

Ann Hoffman

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Ann: And sometimes when we would come up to visit my grandmother in Denver, we'd come up the western slope side and cut over. And when we came through Broomfield it was there was nothing there, but cornfields, and a little small railroad station. And a train that was running through there all the time. Dave: Yeah, yeah.

Ann: And you know, there was, there was really no town there at all. There was just a few, like, there was a general store, and a gas station, and a couple of other little buildings, as I remember. And that was it.

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Dave: Yeah, just nothing much going on. And we don't feel that

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Ann: It was all farmland. That's amazing. That's

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Dave: Amazing. So I think we'll go ahead and get started. And here's, I'm going to, you know, the quarters going. And what I'm going to do is just have you kind of introduce yourself, and then we'll get started with the interview if that's all right.

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Ann: So Well, my name is Anne Hoffman. And I am in my 90th year of living now. And in the early days of Broomfield when it was a very small town. I worked for a gentleman by the name of Bill Markel. I was a registered nurse. And he was trying to set up a business. And so we became friends. And I worked part time for him. And only part time because I had four little children. We had a really good relationship. And I don't know if I should kind of jump to this or oh, sorry, sorry.(chiming cell phone rings)

01:48

Ann: Just sorry, no problem I'll shut that off. Is it ? Yes. Okay. So, our early days there, my husband worked at Rocky Flats. And so I had these four little children. And I had this wonderful, wonderful lady that came by the name of Mrs. Schmckley, her husband worked for the city, he was kind of the grounds guy that did all of the mowing and things like that. And she came to take care of my children. While I

was working with Bill. Well, one day, I come into work, I only worked like three days, part part or three days a week. But one day I came into work, and he said, You know, I need for you to come into my office for a minute, there's something I have to talk to you about. And he had been to a meeting. And there were 15 sets of parents there who all had children with learning disabilities, or mental retardation or combinations thereof. And so he went to that meeting in the evening, and he listened to everything they had to say. And the next morning, he had already processed this in his own mind. And his comments to me were, you know, I went to a meeting last night. And all I could think of is who could do this? Well, Ann Hoffman could. (comment from Bill) And I don't really like talking to you about this, because I think I'm gonna lose you. But I do think that you should go meet with them and see what their interests are, and see if you could fulfill their interest. So that's how it all started. Bill- Bill is the in my mind, he is the kingpin.

03:46

Dave: And so thinking about that you had come to Broomfield because of your husband's job with Rocky Flats is not the original reason why I came in that would have been in you said 1960.

04:00

Ann: So that was in 1961 We came September the third 1961 And that is the first snowfall recorded in Colorado. And our moving van came and moved us in in this beautiful snow. Oh, he's lovely. I am a Colorado girl. I was raised down around Durango. Dave: Okay.

Ann: And so you know, this was coming home to me. This was brand new to my husband. He was an Illinois boy. He had never been in Colorado. before. So this was exciting.

04:30

Dave: And where did you did you meet then in Illinois?

04:34

Ann: yes my. My father was with Boy Scouts of America and he was an executive. And he went from here in Colorado to Minneapolis to Chicago. When I was a freshman in high school, we moved to Chicago area. And during my high school years that is where I met my future husband and he was in Illinois boy, I went to college in Galesburg, Illinois, and I graduated from the nursing program there. And then, of course, the Korean War was now just starting to wind up. My husband had been overseas for two years. And we weren't married at that point. But he had been overseas for two years in Japan. And he was in charge of supplies for all of the fleet in Korea, and around so he had to make sure they had everything they needed. And so when he came home, it was time for him to be discharged. So he wanted to go back and finish his college education. So we went to Champaign, and he was a student there to finish up. And then after that, he took a job for a short time in Decatur. But Colorado kept calling him he had been there one time, and he was looking for work in Colorado. So that's how we got here in 1961.

06:05

Dave: That's great. That's great. So tell me a little bit more about Bill Markel, and kind of the situation when you started and what wasn't named Bal Swan yet? Ann: Oh, no Dave: no action there yet?

06:22

Ann: No, actually, it was called. The Broomfield Foundation for Exceptional Children. And nobody seemed to know what that meant. What is exceptional. And so then it was changed by the board to the Broomfield Foundation for Retarded Children. And there were 15 sets of parents in the beginning. Several of them decided to institutionalize their children instead. But we had a really great program. I was very proactive. And of course, with a nursing background, I was very interested in getting these children to be able to do all of the things that a normal child would do, feed themselves, walk, play with each other, that sort of thing. So I set up a program and I instituted a special program that was popular in the 60s, known as Doman-Delacato. And that was where some educators had found that if you put children through various physical activities, you can increase their learning capacities. So that was one of the things that was part of our program. And we did pattern, the children. I would think for probably more than a year, maybe maybe closer to two. Yeah. And we got a lot of success. There is one gentleman by the name of Dennis Carbery, who lives in Denver. He was my student beginning at age two. His mother was very interested in his progress. He certain things he was amazing. For example, he could tell you every program that came on television from 6am, until he went to bed at night, oh my goodness, you know, everyone he knew who the people were that were in charge of it, the whole works. But he didn't do a very good job of feeding himself, and he couldn't walk. So he was part of the patterning program. And he did walk about the last year of my program, I had him walking in the building. And one day, I recognize that he could walk to a doorway, but he would not cross over the doorway, he would not step through to the next room. So I told my staff, okay, so you do this, this, this this. I'm taking Dennis down to the Broomfield shopping center. And we are going to start at Walgreens. And we're going to go through one door after another after another after another until Dennis gets it. And so I said, I have no idea when I'll be back. But we're going to succeed. And so we got to Walgreens and I introduced it to him and told him we were going through the door and he dropped down onto the sidewalk and started screaming and yelling and carrying on. And I picked him up and I walked him right through and and we've looked at some things in in the store. And then we came back to go out. And when we got to the door, he screamed and threw himself down on the ground. And I picked him up. And we walked him on through. And this went on through many of the stores. Before one time, he just decided to walk on through. And so he did, yeah. I just saw a video of Dennis. And he was telling that he was six years old when he learned to walk. And that's about right. And that all had started at the school. But he wouldn't walk through a doorway until that one day that I took him up to the shopping center. And I think I was gone an hour or an hour and a half before we work that out. Yeah.

10:52

Dave: So the school, where was it located? When you first start

10:57

Ann: On the Kohl school grounds? And I think that little cottage school is still there.

Dave: Yeah.

Ann: And that is where we had our program.

Dave: Nice. Nice.

11:09

Dave: So tell me a little bit more about kind of the method, sounds like it was very individualized,

Ann: With each child, yeah,

Dave: you kind of really had to figure out what, what the best technique would be. So how did you kind of come upon doing that you mentioned your background, and nursing and healthcare and that sort of thing.: But what else kind of gave you that, those insights?

11:34

Ann: I can't explain that. The best the best solution I have for that I was getting messages from God. Because, you know, in my pro, I had worked in pediatrics. But I'd never had a child like that. I had had lots of children with Down Syndrome and other problems. But never such a unique individual as as this kid was. And somehow I would come into the unlock the door and walk into the building. And somehow they're just some seem to be like, Oh, I wonder if I could do this today. It was always a exploring type of a thing. So it was innovative and creative and just happened. Yeah.

12:38

Dave: And then it sounds like you were probably one of the early or maybe the first employees. Is that correct? I was yeah yeah, Dave: you were Yeah. And then what kind of how did the school begin to maybe expand or that sort of thing in the time that you were there?

12:54

Ann: Okay. It didn't expand a lot during the time I was there. at for, the children, there was continuous and kind of slow growth for everybody. But it expanded a lot with the volunteers. I had several volunteers in the beginning. And it wasn't too long before. I had more volunteers than I could handle, which was really nice. And so I kind of set up a schedule and different volunteers had different days that they would come. One of my neighbors probably was the most creative and observant of all of the volunteers. And she kind of kind of fed some things to me, which were really helpful. She later on went on to become a teacher in the public schools, in when they move back to their home state of Oregon. But she was the one you know, I would say, you know, what if we tried such and such and she, oh, that's a great idea. Let's do it. You know, she was just an amazing person. So I need to give her a lot of credit. Her name was Larena VanNorwick. And she just lived a few doors down for me on West Seventh Avenue drive in Broomfield.

14:34

Dave: Nice Nice. So can you tell me just a little bit more about like, how, how long you were there and kind of like what what happened as far as you know, the school developing throughout the course of your time.

14:53

Ann: There was no discussion at all about what became Bal Swan until the very, very tail end of my career there at a point where I knew that my husband had already taken a job with General Electric in jet engines in Cincinnati, and we were going to be moving. And about that same time is about when the board of directors was getting their heads together and thinking about the direction that they wanted to go. I've only been to Bal Swan once. And that was 10 years ago. Some of my really close friends who were very helpful when I was at the Broomfield Foundation, came as volunteers, and Jane Spain. Do

you know Jane? Then she's deceased, of course now, but Jane and I had been friends since 1962.

Dave:

Ann: Wow. And every time I came to Colorado, from Cincinnati, Jane and I always got together when we moved back to Colorado, Jane, and I always spent, you know, two or three or four visits a year to gather. And one day she said to me, you know, have you ever been to this school called Bal Swan? And I said, No. And she said, Well, you know, that's, that's kind of what took off from the Broomfield Foundation. And I'm like, Yes, I was aware of that, but I have never been there. So about 10 years ago, she and I went and spent the day. On that particular day, I was sorry to say that Marlene Putnam was not there. I don't know where she was that particular day. But I had known Marlene, Marlene was a kindergarten teacher in that little cottage school. Dave: Oh my goodness

Ann: where I had all of my children. Yeah. And my oldest daughter was in Marlene's kindergarten class. Yeah. So I knew Marlene, you know, from 1961 on. When she retired from teaching, she did come and help a little bit to volunteer at the foundation. And then as the Foundation is moving from the Broomfield Foundation into the Bal Swan, she's kind of coming on, and I'm getting ready to move to Ohio.

17:35

Dave: Okay. Okay. So that was kind of what the transition. Yeah. So can you tell me just a little bit more, so you must have been a very busy person because you had four children. And did you have all of your children by the time you moved to Broomfield? Yes, yeah, so Yeah,

17:51

Ann: Mark was three months old when he moved to Broomfield.

17:54

Dave: Yes, yeah.the youngest. And so what was that like trying to work and have the job and working for Bill Markel, while also raising the kids says, you said you had, you know, somebody that would come to watch the show, you know, what was that like?

18:11

Ann: Yes. There was a lady whose husband worked for the city. And he did all of the mowing and things like that. And she really was looking for some way to enhance their income. So this was really great for her. And it was really great for me because she was excellent. Dave: That's great.

Ann: She when I would leave for work, she was there. The kids were happy. Some of my kids, two of them were in school already. Two of them were still home. And when I would come back from the Broomfield Foundation, everything was in order in my house, she had done laundry, the laundry was folded, ready for me to put away as other children were happy. It was a wonderful combination. And they, her name was Schmickley . And the kids could say that so they called her Nikki. And it was a wonderful time. It made it possible for me to do what I did. Yeah, that's because I could never have done it without her.

19:26

Dave: Can you tell me a little bit about how you saw Broomfield kind of change over the time that you were there? You said when you first came, just, you know, a little bump in the road, pretty much the railroad and you know, not not a whole lot else.

19:38

Ann: no 6000 people and it was very small town. There were two housing units. One was on the east side of Midway, and that's where Bill and Jean lived. And the other one was the brand new one. And that's where the houses were available now. And so we bought a house on West Seventh Avenue Drive, which was just a block going to have from the school. Everything was small, everything was close. It was a very positive community. Most of the people that lived there either work for the city, they were airline pilots, or they worked at Rocky Flats. Dave: Yeah, that sounds

Ann: Oh, I forgot one very important group. The people that were in the oil industry. Oh, yes. Yeah. But those were the only people that lived there. And we had a lot of fun. And we have a lot of friends and we had we have a lot of really nice get togethers.

20:39

Dave: Yeah yeah. It sounds like, so your your husband was a veteran. Were there a lot of other veterans in Broomfield? Annn: yes. Dave: Can you just share maybe a little bit more about you know, so when you move to Cincinnati, and then kind of how you ended up back in Colorado, kind of curious about that?

21:02

Ann: Well, we never intended to stay in Cincinnati very long. When we moved there, we thought once the SST(Super Sonic Transport) program, which is what my husband went for, is we were competing with France, to build the SST. And that was a very exciting time in my husband's life. And that was actually before the Broomfield Foundation kind of took hold. Yeah. After the SST contract was won by France instead of the US. There were other jobs that my husband took, but they've never really satisfied him. And so we were really looking forward to getting back to Colorado. And it took us quite a while to find just the right thing to do that.

22:01

Dave: Yeah, and so by the time you came back then you didn't move back to Broomfield when you came back to Colorado. You moved somewhere else?

22:08

Ann: a no, we moved to Windsor. Okay. Yeah. Yeah, Windsor was just kind of coming up. And my second oldest child, Deb, lived in Windsor, she and her husband had moved from Illinois to Colorado. And we've also then moved to Windsor. We loved it. There was really great.

22:32

Dave: That's great. So what else did I miss about this your story or about the Broomfield Foundation that we haven't talked about yet?

22:44

Ann: Well, mostly, I think. I think the thing that I would like to share with whomever, is that the Broomfield Foundation was the foundation for the Bal Swan school. The Broomfield Foundation was very different than Bal Swan. And it really centered very much on a small groups, individual care, lots

of medical nursing care from because of my background. And so once Bal Swan was started and began it, it became quite a different but very productive program.

23:42

Dave: Yeah yeah, it makes sense. Yeah, so and I think, you know, thinking about our I had a child who attended Bell Swan, did you have it? Yeah. Our son has Down syndrome. And it was one of those things where, you know, my wife had heard about the school and it just was really just a kind of a blessing to have him go to that school and to have that sort of care and be integrated into the classroom. And it was just really ugly. But as I was thinking about that, you know, just what other sorts of maybe examples of how you worked with different students that you should be able to share?

24:25

Ann Well, I think another one that was really paramount, of course, was also a Down Syndrome kid. And that was Robbie, Hallend?. And Robbie, I know is deceased now. And so as his mom, which I'm really sorry for, but Jan, always stayed very close to me. Even when we moved to Cincinnati. There were little letters from time to time and keeping me up to date with you know, what was going on with Robbie and so forth. And I was just so thrilled that I He actually did graduate from high school and proactive mama. She was amazing. And he had this wonderful career. I just couldn't get over his 30 years of service in the food industry, which was was amazing. And according to his mom, they, they just really loved him there at McDonald's, that people they were. He treated everybody. Like they were somebody special. And you know, that doesn't happen around the world very often.

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Dave: You really see somebody and you're able to acknowledge them.

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Ann: Well, Robbie got treated very special himself. And and I think that is something that was ingrained in him. And he could pass that on. Yeah. Which is pretty exciting. Dave: Absolutely.

25:55

Dave: Absolutely. And thank you so much. I really appreciated my time chatting with you today. It's been a pleasure.

26:01

Ann: My pleasure. I want to show you some pictures before you go. Absolutely.

26:05

Dave And I'd love to take photos of this project. That's right. Okay. Thank you so much.