

Betty Reed

BR: My name is Betty Reed. Today is July 19.

I: When were you born?

BR: I was born April 8, 1928. I will be 83.

I: Have you lived in Barrington all your life?

BR: No, I've got forty years. We moved here in 1966.

I: Where were you born?

BR: I was born in upstate New York. I was born in the Conteg a(?) area. (unintelligible) in the Finger Lake area.

I: What precipitated your move to Barrington?

BR: Well, my husband worked for the American Can Company which was right here where the Garlands is, so we moved to Barrington because he worked for the can company. And at that point we lived out on Lake Cook Road, so it was very convenient for him to get to work – we were about six minutes from work which was very nice.

I: So I know you're very active in public service.

BR: I have been.

I: Yes. So you were one of the founders of Meals on Wheels?

BR: Yes. And so forth. So I'm called.

I: So how did that happen?

BR: Well, I'm very active in the Barrington United Methodist Church which burned down and is now at 59 and Lake Cook (sic), and I was a member of what we call the Missions Commission and when we were talking about what were the needs in the community, this is the one that came up. And so we went about doing what was necessary to get it started and I'm not quite sure, but I think that was about 1976. That's about when it was. I could probably look it up somewhere.

I: How did that come about? Tell us a little bit about how it got started.

BR: Well, of course, the rumor had gotten around that that was what was needed in the community, and so actually I think I went to Church Women United to get people who – and you know, I got a committee of people together. We didn't have a Council on Aging at that time, so we did it kind of on our own. I was the coordinator. Those days you'd find somebody who would do the responsibility for

those things. It was very hard. In the history, a couple of people followed me, but we just couldn't find anyone who was willing to be a volunteer for this project. I know you know how that goes. So we moved on and we hired someone which worked out very nicely. So we hired a person who is now teacher at Prairie or Station with the gifted program. She was having babies so she couldn't go out and do the kinds of things she wanted to do. So it was a good time for her.

I: (unintelligible)

BR: So now of course, her children are out of high school. She was great to work with. And we felt it was a real find to have her to help. Then when she was gone, we tried to look for somebody else and that didn't work out and so that was when we made – I think that was when we made- we merged with BACOA.

I: When you started, how did you do your meals? Did you order them from somewhere?

BR: We went to Wauconda, worked with Wauconda Division of Catholic Charities.

I: Oh wow.

BR: But we picked up our meals at Wauconda and at the hospital and at St. Paul's Church, we were able to- We hooked up with several organizations. People would drop containers off at St. Paul's and the person who brought it back would leave the containers at St. Paul's and the next person would pick up the containers and (unintelligible). But I really appreciated all that St. Paul's did, and now we're back to picking up our meals at St. Paul's. St. Paul's has a long history with us. At that time it was at the front door, and it wasn't always as neat as it is now. It's fairly neat now. But we had to keep the containers overnight and so forth. So it was a little tricky. But we worked with Catholic Charities and we worked with interesting people.

I: Were there a lot of people getting meals when you started?

BR: Actually, it's not too far from the same number. We haven't really increased our number that much, you know, and I have always liked working with the different churches. The ecumenical part, I have found very interesting (unintelligible). But anyway, we had a list of possible clients and another lady and I went out to visit these people to see if they were really interested. It was very interesting, very (unintelligible). So we had a very nice day and by the end of the day, I don't remember who said which, but one of us said, "Well, how many children do you have?" And she said "Twelve". And I said "two". Her name was Mary Rinehart. We had a very nice day. I had never met her before. But she has always been very faithful. All the churches have been very helpful. It has been very nice to work with them.

I: What was the reaction in the community to this?

BR: Oh, I don't know. We just had to wait and see. We heard by word of mouth. We did our own outreach. I don't think Catholic Charities did that sort of thing. So you know it was word of mouth. People came along. We had some very nice people who had lived in the community for a long time.

Some of our original clients knew people (unintelligible). They were elderly when we started (unintelligible). The number isn't that much bigger-

I: It hasn't changed a lot.

BR: It's changed, but we have times when we get down really low, and we have what I call "fruit basket upset" and we start all over again. But we thought that delivering meals was real important, but it was also important to have somebody come to visit every day. We didn't visit, but the delivery involved a stop to chat and having someone come in every day. I remember that one of our people was Jenny Lines, of the Lines School, she was one of our original clients. And she was a lovely little old lady. Just like me. (laughter) And she lived over on Lake Street. And I remember – one of the things we asked was if they would like six days a week instead of five and she said, "Well, no." Because she – when girls come, "I have to get up and get dressed."

I: Leave me my weekends. Was she Arnett's wife?

BR: No, sister. Yeah, I think she was his sister.

I: (unintelligible)

BR: I think I've done all of that. It's changed a lot. Actually, I suppose basically it hasn't changed that much. We still have outreach only now they do the outreach with a social worker and give us people – But as always, we provide food for people who could not shop or cook, and then to have this daily visit where somebody just came in and delivered it, but at least there was somebody in there.

I: Checking in.

BR: Sometimes I appreciate that more now, you know – when you're alone. I'm pretty well taken care of but sometimes I think, "What if this were every day you didn't have anybody?"

I: You were also involved in Crop Walk?

BR: My husband and I have been very involved with Crop Walk, the local walk to collect funds for hunger. Seventy-five percent goes to the (?) project and twenty-five percent stays in the community and my husband was the treasurer for many years. I walked and so forth. And then he died, and he -. But he was always pretty sharp and he was down at Alexian Brothers for a long time, and I went down to see him , I was doing the Crop Walk that day, and he said, "You know, I think you could do this treasurer's job. I think you've got some people over at the Garlands who would help you." So we talked about it. So I went back. This gentleman over at the Garlands – my husband made friends very easily – and I asked Tom Bush – I don't know if you've met Tom Bush- he's pretty independent- and Doc Cowan (?) kept saying, "Can I do anything for you?" Of course he was offering to take me to the hospital, and when I told him what I needed, he was awfully surprised. I said, "I need somebody to help me count my money." because – well, you know, on the days of the Crop Walk, we would probably take in fifteen, sixteen hundred dollars, and you really shouldn't do that by yourself, it's not good business policy.

So he came in. We really enjoy that very much. He comes down and we get a big – for the first month or so, there's quite a bit of money. And I figured this is something I could do – I have a minimum of meetings, I don't drive a car, and so forth, so it works out very well, plus I am easily replaced, in fact, I'm very careful to see that (unintelligible). John B---(?) - I don't know if you know John. He is a little younger. He's the retired math teacher over at the high school, so he's been very good about it, so if, you know, something should happen to me – 85 years old is very, very different – John could take over. Well, I could be replaced. But the Garlands has been so helpful about taking the money. You know it is 24/7 and it's awfully hard to find a place where people – you know churches have hours, they're open to four o'clock and so forth. So it would be (?). Someone is going to have to figure out how to do this one of these days.

I: Has it grown a lot since you started to be involved?

BR: Well, once again, we're kind of the same. We've done very, very well. Our record year was two years ago and it was sixty-five thousand dollars and last year we did fifty-five which was very, very good. We were really surprised, you know, considering the economy. But it (unintelligible) my computer. I use my computer a lot, so I just do that on the computer. And the money goes to the Northern Illinois Food Bank which my husband was very involved with. He was a volunteer down there, right up until practically he died, and then the other local things are Meals With Wheels and PIN which is a group that church ministers have which makes a place where – you know, they have people who come through and ask for money. There are abusers (?) and so they can go to the ministers, and they say, "Well, I can give you a voucher for gas and a voucher for trade – I don't know what all they can do. But then they can't go to the next one and say – because it's all on the record. There's probably some people who really have needs that stop by – they don't actually get much money, but it looks good on the record books.

I: (unintelligible)

BR: Yes, they give some money. Now we may have to redo this but (unintelligible) we also send some money to Wauconda and Lake Zurich so the Wauconda church is very (?), so we do the Wauconda food pantry and Carpentersville is in real need out there. I've taken food out there and people have real need, so they are some of the people we give to.

Now Crop Walk has changed its name. It started as, you know, they went out and gleaned the fields after the crops had been harvested so we have gone from hunger to-. People say, "What does CROP stand for. It is Committee for Recovering of Poverty. So we do other things like building wells –

I: Interesting. I didn't know that.

BR: Every time I write that CROP I write that address so people will know. But it is all a part of Church World Service which has a good reputation. They are for the emergencies that happen. They are all ready located in these countries, so they don't have to start out. I'm very careful about giving to individuals, even though – these organizations are organized and have the stuff to do it, and I have great faith in Church World Services and Overseas Relief and some of these other well-known groups

I: You mention Barrington. Did you (unintelligible)

BR: I did. As part of Church Women United and we had two people who were in Church Women United and Mary Anderson and Jeanette Muench – Jeanette was the Salvation Army Representative and she really (?) Giving Days. It's time to move on. It's hard to get out of these things, so I kind of (just let things lie) for a couple of years, but then Jeanette moved out of the community and Mary moved on to other things. That Committee now is – the daughter is –

I: How did you get involved with (Church Women United?)

BR: Well, I guess I was always into things and they were the persons I went to when I needed – but I just- My mother was involved with Church Women United. And many of us got there that way. So when I was in the community, that was one of the things I wanted to do, and I – We are all quite concerned because, once again, we haven't got the leadership and it is bad. We are going to be having what we call our Celebrations in November, and it's very sad, but we can't find a president, we can't find a vice-president. We have a very good treasurer – not me- and it's too bad. We have clubs and we have people who like to do things, but we cannot find somebody to take over.

I: (unintelligible)

BR: Exactly.

(unintelligible exchange)

I: Now did you work in the Butterball Turkey Hotline?

BR: Oh, I still do work in the Butterball Turkey Hotline. I haven't been invited for this year, so I don't know what's going to happen. But this is the program where we answer questions around the country for people who are cooking their turkeys and would like to have information. And so this would be my seventeenth or eighteenth year. I took off one year when my husband was sick, and now I haven't been invited and I just got my car all fixed up. The problem is that it is in Naperville and it's kind of a long drive, and this has become a group of very close friends actually, so I work with the Crazy Crew which is a group of about ten that have worked in the past, and we just call in (unintelligible). But it's been a really been interesting. People you talk to, you know, - very nice.

I: Have you got any crazy calls?

BR: Well, crazy calls have been received. I never – I'm trying to think if I ever- I never go any that were too crazy, but occasionally somebody will call – little kids playing after school or something like that. I haven't had any problem calls. We are supervisor-led, so I can either turn them off or turn them over to the supervisor (unintelligible)

I: But mostly it is just people who are – my turkey is frozen, or –

BR: Exactly. Oh boy, that is a big deal. Especially the day before Thanksgiving. But that has changed. Not that so much, but the clientele. I would say 25% of our callers are men and sometimes they are

men who are divorced and this is their first Christmas cooking for their kids. Then all the men love the Food Network. They would call and say, "I want to do something different." (unintelligible) So that is really kind of fun. "You have our next caller in?"

I: Do you find that people are more likely to not know how to cook a turkey these days?

BR: First of all, the mother-in-law is coming. Then they have to take all the pots and pans out of the oven which they have been using to store and as I've said they've never really done anything – And this is really quite intimidating –

I: Well, you know, you have certain expectations from your first turkey, you know.

BR: Well, he could have read the directions.

I: Did you give out recipes?

BR: Not a lot of recipes. The gravy recipe is in the wrapper. For one thing, it takes time and you usually suggest they read the magazines. And now there is so much on the internet; recipes.com and so many things. When we are really so busy which is that last week before Christmas and before Thanksgiving. When I was young and good, I'd do 200 calls on Thanksgiving Day, so you don't have much time to give recipes. Mostly time and frozen and that sort of thing. There are still a lot of calls for eight hours. And of course, I'm not used to an eight hour day. Last year I went and got a room at the Best Western and stayed for three days. It was hard on the profit thing, but of course, you don't really do it for profit, but it worked out really well.

I: What did you do (unintelligible)?

BR: Well, I say, "Let's put it in the oven and start cooking." And it takes quite a bit longer and in the end, the product is not quite what you would hope, but it's done.

I: It's done.

BR: We've done it, and it's not too bad, really. But if it's in the morning of Christmas, you might just put it away and buy a ham.

I: Fine for sandwiches.

BR: But of course the day before they just put it in deep cold water, and it'll be OK.

I: How did you find out about this job?

BR: Well, my degree is in Home Economics. I graduated from Cornell and I graduated in Home Economics and I belonged to a home economics group. I worked at the college for about ten years – office work- and my supervisor was part of my home economics group, and I said, "Gee, I would kind of like to do that." So she said, "Just write me a letter." But everybody is a home economist – we have a lot of dieticians now. My daughter is a dietician. My daughter does this too. She is a registered dietician. Quite a few of the girls are – and we are all girls.

I: No boys on the Butterball Turkey Hotline?

BR: We had an e-mail. A lot of this is done by e-mail now.

I: Of course.

BR: Somebody challenged that. But we don't have any.

I: How interesting. What did you learn (unintelligible)

BR: Well, I was a teacher for two years. I got a degree in education and I taught in up-state New York for two years, and then I got married, and I did the marriage thing. I used to have little dress-making classes in my home, and I taught at Proviso High School Adult Education class for a while specializing in tailoring and I worked for Dyllis for a little while and I worked in town at the Octagon House doing office work. I love office work; I love computers. I'm on my seventh computer.

I: Any particular kind you like?

BR: No. I've got a laptop you know. I don't crawl around and put those things up any more (sic). Don Reed is a friend of mine. Do you know Don? He is doing some work for you in the office now, I think.

I: Oh, yeah. OK.

BR: I got a (?). It's been quite a long time since I was on the e-mail. A long time ago. So I worked in the office and using this computer. My brother worked for IBM, and I said, "You know, I can't go into my next life without a computer." So he helped me get some computers and set them up. He lives too far away.

I: Do you keep up with other kinds of technology?

BR: I don't text, but I have a phone. I have to laugh because I have all these things charging. When we were without power, that was the big problem. No power to charge.

I: Oh, I didn't think about that.

BR: I have all sorts of things I charge: my camera, my (?), my Nook,

I: How do you like it?

BR: I like it fine, I like it fine. I'm still learning to use it. We have a wonderful book club at the Garlands and I got myself into Cleopatra and that was quite a challenge, so I got a friend to come in and help me because I didn't have a history or background of - Anyway that was - You get to read books you wouldn't otherwise read. And I play Bridge. I play quite a bit of Bridge.

I: And you and your husband were active in the Arts Council?

BR: He was. He was. And that was kind of interesting. He was the Treasurer of the Arts Council. The Arts Council was in big trouble and they had a nominating committee and they had a board, and there

were a couple of men on the board and Jeanette Minch was. She was a personal friend of mine, she's gone now, but I have her address. She was on this nominating committee and she asked Dwight (?) to be the treasurer and Warren McMillan was the president. I don't know if you remember Warren. He was over at the Garlands, and they sort of straightened things out, so Warren went on and Dwight was the treasurer for quite some time. He enjoyed that. And also, we weren't very arty people, but he sang in a choral group in the western suburbs. It wasn't here. So we met a lot of people we wouldn't have otherwise, and I got to do things I wouldn't otherwise have gotten to do. So that was nice.

I: Whatever became of the Barrington Arts Council?

BR: It died. But they are trying to redo it, but it did encourage and had nice art exhibits of local artists in a series, and it sponsored other kinds of programs. Once again, I think it lost its leadership – the same old story. Women go to work and get paid. We don't go out and do these things for free anymore. I think Karen Darch is trying to redo it.

I: They have a gallery over in the Ice House.

BR: Oh.

I: How do you think Barrington has changed in the time you have been here?

BR: Well, I don't know. As I say, the main thing is the fact that local organizations have trouble getting leadership because we used to do a lot of things during the day. Now, during the day is not a good time to do things because people are out working. Women are lawyers, doctors, and veterinarians. They are not out volunteering. Although there are still a lot of volunteers, but an awful lot of the volunteering is from old people.

I: That's true.

BR: Once they quit working, they want to do things. So that's fine. That's one of the changes. I don't know otherwise – well, neighborhoods aren't the same. When I first moved in, we'd get together with our neighbors and do things. When I left, you didn't know your neighbor necessarily. We lived out on Deerpath so that was kind of different.

I: Did you raise your family here?

BR: Yes. They both went to Barrington High School, and I have three granddaughters that went to Barrington High School. And then I have a daughter in Hinsdale and she has three children. She has two boys and Caroline just graduated from the University of Illinois. She is an RN and has a nice job, but she doesn't start until the first of August, so she came yesterday and helped me clean my kitchen. Oooh. Did she ever do a job for me! Then she has a daughter still in high school and then there is a boy at Illinois Wesleyan (these relationships don't reconcile:dm). And my daughter has gone back to work now. She was a registered dietician. She is working at (?) Clinic – part-time she says. I'm not sure how long this is going to last with the various things that are happening. But she is working very hard now. Whether she is going to be able to do the Talk line and this too, I don't know.

And then my son lives in Barrington Hills. He commutes to Pennsylvania; he is an officer with Vanguard. They have an empty nest. The girls have all graduated. I'm very lucky. They take good care of me and they do nice things for me.

I: Actually do you see a difference from when your children were in school and your grandchildren were in school?

BR: Yes. Well, now people are so protective and hovering. I guess they had to be. I'm just amazed at the phone numbers and how they know exactly where everybody is and what they are doing. They still do. That is really quite different. We didn't have the worries about drugs and alcohol. I didn't have any worries about any of my kids. I'm sure they knew where it probably was, but it wasn't something – They were busy getting their lessons done.

I: If you had unlimited resources and people to work with you, what program would you create now today?

BR: Well, I don't know. I'm kind of concerned there are so many programs. I wouldn't do another program. I would attach myself. Somebody invited me to a leadership conference – there are like 300 programs in this town asking for money. I think there should be some consolidation. I would probably do the same thing, but I would do it with the existing things because everybody who's got an idea, starts a new program instead of finding out where they could fit in with what's going on now. I don't know if that answered your question, but that would be my concern generally.

I: OK. Any particular area –

BR: Well of course at this point, I'm interested in older people – Meals With Wheels, etc. – and I'm still interested in the Northern Illinois Food Bank. Dwight was interested in it and I am doing my donating down there. I wish it were closer.

I: ?

BR: Oh, it's not that far. Dwight drove there all the time. It's in St. Charles. I don't drive that far. I'm very lucky to drive at all, but I drive. I have a car and I drive wherever I go. Sometimes I go down there. They are building a building and I'd like to go to the – well, I've already got a picture of the shovel.

I: There are several people who come here that go over there.

BR: Well, if you do an eight hour day – My boss is just wonderful about hours for me. But if you start at 10 and go to 5, it is dark at 5 and I might have a flat tire on 255 (sic) when it is dark and raining but I was fortunate. I don't drive at night.

I: You have your cell phone though?

BR: (unintelligible) I don't tell everybody about that.

I: Is there anything you want to add?

BR: Well, I enjoyed working with BACOA and I think Joyce is just wonderful. She is a delightful woman. But she owns a house in town (unintelligible). They have been wonderful to work with. We provide all the volunteers for delivery and I think we are pretty faithful about it.

I: Well, thank you, Betty.

BR: Thank you. It's been great to talk with you.