

[Katrina] How about we start with you guys introducing yourselves. What are your names?

[Roberta] My name is Roberta Searle.

[Barb] And mine's Barbara Vargo.

[Katrina] Awesome. And when did you start volunteering at Stan Hewitt?

[Roberta] I first volunteered at Stan Hewitt actually in 1963. I was a senior in high school and a neighbor who was on, was already a volunteer, invited me to come up and be an usher at the Shakespeare Theater.

It was on the back terrace. So that was my very first time, but actively I started in 1988.

[Katrina] Did you dress up for that? I heard that they made the ushers dress up.

[Roberta] Not when we did it, no. We were just high school girls in regular clothes.

[Barb] And I started in 1998 down in the Hort Department working in the greenhouse.

They had me cleaning most of the time. And then when new, about the end of December, they started getting in new, new shoots. This is when they would plant their own plants and then replant them in the grounds.

And then I would transplant the little plugs that came in into bigger pots and so forth. And then I don't remember what exactly. Oh, we worked in the yards in the springtime in the different beds and so forth.

And that's, that was my first duties was, was that. But Pat, when she came to be the executor, she had me clean the whole conservatory at the time. And I really enjoyed that because I could clean off the plants and then clean from underneath and get the conservatory, which the visitors visited, all clean and pretty and ready for them.

[Katrina] That's so cool. I didn't even know you worked with the horticulture when you first started here. Do either of you have a specific memory of someone encouraging you to start volunteering here? Or was there any specific reason you chose Stan Hywet as a place to volunteer?

[Roberta] A friend of mine was on the women's board here at the time and thought that I would enjoy that.

And I came and I did and they needed guides. And I took one tour with Mary Carpenter and took a half a tour with somebody else. And a person who was in charge of the desk at that point came and said, I need you to take a tour.

And I looked at her like, I don't know how to do this. And she said, you know more than your guests. She said, just be honest.

If you don't know an answer, tell them that you'll find out. And that was kind of a mantra of mine all the years I was a guide was, it's okay to say, I don't know, but I'll ask for you. But I made it through that first tour and I kept coming back.

[Katrina] Do you have any specific mem--?

[Barb] What was the question?

[Katrina] A specific memory of someone encouraging you to volunteer or any specific reason?

[Barb] Well, when my husband, Gary, retired, he suggested we come up here and see if we could volunteer. And we applied and so forth and we were accepted. So it was kind of up to him that we were here today.

[Katrina] And he still volunteers here too, correct. [head nod] What was your knowledge or opinion of Stan Hywet prior to volunteering? Do you have any view of this place before?

[Roberta] Well, I lived as a child just down the hill and it was just a big house that I knew someone important lived in. But when I grew up, I just began to realize that it was a really significant home and significant people had lived here.

But the gate was always locked until I got in as a volunteer.

[Katrina] Super awesome though.

[Barb] The school that my children went to, the third-grade teacher and her fellow grade teacher always had an activity of some kind of an outing in the springtime.

And she would always bring with her third-grade class here. So my children, we have five, as they went through the third grade at school, I was always willing to come and be a chaperone with them. And I always enjoyed the house and I always enjoyed coming up to Stan Hywet and being part of it.

[Roberta] I just thought of something else. Way before Stan Hywet ever became a museum, my dad and I used to take walks and we would walk up from Garmen Road. There were no fences, there were no gates.

And we would walk up and walk along the pleasure mile there. And we walked down by what they call the duck ponds and all that. So that was a childhood memory I also have.

[Katrina] What sorts of roles have you held at Stan Hywet over the years you've volunteered? I know you said you've worked in the Hort department and I know now that you guys help with collections, but what kinds of roles have you held?

[Roberta] Oh, as a volunteer here, I have been in the house as a guide for since 1998. I can't remember when I really retired. I didn't officially retire, but I quit giving tours when Barb and I became pretty much involved with collections.

And so that was my role as a guide first. And then we've been in collections as long as, I don't know, what year we ever started. Probably around 2000.

Probably around 2000 is maybe, that's a guess. And then when I did join the women's board, I got involved in all the things that they did. And I suppose the biggest thing I ever did there was that I was chair of Ohio Mart in 2010.

And it was a good job. Had a lot of really good help. There was no CEO here that year.

It was a team of the actual staff that ran Stan Hywet while they were in between CEOs. And we really worked as a team. It was a lot of fun.

[Barb] It ran better that year than it seems like some of the other ones when we had real CEOs. Because the staff had to keep the place going and up. And they just all worked together beautifully, I thought.

[Katrina] Awesome.

[Barb] A really good effort. It was a good year. It was a fun year too.

[Roberta] It's kind of like Jenny's talking about now, about one for all and all for one. Everybody really did get along and work hard together that year.

[Katrina] Awesome. So cool.

[Barb] And you forgot you co-chaired Gingerbread.

[Roberta] Oh, yes.

[Barb] And you made the aprons.

[Roberta] Yeah, I did those things too.

[Katrina] Was Gingerbread during Ohio Mart that you co-chaired?

[Roberta] Yes. Barbara and I did that together for years. That's how we became fast friends.

Mixing dough, not mixing dough, cutting dough. We had the gingerbread made by the ACME. We went one day and watched them make the gingerbread dough in these giant vats.

And they would give it to us in big logs. And we love about the people today because they get it all in little pucks and just have to put it on. Our husbands and Barbara and I and many other people stood with big knives and chopped down through.

[Roberta] What did they each weigh? Ten pounds.

[Barb] Sixteen hundred and fifty pounds.

[Katrina] Wow.

How long would it take you to cut all the cookies out?

[Roberta] All day, every day. As fast as we could cut.

[Barb] Yeah.

[Katrina] That's crazy. How fun. Do you guys have a favorite role or responsibility you've held over your years volunteering?

[Barb] A favorite one?

[Katrina] A favorite thing that you've done?

[Barb] Uh, Christmas.

[Roberta] I was going to say...

[Barb] We worked on Christmas. It was so much fun. At that time, we had a five-year plan. The CEO at that time wanted a five-year plan.

So, we had a theme for five years. And then Kim would come up with some ideas and then we would get the room started and we got the, at first, the room was a mess. We couldn't find anything and the decorations and so forth were all just everywhere.

We got bins and well, Brittany, I think, is the one who spearheaded the bin. We got boxes and labeled the boxes and started to take pictures and so forth and so on.

And then when Brittany got it and she was able to get the bins and get it a little more organized. And I think it just grew from there. But Christmas, I don't know how many rooms we've decorated with Christmas.

We did the North Hall with Santa Claus. He was in the beach. We had the seashells and the sand and what else did we have?

[Katrina] You had sand in the Manor House? Just on the floor?

[Roberta] No, we made sand.

We did a lot of—

[Barb] Don't panic, don't panic

Laughter

[Barb] Actually, it was water with a little bit of sand.

[Roberta] We had a great time creating things for Deck the Hall. Deck the Hall would be, I think Barbara and I agreed, those years that we worked on that.

Do you remember yesterday when they kept using the phrase, anywhere, anytime, any day, every day, how volunteers work? That's how Barbara and I have worked at Stan Hywet. But our favorite years really were when we were helping create Christmas. And we were talking on the phone last night about some of the things we did that you really wouldn't believe today.

We took giant beach balls and paper mache-ed over them and made six feet tall Santa Clauses. One year they wanted to celebrate on the 100th anniversary of Raggedy Ann. They wanted to have a display.

And right where Santa Claus was in the beach that year, Raggedy Ann and all of her associated Raggedy Ann's were at the end of the corridor on the second floor. And Kim wanted something that really was a draw. So we made a six foot tall Raggedy Ann.

She's here somewhere. She's hiding somewhere here. But the years of Deck the Hall creation were really fun for us.

[Katrina] That's really awesome.

[Barb] And at one time, Kim asked us to be the red shirts at Tyler Perry's movie that he made here. And that was very exciting too.

[Katrina] Which one was that?

[Roberta] I, Alex Cross.

[Katrina] I, Alex Cross.

[Barb] He made several of those kinds of movies.

And there were about six of us that she had asked to work on that. And what our job was, if they wanted anything moved or needed anything, we were the ones who went and moved it and went and got whatever they needed. It was an experience because when you see a movie today, you don't, it's a beautiful movie, but you don't see the behind the scenes.

Everybody had a stand in. If Tyler was supposed to stand somewhere and he wanted to do something else, he would call for his stand in and his stand in would stand right there. He wouldn't move.

He wouldn't do anything. He'd just stand there. And I think it's because of the lighting and the sounds and so forth that they had.

But the West Porch was all lit up at night one time because of the lights and the different umbrellas that they put up. They're not called umbrellas, but they look like umbrellas and sunscreens and so forth. It was very exciting to see that and all the wires and the cameras and the crew that they had.

And the food carts that they had were awesome. They were three or four food carts and they fed those actors and actresses very well.

[Katrina] Did they feed you guys too?

[Barb] Yeah, we could partake in the food, absolutely.

[Roberta] It was a lot of fun. I think that was where the red shirts for Stan Hywet actually started, because they had to know that we were okay to be there.

So we all got red shirts and that's what the crew called us for the whole week they were here. Can I tell you a funny story on Tyler Perry and the tour?

[Barb] No, I don't care. I didn't know who Tyler Perry was.

[Roberta] You can cut this out if you'd like.

[Barb] Yeah, he was tall and we didn't know any of the cast. And this fella came in and he was tall and just beautifully put together.

He had a beautiful suit on. He had a security badge on. And like I say, I didn't know him.

I don't know actors or actresses. So I thought he was security and just looking around.

[Roberta] So he came up and he kind of put his arm around Barb and just walked away with her.

laughter

And Gary and I, she was gone and we were like, what happened to Barb? And we found her and he had taken her into the west porch and she was in there giving him a nice tour of the west porch. And when she discovered who he was, she had no idea who she was giving this tour to. She thought he was a security person and he was the star of the movie.

And it was just one of those really comical moments when she didn't realize what he represented.

[Katrina] That's funny. Okay, so I guess another project I know you guys have worked on, if you want to tell me a little bit about that, was winter cleaning.

So you've been involved with winter cleaning for a number of years. Do you want to talk about some of your experiences with that and how it's changed over time?

[Roberta] I have a story on that one on me. If I can laugh at Barb, I can laugh at me.

The very first time, Barb had cleaned when only, I think it was a total of five people at period, cleaned the whole house. We used to be closed from January, only the month of January. And in one month, five people cleaned the whole house.

And so I thought that was too much work for my friend, Barb. And I said, I was going to come and help. And the day I got here, they were cleaning up in the maids' rooms and I was so nervous, just like today.

And they said, you had to wear white gloves while you cleaned. And this was what I did. I had my white gloves on and someone said, okay, you need to scrub the bed or something like that.

And I was hardly breathing because I was afraid I was going to do something wrong. At which point, my white gloves went into the bucket and I scrubbed my, you know, running out my rag, whatever you call it. And all of a sudden, I'm looking down going, oh no.

And I couldn't hide. I mean, they found me, they knew what I had done. So anyway, that was my very first memory of cleaning in the house.

But over the years, I think we cleaned some of everything in this entire house. And I know that sounds exorbitant, but this gallery, we would clean in this gallery. In the basement, in the canning shelves, we cleaned all the jars.

All the fine things that are part of the museum, we cleaned. One year they had us, I think Kim thought maybe we were getting too old to clean, but we were really just getting started, weren't we? And she had us do an inventory and we did what you do room by room now. We did the entire house.

[Katrina] At once?

[Barb] We got the rooms before they came in and cleaned so that we weren't in their way. So we were about one or two rooms ahead of everybody that was cleaning. Thank goodness it took them a little bit of time to clean, but it took us a little longer to do inventory.

We took the pictures. So one would write the numbers, one would get the article, and Gary would take the pictures. So we kind of had a little seam going there.

[Roberta] It took us three months. We worked the whole time they cleaned. Every dish, every piece of silver.

It was really an interesting job. Every book. Crawled around on the floor looking for the numbers on the furniture.

[Katrina] So you've touched everything.

[Barb] We have. That's what I said.

Anywhere, any place, any time.

[Katrina] Okay, do you guys have anything else to add about when you're cleaning?

[Barb] No, I started cleaning when the conservatory closed down during the winter time. I didn't have anything to do.

So I came up and asked Lori Washburn, who was at that time the head of cleaning for the head of housekeeping, if I could clean and she said yes. And that was about the second or third year I was here and I've cleaned. Except for last year, I've cleaned every year since then. But it's always fun. You always find something new.

You always find a little face on something that you've never seen or you can't see when you're on a tour. And to be able to get in and actually hold the things that Mr. and Mrs. Seiberling held dear to their hearts and used themselves. It's just something that, it's just very heartwarming.

[Roberta] I agree.

[Barb] Yeah, it's hard work but it's fun. The people were fun and we laughed a lot and joked a lot and hulled buckets of water a lot.

[Roberta] We got a bigger team as time went by.

More and more people joined us and we had pretty much the same group every winter for a long time.

[Barb] And a lot of the staff, they didn't have a job to do so they came up and cleaned. They helped out a lot also.

We did everything. From guest services and everything.

[Roberta] We'd line up across the great hall and roll up the rug, all of us together.

We did things that you don't really think you're going to do.

[Katrina] Oh, that's so awesome. Okay.

I'm kind of along the same line of conversation. Were there any preservation or conservation projects that you remember being significant and what the reaction was when they were finished?

[Barb] Oh yeah. The redoing of the grounds.

The elliptical garden and the well and the drying yard. They were all done under Hank Lynch's time that he was here as CEO. And we were promised that it would never have to be taken care of again.

The tar would not come up in a well. The bricks would be fine. There would be no bleeding of the cement.

The elliptical garden has been pretty good. He just said it would grow up. He was told that it would grow up to be like the old established one.

Well, the trees do die down and bushes do get old and so forth and so on. And some things just they promise you and it just doesn't happen. We're getting tar in the well and stuff like that.

But it still looks beautiful.

[Katrina] It does.

[Roberta] A project I remember that we didn't actually work on.

But when you talked to us about doing this, I saw a picture that I had taken. One winter while we were cleaning, it was decided that the tiles in the floor on the first floor needed to be cleaned. And they came in and completely took off the surface.

The stone tile in the Great Hall, all the way down the hallways, anywhere the tile is, they pull. I don't even remember how they did it. What would they use? Some kind of chemical.

And they stripped it down.

[Barb] They polished it.

[Roberta] It was white, right.

For a long time when we would stand up in the master bedroom and look down while they were working in the great hall. The floor had just a white color.

And you were like, they'll never get it back. And they not only got it back, they made it beautiful. But that was one that we did not work on.

But again, for us, the pleasure is that we got to see a lot of things that many people never get to see. So it was enjoyable.

[Katrina] I think we did the elk that same year.

They took the elk down and they did the Great Hall.

[Roberta] Yeah, I think so.

[Barb] I think when the chandelier in the Great Hall came down, that was something else.

I don't know how they ever rigged that up to be able to come down into the hall so that it could be cleaned. It's amazing what the staff can do. They're just great workers.

They just are great workers.

[Roberta] One time—

[Barb] Bringing that big thing down.

And it's just beautiful. To really see it before. And then when it came back, it was unbelievable how beautiful it got.

[Katrina] Yeah, kind of magical.

[Barb] Yeah.

[Roberta] One time when we were cleaning, Barb and I were in the cook's pantry and we had to take everything out of the cupboards.

And we had a big cake that was used on display like when they displayed for their wedding anniversary. Yes. Or I think it was more for Irene's wedding than for the anniversary.

But anyway, we opened the door in the cook's pantry where the wedding cake was stored. And a mouse or maybe 10 mice had decorated the wedding cake in ways that I don't think Mrs. Seiberling would have approved. That was that was one of those very comical moments that we did.

We never took a picture of it that I can remember. But I know we went and got everybody to see what the wedding cake looked like.

[Erica] And you had to fix it? Or did you throw it away?

[Barb] We cleaned it.

Yeah, I don't know whether they ever used it after that or not.

[Roberta] I think it's still in that right cupboard.

[Katrina] Yeah, it's still there. We can't throw away anything here.

[Barb] Well, we did throw away two chickens. Roberta and I, we did the flower arranging room and it was a uh—

[Roberta] For Deck the Hall. We did Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol that year.

[Barb] So we did the butcher shop. We decorated the flower arranging room into a butcher shop. But we didn't have any meat or anything to put out.

So we did have an artificial chicken. So we took it home and put paper mache on it and got it two artificial, two more chickens so that we could put out. Well, we couldn't throw anything away.

So we saved those in the cook's pantry. And a year or two later, we got went to get them out. And they were also used by the mice.

And I think they took them home to a feather their nests, so to speak, because they were just chewed to pieces.

[Erica] So it's time to let go.

[Barb] Yeah, we had to let them go.

Of course, there wasn't much left of them to let go. But what was left, we got rid of.

[Erica] That sounds like a really cool theme for Dr. Hall.

[Barb] It was.

[Roberta] It was. It was a great thing.

[Barb] It was another fun thing to do. Very, we had to be kind of creative about that. They enjoyed it.

[Roberta] They turned.

We took all the furniture out of the Great Hall, everything. And we turned the Great Hall into like a street in old London with shops.

And the people just, [cough] excuse me, the people just walked across in front of them from the entry of the Great Hall to the Dining Room. But it looked like the town. It was really--

[Barb] We didn't do that. They did that down in the woodworking.

[Roberta] Right.

[Barb] And then they brought it back.

[Roberta] Right, right.

[Barb] Yeah, that was very good.

[Roberta] One, one Christmas day, they did storybooks as the theme of Deck the Hall. And we made characters for the Island of Misfit Toys that were eight feet tall, the big white snowman and different things like that. We, I already said about the big snowman.

That was another year. That year we did a Christmas story in the Great Hall that was called. Oh, I can't remember the name.

And I already asked. A Christmas Wish. It was about a little girl who wanted to become one of Santa's elves.

And we, we built this giant ice house. And somewhere, I have no idea. Again, we're using the name Brittany and Kim a lot.

But they were the spearheaders of all these ideas in the years that we worked. Brittany showed up one day with this giant, really giant muskox. And, and we had to put him in an ice cave because that what we depicted the entire story around the Music Room.

And one of her adventures was the muskox. And he was in this big ice cave. And after we got him, realized that his horns were not the horns of a real muskox.

And attention to detail was really important to Brittany. So she magically turned his horns around. So he became the muskox.

And it was a good display. We had, we had a good time with that, that year.

[Barb] Christmas has a lot of good memories.

A lot of fun ones.

[Erica] And their real stage production thing.

[Roberta] They were.

And it, it was a sense of pride because it was the people who worked here at Stan Hywet who were doing it. Now at this point, we use all the decorators and they do such a lovely job. It's beautiful.

But there was something wonderful about being able to produce the beginnings of Deck the Hall, which no one in Akron or any other place had ever seen what we did. When Christmas was first celebrated here early in the years when I volunteered, there were three basic Christmases. Christmas decorations.

And we'd simply rotate every year. You probably already heard this, but one was, one was the year they family celebrated an old English Christmas in the Great Hall. That was one.

One was Irene's wedding in 1923 on Christmas day. And the third one was during World War II when Fred was away and the family had a more quiet Christmas. Am I remembering all those things right?

[Katrina] Was it Fred or Franklin? Franklin was away during World War II or World War I.

[Roberta] Yes.

I'm sorry. You're right. It was Franklin.

Sorry. I told you I was bad at names, Katrina.

So anyway, when they decided to use Stan Hywet during Christmas as a more beneficial financial project, that's when we started Deck the Hall. And for years, like I said, it was an all in-house preparation. And everybody, if they were Hort, they worked.

If they were in the carpentry area, they helped. And anyway, we did a lot of fun things that we were proud of at the time. Now they probably look fairly elementary, but we look back at the pictures to do this interview and we were like, we did okay with some of those things.

And it started a good tradition here.

[Barb] The anatomics that we borrowed from [unknown] company, we got to redo all of those and remake them, their hair and their makeup and their clothes. And we got to, that was good. We had a terrible, I had a terrible time trying to get the yellow brick road.

Roberta came in and measured it out and it couldn't get the curve right. The bricks weren't right in the yellow brick road. And we got it fixed up and it was everything on, it was a lot of fun.

[Roberta] The Wizard of Oz took up the whole great hall and we had all those characters that had been really left to ruin in the basement, in the parking lot basement actually of the old O'Neill's department store. And they said we could use them. They brought them here, they were basically in pieces.

And again, everybody worked together, somebody who is good at electric stuff helped put them back together. Barb and I spent a long time re-curling the Cowardly Lion's hair. He was about as tall as you are, Katrina, not quite.

But anyway, we have pictures of him with rollers in his hair and all the Tin Man, all of them were a part of that. And we really were proud of ourselves to be able to get them to where they moved. They did the things that they did when they were in the store windows at O'Neill's.

So that was a big year too. See, you just got us going. Now the memories are starting to roll.

[Katrina] I told you they would. Okay. What has been your favorite reason for volunteering at Stan Hywet? I feel like we've kind of been bouncing around on a lot, but if you could put in like a sentence or two what your favorite reason for volunteering here is.

[Barb] I think just the friendliness of the volunteers, of the other volunteers and the staff. The staff seems to get along well and the volunteers seem to get along well. Whatever day you volunteer, you become close friends with those people.

And then you come in another day to help out or to be an extra guide or an extra volunteer of any kind, even in security. You get to meet those people and it's a wonderful experience to meet so many different diverse people and they all get along.

[Roberta] And that's, Barb said it beautifully.

We don't do things in one sentence, sorry. But really it is that you make wonderful friends along the way with everyone who cares about, you have a common goal for this place and that's what makes it valuable. And you still have the friends at the end of the day.

[Katrina] Mm-hmm. Another fun one. What's your favorite place on property and your favorite place in the house?

[Barb] Right now it would be the drying yard.

I think the drying yard really is beautiful this year. I love how the, even though this is not the right thing to say, I love how the bricks are failing right now because it just adds to the

colors of the flowers and the design of the flowers. And my favorite room would be, I think the Breakfast Room.

It's bright, it's light. It's where you start your day. I think it's the room that would make a, if your night wasn't too good, your morning is good being in the Breakfast Room.

I like the breakfast room a lot.

[Roberta] Outside, I like the lagoons and it's for a reason that I saw a picture in our old photographs here of the family when they were all playing in the water, diving off the rocks and things down there. And there's a peace to simply being there.

But when I walk down there, I see that and I see that real people lived here. And that's why I like the job you have us doing now because it's a chance to see the people who made this big museum a home and a gathering place for family. And I like that outside.

Inside, I like them all. But as far as impressions for me, the most impressive room in the house is the great, or not the Great Hall, the, here we go on the names.

[Katrina] Music Room?

[Roberta] Yeah, the music room, thanks.

When the organ plays in the music room, there is something that simply just takes over me. Again, of the magnificence of this home that they had the forethought to open their home to people so everybody can hear that beautiful organ.

While they lived here, it was probably by invitation only. Although I'm sure you've heard this story. They did have a picnic one year celebrating their life here at Stan Hywet.

They invited all of the people of Akron to come and thought they would only have a controlled number and they had hundreds of people. So that was sort of the beginning of sharing Stan Hywet.

[Katrina] And what year that was?

[Roberta] What year seems to me, no, I can't, I'm sorry.

I probably have it written down somewhere, but yeah, we could look it up. Anyway, that's it.

[Katrina] So, onto some early Stan Hywet questions.

What did early fundraising look at Stan Hywet?

[Roberta] I remember one fundraiser that happened midway through the time Barb and I have been working here. They were going to replace the mural at the end of the swimming pool inside the house. And they wanted to have a fundraiser to do that.

And someone working here at the time suggested that they put tables down inside the pool area and serve cocktails. Well, it was decided that if you ever walked down, if you ever walked down the sides of the pool, you would know that there's a little bit of a slant and that's not good. And then the steps that lead to the bottom, Barb and I have been up and down those steps because that's one of the things that we use to help clean is the bottom of the pool.

But for a party, it seemed a little bit out of line. So they had the party elsewhere, but we filled the pool with blue balloons to make it look like the pool was full of water. And I have a picture of it and it's really very effective.

That was the fundraiser. And I don't have any idea how much money they made, but the mural's there, so they must've made enough.

[Katrina] That's so cool.

How many balloons do you think it was?

[Roberta] Oh, I have no idea. Enough that you know how big the pool is and the balloons are only about like that big. We blew them up for days.

[Katrina] Oh, fun. Okay. We talked a little bit about this before we got started.

So just to reiterate what you had said, what were your feelings regarding the separation of Stan Hywet Inc. from the Foundation in 1990? And how do you remember hearing about it? And do you think there was, what was the feeling about it at the time?

[Roberta] I can't really speak to the feeling about it. I think it was, there was probably a connection with A.B. because A.B. used to have their own money. And then everything went into one fund at that time.

But I don't remember, I wasn't an officer yet in A.B., so I don't really remember what the exact reaction of people was. What I remember is that they had a big meeting for everybody down in the gym. And that's the first time I remember that they actually spoke about a mission, having a mission for Stan Hywet and what the wording would be and took people's suggestions and that.

It was, as I remember, it was a positive thing, but I can't really speak.

[Katrina] Do you have any memory?

[Barb] No, I don't have much of a memory of that at all. In fact, I may not have even been affected by it, so I was not involved.

[Katrina] What have been some big changes you've experienced in leadership or just within the organization over the years? And what were your thoughts?

[Roberta] Well, I think we spoke to the year that everybody worked without a CEO. There've been different CEOs who all had different ways of managing. I think right now we're in a good place of making the community of Akron feel a part of Stan Hywet.

That's thanks to you. And it is important for everybody in Akron to feel connected here, so.

[Barb] I think the opportunities that Stan Hywet gives the community to come in and visit all the different activities that they have for all ages that the wine tasting and the children's playground, they're trying to bring all ages into the property.

And I think that that's going to help Stan Hywet a lot with those types of programs.

[Roberta] I love that, and I think we're not really answering your question, we moved to other things here.

But I think one of the best things that I have been involved in here actually is when they began to bring the school children here and made it a meaningful visit for the kids. I loved giving kids tours when I was a guide.

And then you realize that those children that you gave tours to are now bringing their children here. So introducing the kids to Stan Hywet early is a vital thing. And now it's just such a peaceful place in the world we live to bring families and know that a place is here, always the same.

And it's played such a big role in Akron's history.

[Katrina] That's amazing. I definitely agree.

This question kind of goes along with what you're talking about. But how do you think Stan Hywet has and continues to build a sense of community, both amongst volunteers and the staff and even out into the community? Can you think of any specific examples?

[Barb] I think the volunteers, they have a camaraderie here. They love Stan Hywet and they go out and promote it even to their friends and so forth, bring their friends in.

And the more that you can get out into the community with the volunteers and the staff feeling they're as committed to Stan Hywet as they are, I think helps promote the Stan Hywet feeling of community, right?

[Roberta] I would say Ohio Mart has played a huge role in that also because Ohio Mart draws all kinds of people, families, older people, artists, anyone who enjoys shopping. But it's much more than that. It's a chance for people to come to the property and maybe take a first look and then go, well, I want to see more about this place.

So I would say Ohio Mart is a major connection.

[Katrina] Where do you hope to see Stan Hywet be in the next 20 years?

[Roberta] Here.

[Barb] Right here, bigger and better. And at the rate they're going, they will be bigger and better.

[Katrina] Are there any interpretive or education initiatives that you really enjoyed participating in? This is kind of off topic, but I forgot to ask this earlier.

[Roberta] Again, it goes back to the children. One year they had the Seiberling granddaughters, Julie and her sister come.

And we were here cleaning and it was during the winter. So it was the library was the choice of places for the children. And they sat on the floor in the library.

It was completely empty because they were refinishing the floor, hadn't started the job yet. And we were in the hallway cleaning and I began to hear these wonderful stories coming out.

And it was the two granddaughters sharing their memories of actually living here. Again, connection with children, but the kids were just in awe of the stories of playing hide and seek and all the things that the granddaughters remembered. So a simple one, but significant to me.

[Barb] Well, they were good speakers, Anne and Julie. They were very good at telling stories. So it was very, very interesting.

I wasn't here, so I wasn't able to enjoy it, but that's what I've heard.

[Katrina] Okay, then we have one final question unless you've got some questions. What keeps you volunteering?

[Roberta] Friends.

[Barb] Just about everything.

The staff is very friendly and the volunteers are awesome. Some of them are very good friends. They're always talking to you, always listening to you.

If you have a problem, you can always go to a staff member and pretty much tell them what your problem is. And they try to take care of it or at least accommodate you by listening.

[Roberta] I agree with everything Barb just said.

It's fun to work here with you because you make us feel a part of this.