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Thu, Jan 25, 2024 3:18PM • 34:23

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

newspapers, kids, thought, broomfield, work, soccer fields, decided, left, started, good, nature, involved, spiders, advertising, newspapers, open space, Ellie's Pond, Parkinson's, support group, shoe shop, wanted, today, town, community, Bal Swan Children's Center, Christmas Open House, Church Women United, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, Kohl school.

00:00 Ellie McKinley

They've done this before. So I know there are records of whatever I've done before.

00:05 David Allison

Yes, we definitely have some past oral histories.. But I'd love to have another one today. So yeah, thank you so much, and I really appreciate your time.

00:15 David Allison

I wonder if you could just maybe start by introducing yourself and just sharing a little bit about yourself.

00:20 Ellie McKinley

My name is Ellie McKinley. And I live at 1143 Ash Street in Broomfield, Colorado. I've been here for 56 years, same house, same everything.

00:32 David Allison

Wow.

00:33 Ellie McKinley

Not too many people can say that; they have moved a lot.

00:35 David Allison

Absolutely.

00:36 Ellie McKinley

We moved here and we had friends all around us immediately because it was a new neighborhood. And it's easy to make friends when everybody's new. There were 13 Girls on this block that would be friends to my girls and it's just been a good neighborhood. We had a bridge club, just did all sorts of things together. And they've continued to do things together. The ones that are that are still around here. They might not live on the street, but there are nine of us that get together once a month and have a birthday luncheon together. We got one Friday, tomorrow, that we're gonna meet.

01:15 David Allison

Oh, that's so fun.

01:16 Ellie McKinley

That's a long time to be meeting with the same people.

01:19 David Allison

Absolutely. It's a lot of connections over the years.

01:22 Ellie McKinley

And I think that's what happens when you live in the same place. And you've been involved in a lot of different things, so you have a lot of friends in different areas of town and it makes it really nice.

01:37 David Allison

Yeah, for sure. You know, I was thinking about your involvement in various things over the years, and on my way here, I passed a little place called Ellie's Pond. (Laughter) I wonder if you want to start sharing just a little bit about that.

01:53 Ellie McKinley

That's the result of being involved in open space, primarily open space, though it's because of other things I've done. But I was really surprised with the name; they wanted to know if I wanted Ellie McKinley. And I said no, just Ellie. But that's because I was very involved with open space. And the first time I went around it, it was defeated, not by much, which was amazing that these same people didn't come back and work on it, but they didn't. It's really strange. And so there were four of us. Rick Erickson, Jean Patterson, Gordon McKellar, and myself that met after that. And I've not been involved in the first one at all. Rick was only because his wife was. And I don't know about Jean and Gordon, whether they had been involved, but I don't think so. I think we've started an entirely different group, but the four of us decided that we wanted to get it passed. And so we spent a year, almost a year, working at it. And it was, it became an everyday affair with me. (Laughter)

03:11 Ellie McKinley

I worked at it. And we decided that 10% of the money would go to recreation, because they were the ones who....just wanted more soccer fields, and they needed more soccer fields. So the fields, which we were fighting for, because they had planned 300 houses on that field...

03:38 David Allison

wow

03:39 Ellie McKinley

When it was really the exact best location for them to have those soccer fields. Anyway, we worked very hard, and we divided up the town and canvassed the entire town with fliers. And the object was to talk with every single person, not just leave a flier, but actually have a conversation. We interviewed all the city councilmen before they were elected to see where they stood.

04:09 Ellie McKinley

We were serious about this, really serious. And it turned out fine. But right after that, I was down in one of the city offices and they were already planning to put a soccer field on the lower half.

04:27 Ellie McKinley

I was so upset. You can't even imagine how upset I was because it was supposed to be left open space. And so at that point, we went to work and got it so it would be in perpetuity, that it would be left untouched unless the city decided differently. We could vote on it and decide to, but it wasn't just somebody deciding that they wanted to put soccer fields down.

04:57 David Allison

There had to be a vote.

04:58 Ellie McKinley

Yeah, there had to be a vote and that really saved us and Kristan Printz, who's in charge of open spaces was so pleased that we have that money in perpetuity, because nobody can touch it, except open space. And that's not true with a lot of funds in the city; if they want something, they can shift things around and make them work that way. But they can't do that with open space. It's locked in, and they have to use it for open space, which is really good. It's just a really nice thing.

05:31 Ellie McKinley

I guess I've been involved, you know, I decided the reason I know so many people is because I've been involved in so many different things. Not just one or two, not just my family, which I love dearly. But I decided, don't ever tell me that you're bored; I wouldn't let my kids say "I'm bored." There's too much out there to do and to be thankful for. So open space was really one of them. And, when I retired from my job, I already had a plan. So I wanted to be involved with nature. Nobody knew I liked nature until then. So I took a course. We were part of Boulder County at that time and I took a course to become a Boulder County naturalist. 50 hour course.

06:27 David Allison

Wow.

06:28 Ellie McKinley

But I had an ulterior motive in doing this because I wanted to bring nature to Broomfield. And that's when we started the nature group. But I completed all the requirements, you know, so many hours of working that group, program plans, that sort of thing. But then we started our nature group here. And I had Karen Steele and Denise Price working; I mean, they were both volunteers. And so after three years, I thought, well, they can take over, because I thought we really need to keep changing. And this was in, I don't know, 2002, about 2001 or '02. And they've been doing it ever since, ever since. (Laughter)

07:21 David Allison

Wow.

07:23 Ellie McKinley

I just went to a party at Karen's house at Christmas time. I said you know, "is this okay?" (Laughter)

07:35 Ellie McKinley

But they've done such a good job of it. And they provide nature experiences for kids that some of them would never have had an interest in. So I, you know, I think that's a really good thing. And then my husband had Parkinson's. In fact, he died of Parkinson's in 2004 and there wasn't a support group here at all.

08:01 Ellie McKinley

So, Betty Calvin (spelling?) and I started that group. And it got an award that really ought to be in the newspaper. They got an award this year for being the best in the state.

08:14 David Allison

Wow, fantastic.

08:16 Ellie McKinley

I went there for their Christmas party and I hadn't been for a long time, but she's done an outstanding job. So it's really nice to pick people that you really think will do well, for a group that you want to keep it going. And they have, they've just done, you know, far better than I would have done, but really great. They're just really great people.

08:40 David Allison

That's wonderful. Can you tell me just a little bit more about what brought you to Broomfield 56 years ago?

08:49 Ellie McKinley

Well, a friend of ours. Melvin wasn't happy. He had changed jobs and was with a small company in Henderson, and he really wasn't happy doing it. We came out here to visit them, George and Sally Hopper. George was a lawyer downtown and Sally eventually became a Senator for this whole area. But we came out to see them and Melvin was a CPA and George said, "you won't have any trouble finding a job out here." In one month's time, we moved. It was absolutely spectacular.

09:27 David Allison

Wow.

09:28 Ellie McKinley

The best thing we ever did in our lives was to move out here.

09:32 David Allison

That's amazing.

09:34 Ellie McKinley

So then I didn't work for a while. I've had various jobs in my past. I have a degree in social work. And so

I guess we were here for about three or four years and I became the Executive Director of the Attention Homes in Boulder.

09:53 David Allison

Okay.

09:54 Ellie McKinley

Do you know the Attention Homes?

09:56 David Allison

Never heard of them.

09:57 Ellie McKinley

They still exist. They are completely different, a different way of being run, but they had four homes for kids who had a run-in with the law, a lot of runaways, but didn't need to be in jail. They didn't need that experience. And so I did that for several years. But then I got into, by default, I got into the newspaper business.

10:21 David Allison

Okay.

10:23 Ellie McKinley

Did you know that?

10:24 David Allison

No. Tell me about it

10:25 Ellie McKinley

I was one of, well, they had just started the free Enterprise and (name??) owned it; I think it was called the Tri City Journal then and Al had a print shop. And Al Shaefer (name??) decided he was going to have a print shop along with that paper. And now this is a little teeny tiny town. You don't need two print shops.

10:57 Ellie McKinley

And Al was furious. And so he said, "I'm gonna start a newspaper." Well, this is absolutely unbelievable. I think Broomfield couldn't have been more than 10,000 people.

11:09 David Allison

Yeah, yeah, that sounds about right.

11:10 Ellie McKinley

It was really small. And no businesses to speak of, literally no businesses. And we don't have a lot now and there really weren't then.

11:21 David Allison

People were living here and working elsewhere.

11:23 Ellie McKinley

It was a suburban community. And so, Ann Craft (name? spelling??) was my best friend and we used to walk together everyday. She was part of everything good in Broomfield. And so she said, "There's an opening up in this little little newspaper for advertising. Ellie, you could come work there as an advertising manager." And so I thought, I'd done something for the chamber. I put together their directory of the businesses. Now at the time, they just wanted the businesses listed that were members of the chamber. And I thought, well, what kind of directory is that? Not much (Laughter)

12:03 David Allison

Not much going on there.

12:08 Ellie McKinley

Yeah, so I decided everybody should be included, and went to Lafayette, Louisville, and Broomfield. I went to Lafayette in a snowstorm one time. I thought, Now I'm sure they'll feel sorry for me. (Laughter)

12:27 Ellie McKinley

So anyway, they offered me the job. And we've always had a job description. You know what my job description was?

12:36 David Allison

What's that?

12:38 Ellie McKinley

To sell enough advertising to pay everybody who worked there.

12:40 David Allison

Wow.

12:41 Ellie McKinley

Because it was a free newspaper.

12:44 David Allison

Oh, my goodness. That's some pressure.

12:46 Ellie McKinley

I was almost ill going home. I thought, what in the world. And I really, I had not been in sales.

12:58 Ellie McKinley

I think when you're a social worker, you do a little bit of everything and you just carry your skills from one place to another, just have a different title to them.

13:10 Ellie McKinley

That was interesting, this advertising manager was fired soon after I came because he had a flier that he was also selling and getting the same advertisers.

13:23 Ellie McKinley

And when they found that out, they fired him. And so I was the only one that was left.

13:34 David Allison

I can tell you that there were all these little secret meetings because they didn't know what to do.

13:36 David Allison

Oh, goodness,

13:37 Ellie McKinley

I was inexperienced. So they finally decided to just take a chance on me.

13:43 David Allison

Wow, that's amazing.

13:45 Ellie McKinley

It's amazing. (Laughter)

13:49 David Allison

I tell you, it seems a little putting you on the spot there too.

13:54 Ellie McKinley

So I did that for a while. We were in competition with this other little newspaper. And I decided one day, what I'll do is get everybody under contract. And then they can tell them that they're under contract with me and they won't feel any pressure to advertise. Well, I did that and they went out of business.

14:16 David Allison

Oh, wow. Look at that. That worked.

14:21 Ellie McKinley

It worked. It worked. I didn't want him to be editor or publisher. I didn't like him. At first, I didn't think his ethics were very good. And I just never never want him to be in charge of the newspapers. I just felt they were too crucial to a community to have somebody that you didn't think was ... and money was never, you never made much money.

14:44 Ellie McKinley

Not much of an object to have a job and it was but not in those days. So then it worked for a while in the Sentinel newspapers. This was in the early 80s when things were really bad for newspapers. Well, they are worse now. But they were really bad then, particularly for weekly newspapers. The Denver Post and Rocky Mountain News were okay, the dailies, but not the little ones.

15:19 Ellie McKinley

People only had so much money to spend and that was it. So anyway, that sort of went downhill for the Sentinels. There were 15 newspapers, little newspapers all over town for every community.

15:36 David Allison

Wow.

15:37 Ellie McKinley

And I was in charge of major market advertising. So I went to the (media NIFS?? - inaudible) and the fashion bars and all the biggies to get advertising. And it was not easy, because they were already committed to the news in the Post. So we sorta got the money that was leftover.

15:56 Ellie McKinley

Whatever was still there. (laughter)

16:02 Ellie McKinley

But anyway, that's what happened with that; it just sort of collapsed at the time. And I still owned the Aurora Sentinel, it was left over. Nobody went. So Harrison, and Joan and David and I bought the Aurora paper; I paid 5000. My husband didn't want any part of it. I said, "okay, then you're not gonna get a part of it when I sell it." (Laughter)

16:37 David Allison

I love that.

16:39 Ellie McKinley

And we would meet monthly. And it was not a good scene at all. But we sold it for quite a bit of money.

16:50 David Allison

Wow. That's great. Can you tell me just a little bit more about some of the things you've seen as far as changes in Broomfield and you can be as specific to you know, even this neighborhood, but what are some of the things you've seen change over time?

17:07 Ellie McKinley

Well, I was President of Bal Swan Children's Center soon after I moved here and there was always a Bal Swan dance. It was \$5 and everybody in town came.

17:23 David Allison

Wow, wow.

17:24 Ellie McKinley

And when I was head of it, we had to dance in the basement of the Catholic Church and the nuns blew up the helium balloons. It was so hometown, I cannot tell you how hometown it was. You knew everybody there. Everybody had a good time, drank too much, partied too much and just had a blast.

And the community was really very close, I felt, it was very close. Because you couldn't go to the grocery store and expect to get out there in 20 minutes because you'd see all these people. And that's not true today.

18:06 Ellie McKinley

But I think that's one thing, the biggest thing that I've seen, but maybe it's just me, because I don't know the new people. I had a call today from a friend and she said, "I want you to go to the Bal Swan Children's Center dance." I said, I don't know. My husband and I went later on, you know, I didn't know a soul. I did not know a soul there. They were all new people, which is great, but I didn't know them. All I can remember was how it used to be. And it wasn't the wasn't like that any more. That's true with a lot of things. Our neighborhood was very close, because not many women worked and you could find coffee at any house on the street. (Laughter) Just drop in and have coffee. Our kids all played together and they played outside, which they don't do today. And things were, I say, a lot more neighborly than they are today.

19:08 Ellie McKinley

I had an Open House last Christmas, not this Christmas, last Christmas, for my neighborhood because I wanted us to get to know each other. And people were seeing each other for the first time.

19:21 David Allison

Wow.

19:22 Ellie McKinley

They had no idea about each other.

19:24 David Allison

Yeah, no idea who's a couple houses down.

19:25 Ellie McKinley

Yeah, they didn't know. They had no idea. So I just like to bring people together, bring people together with ideas, to generate the good things that we need to have. I really do, that's one of my passions, I'd say, is to just have people enjoy themselves and work for the better, good or environment. I know I've gotten a lot of criticism because I am always for change.

19:59 Ellie McKinley

Some people don't like change and they think, oh, man, that woman doesn't like the way things are going at all. They just see that, but it wasn't true. It was fine. I just thought there are better ways of doing things. And that's what I was for, better ways of doing things.

20:16 David Allison

Yeah. I love that. That's a wonderful sentiment. Where do you think your sense of pulling people together and wanting to make sure that there's a sense of community and forward progress and getting things done? What do you think that comes from, for you?

20:32 Ellie McKinley

Well, my dad... see that award over there?

20:36 David Allison

Yes

20:37 Ellie McKinley

He was Citizen of the Year and he was involved with every, every good cause in my little hometown.

20:42 David Allison

This is from Henderson?

20:44 Ellie McKinley

Yeah, yeah. He was. So I think it comes, I know it comes from him. So my mother said, "You only need one volunteer in a family." (Laughter)

20:55 Ellie McKinley

She did not participate as a volunteer in anything.

20:58 David Allison

Yeah. But that was his thing.

21:00 Ellie McKinley

Yeah, it was this thing. And I know, he did a lot, for a lot of people. And I just really admired what he did.

21:11 David Allison

Yeah. That's wonderful. Can you tell me a little bit more about some of the other things you've been involved with in the community? Are you involved in a church or a faith community, anything like that?

21:25 Ellie McKinley

Well, yeah, I've always gone to Episcopal church. My husband was an Episcopalian, I was a Methodist. And at first we took the kidsNo, my dad, when we were in Henderson, my dad would pick up the kids and take them to the Methodist Church, and one hour free a week. (Laughter)

21:45 Ellie McKinley

Because our kids were two and a half years apart from the oldest to the youngest, and there were, you know, three of them. So they were really like raising triplets.

21:57 Ellie McKinley

And so then I thought, This is crazy. We need to all be united in wherever we go to church, and I didn't think Melvin would change or would want to. So I became an Episcopalian. And when I was growing up, that was where we had our Girl Scout troop. And when we came out here, the son of the priest that was there, we were very close to them. We just always went to the midnight service there and that sort of thing. So I've been active in the church, over the years, done many, many things. Whatever was

going on there. Yeah, President of Church Women United, which was a really nice group that united the churches in town.

22:45 David Allison

Oh, interesting

22:46 Ellie McKinley

When we first came, you knew all the ministers of every church. There were only five major churches at the time. And you felt very comfortable with the people that belonged because we all did things together. I don't know that that happens today. I don't know. I don't think it does.

23:05 David Allison

Yeah. I've never heard of that before. That's interesting. It might not be around anymore, but that's an interesting idea, for sure.

23:12 Ellie McKinley

Yeah, we did a lot of things together.

23:15 Ellie McKinley

Then, I've been active with (Dottie Moyer - spelling? name??) going to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation over in South Dakota.

23:25 David Allison

Yeah. Interesting.

23:27 Ellie McKinley

I've been there six, six times, I think, which has been very interesting. When we first went, she belonged to a group, or she has a group that makes all sorts of hats and scarves and gloves and that sort of thing. So we had a lot of that stuff with us when we went up there. I thought we ought to find out where we're sending this stuff, find something about it. So we went up there and met with this priest that I didn't like at all. And he said, "Oh, well, probably they wouldn't want that stuff." We just take it over to wherever they had a giveaway thrift shop or whatever. And I thought that's not right. I don't think we'll do that. So we went around, we stopped at one of the schools. And as I was walking up, I had gloves in my hand for the kids. And so I talked with this woman and I said, "Do you think your child would wear these gloves?" Oh, yeah, she took them from me. And in those days Pine Ridge was supposed to be the poorest reservation in the country. These people had so little, and no grocery store, no bank.

24:43 Ellie McKinley

They'd have to go to, I think, Rapid City or somewhere, to get anything. Now it's a lot better. They do have a bank.

24:54 Ellie McKinley

Because of Dottie Moyer, they have a lot; they start getting a lot of equipment.

25:00 Ellie McKinley

The Rotary here has given a lot of money to help get them started up there. And they grow their own vegetables. They have their own greenhouse. They have a huge new community center that Running Strong paid for, which is an Indian organization.

25:23 Ellie McKinley

And last time we went up there, they were decorating Dottie, not me, but they gave us blankets and, you know, paraded us around. (Laughter)

25:34 Ellie McKinley

It was really, sort of, you know, you knew that I hadn't done anything, but while I was along with the person who had done it. (Laughter)

25:43 Ellie McKinley

But that's one thing that I've really been pleased with the way it's turned out.

25:50 Ellie McKinley

We did Jump Start, too, when I was a teacher. It was 7:30 in the morning; they had morning math over at Kohl School and I was a volunteer over there. And I realized that come September, these kids couldn't remember anything. It's summer. So we started Jump Start.

26:15 David Allison

Okay.

26:16 Ellie McKinley

And it was a two-week program that we had right before school started, for Math and English.

26:21 David Allison

Nice.

26:22 Ellie McKinley

It was wonderful, but it stopped during COVID. It wasn't picked back up. The woman who was supposed to head it up, had a child that was sick, and it just never got started again. I didn't have the energy to get it unstuck. But it was really a wonderful program. So lots of fun. We made it fun. Yeah, made it fun for the teachers. Got a lot of retired teachers involved in it. We had 100 kids and Rotary gave us \$500 to pay for the incidentals.

26:54 David Allison

Oh, wow. So that's wonderful.

26:55 Ellie McKinley

No, it was a really, really good program.

26:58 David Allison

Yeah, yeah, that sounds like it is. So many kids have a hard time keeping that stuff with them over the summer.

27:05 Ellie McKinley

And they don't remember it. Yeah. I remember teaching first graders math. Lordy, I thought, the concept. We don't realize how difficult sometimes Math, the one plus one is two. They just, you know, it's so foreign to some of these kids. They just don't get it. (Laughter)

27:24 Ellie McKinley

And when they do get it, it is such a thrill for a teacher to see the light come on there. (Laughter)

27:31 Ellie McKinley

Oh, by golly, they got it.

27:34 Ellie McKinley

So I don't know what else I can tell you. I used to be called the spider lady when I did nature training

27:49 Ellie McKinley

Well, we were supposed to give our reports at the end of our training. And I was going to be in a wedding somewhere. So I needed to pick out something that nobody would pick out. Well, nobody likes spiders. (Laughter)

28:03 Ellie McKinley

That's what I'll do. Nobody likes spiders. And so, not that I am not an expert on spiders, but it was an easy thing to do and I've given presentations all over the place.

28:21 Ellie McKinley

My main purpose was to teach the kids not to be afraid of spiders. There are very few that you need to be aware of that are dangerous. You need to teach them not to pick up any spider that comes along but to not be afraid of these little teeny tiny things. And they get it from their parents.

28:40 Ellie McKinley

Their parents instill that fear in them and it's just awful. I gave a program on spiders to elderly people. Well, I decided that wasn't the thing either.

28:53 Ellie McKinley

They were scared. Just scared. (Laughter)

28:56 Ellie McKinley

They didn't like spiders at all.

29:00 Ellie McKinley

And I got interested in Broomfield's past and so I did a series of talks with old Broomfield people.

29:09 David Allison

Oh really?

29:10 Ellie McKinley

In fact, I think the library has a tape that we did. Kayla Schwenck (Name? spelling?) and I did, interviewing old settlers in the area. This was some time ago and they were still around. They wouldn't be around today. But if you want to, if you want to see old Bromfield, there's some good....

29:33 David Allison

Listen to those tapes over there. Yeah, yeah. I should check that out. I know that we recently digitized a number of the cassette tapes and videotapes. And so we digitized them, so that then you can access them online or digitally and so yeah, that's definitely important to have those. Thank you. Thank you for doing that.

30:04 Ellie McKinley

I didn't do that, just the one thing I did. I know there was a shoe shop over there where the Grange, not the Grange, the place that burned....

30:24 David Allison

Oh, the Jones Hall?

30:25 Ellie McKinley

The Jones Hall. There was a shoe shop next to it, but it was closed during the winter, so he always had his sign, be back on or before spring. (Laughter)

30:36 David Allison

On or before spring. So funny. (Laughter)

30:42 David Allison

Well, I think we're about ready to finish up here. But I just wanted to ask one other question. We started a little bit earlier, talking about open space.

30:52 David Allison

But why is open space important to you? Why is it better to have the open space than another apartment building, for example?

31:01 Ellie McKinley

Well, I think it clears your mind, I think, being out in nature. There's a lot of documentation related to being in nature and how it helps you to relax and take the stress out of your life and, and just be a part of what God has given you.

31:20 David Allison

Yeah.

31:21 Ellie McKinley

And I think that's important. We're all so busy all the time. And I find myself being busy. Even at my age, I'm busy. Not as busy as I used to be, but I am busy. And compared to people that....I don't even know anybody my age, now that I think out it (Laughter)

31:47 Ellie McKinley

They've all died. In fact, I just wrote my Christmas letter that's all about my friends that have died. And I said, the best place to go is to go to a funeral and then you see the ones that are left. You can socialize. (Laughter)

32:06 Ellie McKinley

I think open space is very important. We're so lucky in Broomfield because there was land left. It wasn't all developed.

32:15 David Allison

That's right.

32:16 Ellie McKinley

And a lot of places when they woke up to the fact that they wanted Open Space, they didn't have it.

32:21 David Allison

That's right. Yeah, yeah.

32:22 Ellie McKinley

It was too late. And even when we were doing it, I remember talking with someone about, you know, what's up North with all the open lands. And he said, No, that's already been developed, that's already been bought by developers. They're just waiting for a chance to develop the land to get in there.

32:47 Ellie McKinley

I think....I know we need housing. But, I know having density is important, because it eliminates the need for a lot of infrastructure...

33:06 David Allison

Sure.

33:07 Ellie McKinley

...But it's too bad people can't live in houses with yards around them like we used to, have the same kind of playground around your own house.

33:21 David Allison

Yeah, for the kids to get out and do all those things.

33:27 Ellie McKinley

Yeah, there are things that were part of the past that I wish we still had; they're just not there anymore.

33:35 Ellie McKinley

And nobody really, people growing up today, don't even realize how it was. Yeah, you have no idea. Yeah, I remember racing out the door, to see an airplane pass overhead, because it was so rare. (Laughter)

33:50 David Allison

That's so funny.

33:53 Ellie McKinley

So I've gone through a lot of stages in my life, you know, of growth and changes. And so it's been a good life.

34:05 David Allison

Well, thank you very much. I can tell it has been and you've had a great impact in this community. And I want to thank you for that. And thank you for your time today, too.

34:13 Ellie McKinley

You're welcome. (Laughter) I don't know about the impact, but anyway, I've had a good time with it.

34:18 David Allison

Absolutely. Well, thank you again

34:20 Ellie McKinley

You're welcome.