But it's only natural.

Sherry: Looking back over almost eighty years of living in West Seattle--

Beth McAdams: Yes, pretty close to that.

Sherry: The biggest changes that you think you've seen? I mean, obviously so many--

Beth McAdams: Oh, yeah, there are.

Sherry: The biggest changes that you can see for the better and then biggest changes for the worst.

Beth McAdams: Well, progress is painful, at times. And progress is good. You can't stand still. So it has to be. [pause] I suppose what I would say, that this even looking out my view window here and looking at what we have here there's some of the old and some of the new. Because there are some very old, old modest houses, if you walk down the blocks here that you will see. And you can walk down a street, that looks as quaint as it can be and you have a feeling that they still have a bathtub with four legs on it. [laughs]. But then, you walk down another block right next to it and you will see some new houses or remodeled or whatever. But that I will assume is very typical of all areas. And then, West Seattle, 'cause we are sprawled all over, but our biggest changes have been when they've started developing some of the areas that had not been built on and had views. And we called it Pill Hill for a while, Genessee Hill, because all the doctors and lawyers and whoever had money was building these gorgeous big homes for the big views. And that is, I think, one of the biggest changes in West Seattle.

Sherry: Probably both for good and bad.

Beth McAdams: I'd say it was good. What it has done in some areas, they've crowded too many houses into a street and spoiled things somewhat. And I suppose if I had lived in different areas, they probably cut down trees where people didn't want them to cut down trees. Well, any of my friends, my age, would take a drive thorough West Seattle, you kind of gasp

almost sometimes, "Oh, this street has changed so! It's so *different!*" I had that experience. But that's what it is. It's new houses being built people building them so they can catch a view, if they have to go up to a tall and narrow house, or something, they're gonna catch that view. But I wouldn't say for the worse. I don't think West Seattle has changed for the worst. I think the biggest change in West Seattle has been in our business zone at the West Seattle Junction. That has seen a tremendous change. A once thriving business community is now struggling to make do.

Merchants are doing a lot, they're, at the moment they're tearing it all up and making it impossible to shop, but it's supposed to be part of a beautification. And I expect it will be when they're through. And there are some places there that are doing well. But there are also a *lot* of empty store fronts. And that is where I think I see the biggest change. And I see it, just like Jefferson Square, which was Jefferson School and then they tore it down and put up a miserable, *miserable* square with poor parking areas, just never has taken off. That to me was just too bad. It could have been done better. The same was true of the banks, in the years when they were building bank like popcorn and now they're gone. And we have not been able to rent the buildings and the story is that whoever owns the land and the buildings is asking too much. But some of the owners, maybe that's true. And also there's the feeling that it will never grow again because we aren't big enough to have a large department store, there's nothing there to draw people. All we have are the Safeway and the bakery and the Northwest Art and

Frame and the theater now, a couple of antique places. Little things. Lots of Thai food and different things, fast food all the way. They used to have much better, much, much better. So that part I do mourn. The Junction is not, doesn't beckon me any more.

Sherry: That's too bad, though. I mean, in one sense, that's usually the center of a community is the retail where you get your necessities. I would think that people living here as the population grows, wouldn't want to have to go much farther away.

Beth McAdams: Well, I think what took it out of the Junction ,what took it out of lots of places is that your big stores, your malls. Your malls are one thing. Westwood Village didn't hurt the Junction at all and it never took off either. But South Center, with it's Bon Marché, well now that you have a car, in fact, I did it when I had a car, why drive downtown and pay, I did, and pay a huge parking fee when I can drive out to South Center and park for nothing. When I have all of these cluster of stores together, well, that's perfect. Well, then, eventually, that took Penny's out of the Junction, we had a Penny's store. We had two or three ten cent store. Well, whoever builds a ten cent store, today? They don't. They're gone because of Home Depot, probably, or who takes the place of ten cent stores? Bartell's probably. Our ten cents store, it's been only a matter of four years or five years since it's been gone, our last one. They just couldn't make it. Not with the wages they have to pay not with the rents and the taxes.

And I don't see, how is it going to come back? Well, as a person, I like to be able to go up there and go to Husky's and get myself a bakery. Their parking is awful. So that, I would say, is the minus in West Seattle. And I know that the merchants are trying very hard. Ballard has done it far better than we. But they have a much larger business area. But they too have had their problems. And they have tried to upgrade their, themselves and I think they did a pretty good job of it. But they had a hospital and we don't.

Sherry: It seems like a lot of growth, though, is happening here and south of here. Right? So that maybe that will come, maybe not.

Beth McAdams: I think that land is so expensive and when I look at Jefferson Square is the only place that we could have had a department store and I don't think, even it, there wasn't a department store that would even look at it. And who have we got left in Seattle? We have really *one* department store. We have the Bon Marché. Nordstrom's is not a department store and we've lost Frederick's. I think that Seattle, for all of it's growth, and I'm very proud of our city, because I think we've done a lot of, well, some things are not so successful, but others have been tremendously successful. And what keeps Seattle going? Downtown. It isn't the department stores.

Sherry: What makes me sad though, is to see, and I think this is why the future of some of these retail areas hopefully will be brighter, is that in the downtown area like in Seattle you now have the same stores that you have in every downtown in almost every big city. You have all these chains but it's all the same. You can visit almost any city and it's not all that different.

Beth McAdams: It's the same as walking through, yes, I know, I've shopped--

Sherry: And I think most people realize that and most people don't like that. What was fun about traveling and going to other cities, aside from other natural features and things they had to offer, was different stores and finding new things and you know, you can't do. I mean everywhere you go is the same and to me that's sad. And I'm hoping that some of these smaller communities will be able to rebuild that sort of small business, the sort of uniqueness---

Beth McAdams: The only thing I see that's just spread all over is these communities and, lots of times in smaller towns, where they've gone the antique route or the craft route. And that is every place you go. And there's just blocks of them. And I've been to California and I've been to Arizona and I've been to other places, even back in Chicago where they have these things and it's just the same. How otherwise are small business owners going to make a living? It has to be in something unique. So it's either an art gallery sort of thing or a candle shop, maybe. But you were commenting about

things being the same. Doesn't it strike you that in today's world, that that, maybe not in the technology or maybe not in computers, but in our salable things, there was a sameness in *everything*, wherever you go.

Sherry: I agree. And I think it's really sad, personally [laughs]. It's nice to be able to have access to things. And I think part of the draw of the internet has obviously been that no matter where you are, you can have communication with but you can find out information and buy things,--

Beth McAdams: And don't have to go to the store.

Sherry: You don't have to go anywhere. And there certainly is a draw of that. But then of course, you lose that face to face, that personal kind of contact.

Beth McAdams: Oh, that personal. Do you think that we're going to lose some of that? I can't see how we could help it. And reading. Well, Harry Potter kind of took us by storm, and all the kids, but that is one book. I even get printed notices from great grandchildren that are done on the computer. They can do it, no problem.

Sherry: Looking back on West Seattle, what was the best part of living here?

Beth McAdams: The best part of growing up in West Seattle?

Sherry: That's an awfully hard question.

Beth McAdams: Yes, it is a hard question. I've always said that I had a happy childhood. And I think that is part of West Seattle and I think it's part of where I grew up. That all the things that I did, though they might not, some other child might have had a far more exciting childhood, whose family traveled and lived in foreign lands, would have had a far more. But I felt that I had a happy childhood. And now, in my ancient age, when I look back on it, I'm kind of proud of the fact that I've lived in West Seattle this long. And I'm proud of West Seattle. I think it's a community that's done a lot for itself and for the people that are here. It has and even though my generation is going and soon, will not be around anymore, there's something of us left here, I hope. I don't know what it'll be like fifty years from now, who does. But I am proud of West Seattle. And I'm glad, I think, I had, not a dream, but I have a hope, as I grew older and the family left and then when I became a widow, I thought, well, I'd like to end up in an apartment you know, kind of a cozy and I want a view. Well, my dream did come true. Far more than I ever realized would. And I'm *terribly* grateful for it and terribly grateful to be living right here. I think it's kind of a fitting ending to a story that had, that began here, don't you?

Sherry: Oh, absolutely.

Beth McAdams: If I could be living in St. Louis or Chicago or San Francisco and be in a place just like this, but it wouldn't be the same,