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Janet Chappell interview for a Wright State University History Course

Bethany Chappell-Saxton

Janet Chappell

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Profile: Janet Chappell

Narrator Name: Janet Chappell

Interviewer: Bethany Chappell-Saxton

Author: Janet Chappell

Date of Interview: February 20, 2011

Subject: Community Activism in the Miami Valley

Keywords: Cincinnati, Ohio, Dayton, Catholic, Miami Valley Hospital, BSN, RN, Harlem, New York, Indiana Wesleyan, Harrison Township representative

On February 20, 2011 I arrived at 2436 Elsmere Avenue at 7:15 PM. I have driven to this address many times to eat dinner, to talk, to laugh, to cry, and sometimes just to give my parents a hug, but today was a different kind of visit. Tonight, I was there, at my parents house, to interview my mother for an oral history class project. I was there to interview, my mom, Janet Chappell on her role as a community activist in the Miami Valley.

After letting myself inside, I met my parents in the dining room where they were talking. My mother had been waiting for me. She had only been home from work for about an hour, but she had to get up early the next morning to do it all over again, so she was eager to get started. We decided that we would do the interview in her bedroom upstairs where the noises and disturbances would be blocked out.

Once we were in her bedroom we went over all the appropriate paper work, and I started the recorder. Since it was my mother she seemed very at ease as we went through the interview. She began at the beginning, telling me all about her life growing up as a child, and ending with where she finally settled permanently with her husband and children.

Janet Chappell was born Janet Yvonne Burton on June 11, 1952 in Cincinnati, Ohio. She was the second child of Della Francis and Matthew Burton preceding her older sister Sharon by two years. She has two younger siblings, both boys, named Matthew Dale, and Mark. Matthew was two years younger than Janet, but Mark, the baby was six years younger than Dale. They all grew up together in a happy home. Janet's father was a mail carrier, and her mother was a LPN. Growing up her parents always worked so they learned at an early age how to be responsible and to do chores at home. Janet describes how the three eldest children

were very obedient and always did what was asked of them by their parents. They lived a very structured life. Sharon, the eldest, was in charge mostly of the housework, while Janet, the middle child was in charge of the baby, and Dale, the youngest of the three, was in charge of going to the store, and getting lunch for everyone.

Although, Janet and her siblings were home alone during the day, they always knew that if they needed something they could always go next door to their grandmother's house. Life for the Burton children was very innocent growing up, and the three eldest children always played together. Once school began, however, Janet's Catholic mother wanted her children to go to Catholic school to get their education, but Janet's Baptist father wanted his boys to be like him and therefore he wanted them in public school. In order to compromise the two decided that the two girls would follow in their mother's footsteps and go to Catholic school, while the two boys followed in their father's shoes and went to public school. Janet missed her brother, and to this day wishes he would have attended school with her and her sister. Janet went to St. Richard's Academy for elementary, and for high school she attended McAuley's Catholic High School for Girls.

Janet's mother realized that her daughter's had been sheltered their whole lives and as a result, she insisted that the two girls went away to Harlem New York for school, a long way from home. In Harlem there was Harlem Nursing School, and her mother wanted the best for her children. She wanted her girls to be able to take care of themselves by themselves. Janet's mother wanted her girls to do better than her, and she insisted that they became RN's, and not just LPN's. So in 1972 she packed up all her belongings and went to New York.

Janet eloped and got married while home for Christmas vacation, her first year in nursing school, to the man that she had been dating since she was thirteen years old. They didn't tell their parents in fear that they would be upset, and because they had little money and could not afford to live together just yet. In her final quarter at nursing school she finally told her parents of her marriage, and she and her husband, Ronald Chappell, found their first small apartment. The two of them went on many adventures together all over the states trying to find the perfect place to call home. They knew they didn't want to be in Cincinnati anymore. They wanted to get away. They lived in Washington DC, Columbus Ohio, and then finally they ended up in Dayton Ohio where Janet began working as a nurse at Miami Valley Hospital in 1978. It was one of her most fulfilling jobs she recalls. She learned the most there and felt the most at home and loved there. Her career since she started there had flourished. In 2003 she went back to school and finally got her BSN at Indiana Wesleyan in two years, and in 2005, after working at the Valley for 25 years she advanced her career and her salary and went to work at the V.A. Hospital.

Janet had two children. Her eldest is a daughter, Bethany Chappell, born in 1983, and her youngest is her son, Elliott Chappell, who was born in 1985. Janet worked hard to provide the best life and experiences for her children that she possibly could. She wanted her kids to grow up in a fun and safe time just like she had. In order to do that Janet made sure that she was active in her community. She helped with neighborhood block parties, and Easter egg hunts, and picnics, and Mayor's Walks. Janet in order to keep her community safe was vice president and president of neighborhood association, and was named Harrison Township representative.

She believes that people need to become more involved in their neighborhoods and speak out against things that shouldn't be happening there. She believes that a neighborhood is only as good as the people that live there, and that phrase alone shouts community activism.

Index: Janet Chappell's Oral History Interview

Name of Project: Community Activism: The Janet Chappell Interview

Name of Project Director: Marjorie McLellan, Department of Urban Affairs & Geography,
Wright State University, Archives or repository

Interviewee / Narrator Name: Janet Chappell

Interviewer: Bethany Chappell-Saxton

Others Present: None

Place: 2436 Elsmere Avenue at the home of Janet Chappell in her bedroom.

Date: Sunday, February 20, 2011 at 7:15 P.M.

Length of Recording: 1 hour

Original format: digital recorder

Key Words:

Nurse

Miami Valley Hospital

Harlem School of Nursing

Community

RN

BSN

Index

Indexed by: Bethany Chappell-Saxton

0:00:00-0:00:11 Introduction to Recording

Information listed above.

0:00:13-0:18:12 Life Growing up in the Burton Home

Nurse Chappell discusses her innocent life growing up as a child with her three other siblings. She talks about how shy she was as a child, and the friendship that she developed with an extroverted girl named Thomasina was a true friendship that she will cherish forever. She also discusses why she went to Catholic school while her brothers attended public school. She discusses how and when she met her future husband.

Key Words:

Naïve / innocent

Catholic school

Values

Change

'60's

0:18:12-0:25:26 The Transition After High School

After high school Janet realizes that her parent really don't have the money to send her off to college like her sister had, and so she was forced to stay home and save up money so that she could attend college. Her only other option was to go to the University of Cincinnati in state and come home on the bus each night because her parents couldn't afford for her to stay in the dorms. She ended up getting a good job for the times at the Cincinnati Bell telephone company, and she discusses her experience there. After being out of high school two years she attends Central State to be with her boyfriend who was also attending there. She was there a year before returning home because it just wasn't for her and she knew she wanted to be in the medical field.

Key Words:

Central State

Cincinnati Bell

Education

Medical field

0:25:26-0:33:46 Harlem Nursing School & Marriage

Janet's mother wanted the best for her girls, and she knew that Janet, her youngest daughter, was very shy, so she wanted them to go off to school and become nurses because she knew that they would always have a job as a nurse and could take care of themselves in this profession. Janet talks about how her mother filled out her application, and when she was accepted she flew to Harlem New York to begin her studies. Her first year at school she eloped and married Ronald Chappell, but she didn't tell her parents until she was about to graduate from college because she wanted to move out and find her first apartment with her newlywed husband.

Key Words:

Harlem New York

Kent State incident

Married

0:33:46-0:49:05 Young Married Life & Finding a Place to Settle

Janet and her husband moved around a lot through the early years of their marriage. They were exploring and having fun traveling and looking for new and exciting jobs. They were at a time in their lives where they were trying to find the right job and the right place to start their lives together. They went to Washington DC, and to Columbus, and they finally ended up settling in Dayton Ohio where Janet found the nursing job of her dreams at Miami Valley hospital and she was there 25 years before she decided to go back to school and get her BSN. When she graduated she got hired at the V.A. Hospital. She had children in Dayton and made a life for herself and her new family.

Key Words:

BSN

Miami Valley Hospital

Pre-admission testing

Good Sam

Dayton Ohio

Indiana Wesleyan

0:49:05-1:00:00 Community Activism in the Neighborhood

Janet isn't just a nurse who helps and cares for people at work, but she is also an active member of her community. In this final section Mrs. Chappell discusses her role as Harrison Township representative, and how she does things throughout her neighborhood to make it a wonderful place for everyone.

Key Words:

Mayor's Walk

Harrison Township Representative

Community

Luminaries

Involved

Transcript: Janet Chappell Interview

Bethany: I'm so excited to interview my wonderful mother this evening. I know that you don't really realize all the great aspects to your life and all the things you've done and contributed to the Miami Valley, but I see them and respect you for everything that is you. In this interview I'd like to focus on your life growing up and how it brought you to your career as a nurse and community activist... So what's your full name?

Janet: Janet Yvonne Burton-Chappell

Bethany: And when where you born and when?

Janet: Cincinnati, Ohio. Um, June 11, 1952.

Bethany: And your parents, could you tell me a little bit about them?

Janet: Well, my dad was one of twelve children. He was the third from the youngest. Um, my dad had a lot of personality. He liked to talk. He would have been great to do this interview. You probably would have had to tell him to be quiet. (smiles)

Bethany: (laughs)

Janet: But, and my mom... They grew up together pretty much. My mother was...came from Pittsburgh, and they lived on the same street. That's how they met.

Bethany: And siblings?

Janet: I have three um... a sister, Sharon, two years older than I am, and my two brothers, Dale and Mark.

Bethany: And what was life like growing up in the Burton home?

Janet: We grew up in the um late 50's and 60's, and life was different then. Our youngest brother Mark was born in 1961. So, um, Sharon and Dale we played together. Um, life was just very innocent. We were very naïve, good kids, uh "yes ma'mam, no sir". We did what our parents told us. Um, we were...raised to have respect for our elders and we did that—we did what our parents told us. We didn't talk back. We had a good time. We played with what we had. Um, Sharon and I played our dolls, and uh teacher. I mean that was something we did every day. We never got tired of it. We took our dolls to bed with us. We named them... I let uh Sharon—since she was older—uh would talk me into cutting my dolls hair and it never grew back (laughs)

Bethany: (laughs)

Janet: We used to play with uh Dale's cars. We would make our own roads along the side of the street, and we would play all day long while our parents were at work. The uh good thing about the neighborhood that we grew up in... oh uh...the street we lived on was Second and we lived right next door to our grandmother. So we always had someone to go to, and our aunt lived there too. And then when we moved to the big house up on uh Simpson our other grandmother—our maternal grandmother—our maternal grandmother lived next door so we were always surrounded by family. Back in those days it was OK to stay home. It was safe... It was a safe time. It was a safe period in the late 50's and early 60's, and we could stay home knowing that our grandmother was next door, but we'd stay in the house. We would do our chores, and we knew what was expected of us. We get up and um...Sharon was more um... She liked house work—she didn't like it, but she would do it. She could seep through the house really fast, and then we could watch our soap operas, and my job was to watch the baby, um, which was Mark. He was born and Ma taught me how to change his diapers. So, she was preparing to go back to works so I took on taking care of the baby, and Sharon mostly did the house work, and Dale, his job was to go to the store and buy our lunch and that kind of thing. So, we knew our roles and we did them. Every day the house was clean. We didn't allow our friends in the house because we knew we couldn't do that. And our dad was the mail man so he would come through on his lunch break while delivering the mail and he could check on us and keep going. So, we had we had a very organized uh good life.

Bethany: Well that's interesting, and from stories you've told me growing up about how you and your sister went to Catholic school while your brothers went to public school. I found that interesting. Could you tell me the story behind the situation?

Janet: My mom was Catholic and my dad was Baptist, and they got married and he loved my mother, but he wanted his boys to be like him. So, um... my sister and I went to Catholic school, and he agreed to let us be Catholic, and my brother Dale um I—I should go back. The three of us older ones were always two years apart, and then Mark came along and he was born six years after Dale. So the three of us were um... not only siblings, we were playmates and we went to Catholic school and Dale would go the other way and we really missed our brother. Um...yea that's one thing that I look back on and I always wish he could have been there with us.

Bethany: What? Uncle Dale?

Janet: Right. And Mark, and I think um...(sighs) not that one way is better than the other...um... not saying that Catholic was better than going to public school, but because Dale was very smart—He was a very smart little boy. And um we were taught a lot of discipline in Catholic school, but it did really seem... We got used to it. So, when we came home again the three of us playing um...but we missed our brother. And I wish my dad hadn't been so pigheaded with

that because I feel like Dale missed out on some things... I think he would have done better... I think it's interesting... and I think of this: My father and my brothers all went through 12th grade and none of them graduated.

Bethany: That was my next what my next question was gonna be. Do you think there was a significant difference in the way you and your sister grew up and the education that you got and the values that were instilled in you even though you grew up in the same home just because you went to different schools?

Janet: I do, and... not so much our values. We grew up with the same type of values, and Dale was very much like us, and I look back on it and I see him, the way he carried himself, as being very much like in the way Sharon and I carried ourselves. We were respectful of our elders and we didn't get in trouble and um he just should have been with us. That... we broke that... We lost that connection, but once we were home we played. We loved each other. We had fun, but then um, Mark came along six years later. Some of the rules we grew up with relaxed and I think that is the trend that you see over the years with younger people um not being as respectful, not doing um... what their parents uh taught them. Mark was a little bit rebellious. He was a little different than us—He didn't think the way we did (laughs), and you um know your Uncle Mark. He's still kind of a... maverick I guess. I don't know. For lack of a better word um he was more into that 60's generation and it may not be fair to say, but I think that was the generation of change. The 60's were about a lot of change. Um...and he was in that mix, and I think that was the generation of "me, me, me", "me first, you second". That's how I see it.

Bethany: Um what values did you take away from your Catholic school that you may not have received in public, if any?

Janet: I think because we were Catholic we had religion classes, but those kind of things were um pushed...were in our face more and I think...I don't wanna say...It's not...we prayed every day at school... I think your values are what you hold dear and I think from...just our upbringing we held dear what our parents held dear and we...again I'll stress, we were obedient children, and just did what was expected of us, and Mark was a later child and just more self-centered.

Bethany: That could have come from...

Janet: Being the baby...

Bethany: Or the time. Like...I, like learned, like classes, like political science class they told us, pretty much that, like the time—the 60's—was a time when...

Janet: Revolution?

Bethany: Yea. It was like the revolution... those kids were doing every—It was cool to do everything your parents weren't doing—didn't do. And every generation before that and now it...it's kind of reverted back; it's kind of cool to follow what your parents are.

Janet: Really?

Bethany: Uh-huh. That's what we learned in like political science classes.

Janet: Hum... That's interesting.

Bethany: And actually it kind of makes sense because it was like—If you think about it, you had hippies and that was like cool. You revolt—it was like a revolution and your parents didn't really believe that at that time. They grew up totally different.

Janet: Right.

Bethany: Maybe he just...

Janet: And everything when you look back, that was when boys started growing their hair long and the Black Power movement

Bethany: Right.

Janet: And afros. Um...everyone was black and proud. Everyone had an afro and it was kind of time of rebellion—free love, marijuana, a lot of acid, LSD. Those kinds of things came into play and... Yea it was just a different time. It was um... a change in our society with the music, the Beatles. And people would read into music and interpret it the way they thought it should be interpreted, and they would lead their lives the same way, but it was a lot of fun to it too. We had our clubs and strobe lights and go-go boots and uh... and it was a fun time to. It was definitely a time of change, but it was fun.

Bethany: So did you have any boyfriends growing up?

Janet: (laughs) I was very, very shy. Your dad started coming around to see me when I was thirteen. Again, going back to um the innocence of the time, we had a talent show (chuckles) down at the school and um I was very, very, very shy, but my best friend Thomasina talked me into being in this talent show, so we called ourselves "The College Hill Supremes" (laughs). So we all um got little out-fits alike. Uh, we walked up to Arlin's, which is a store like um... Meijer's or something, and got ourselves white skirts, black tops, and um horsetail ponytails (laughs), and we put that on, and that's what we wore uh for the talent show, and that was around the time that your father saw me in the talent show and he followed me home that night and started talking to me, but my mother told him I was too young for a boyfriend. I think I was

thirteen, and told him to come back in a couple of years. So he came back in a couple of years. He actually came back.

Bethany: (laughs) He waited that whole time?

Janet: He did. He came back in a couple of years (laughs). So yea, we've grown up together.

Bethany: Did he say something to your mom first, or did he just start talking to you?

Janet: I don't know. He just started hanging around. I looked up and he'd be outside by the fence. (laughs)

Bethany: (laughs)

Janet: He didn't know how—He'd just be walking through hoping he could get a glimpse of me, or whatever. I don't know. I was very shy so I would ignore him anyway.

Bethany: Yea. You were so shy then, I was surprised you did that talent show. Were you nervous doing that?

Janet: It was horrible. It was horrible, but Thomasina was my best friend. Sina, as we called her, she was my best friend, and I thought, "Just do it, and before you know it, it will be over. The song is only about three minutes long. Three minutes and then you're done. (laughs) And then you've got your friends, and you didn't let your friends down, and you don't look like a big um... square.

Bethany: Was she really extroverted?

Janet: Yea, pretty much. We were so totally different, but I look back and I have such good memories of Sina. She was a very strong person because she came from a very dysfunctional family: Alcoholic mother and father fighting, actually in the street, where people could see them and she'd hold her head up high and she'd come to school and sometimes other girls would pick on her, or start a fight or that kind of thing, but she was very strong, and she loved me. And we used to talk about when we got older, we were gonna have an apartment together. And so we were went through grade school together, and um she went to high school at McAuley, all girls school... she went there for a couple of years, but given um given her background she ended up getting married when she was like sixteen, and she continued to come to McAuley, she continued to go to school, and she did graduate, um but I don't think she—she didn't graduate from McAuley. She went somewhere else by then and graduated. I think by then, she had got pregnant, and she was... and at that time no Catholic girl high school was gonna let uh—you know a pregnant girl go to school. It just didn't happen.

Bethany: Even though she was married?

Janet: That didn't happen in those days. She shouldn't have been married. (laughs)

Bethany: 'Cause you know, now today, you can be pregnant, but you just can't get an abortion, or get rid of it in the Catholic school

Janet: Oh I didn't know—well, I... yea I mean Catholics have always been against abortion, that kind of thing, but then um... no, that wasn't allowed—at all.

Bethany: So, you guys were that different. Can you remember what made you guys even become friends or talk to each other?

Janet: I can't remember exactly, but we were in grade school, and when school was out um you'd walk home... We lived pretty close to school and Thomasina lived all the way up Weatherby, so she would go all the way up the hill and sometimes I would go home a little bit down Weatherby, and then cut up First to go home. So we could walk. So I don't know what actually made us... I can't remember the first incident, but um... I don't know once we start—stopped uh walking and started talking outside and we just realized that we just kind of liked the same types of things, and next thing you know, we exchanged phone numbers, and we were talking on the phone, and then before you know it, it became an everyday thing. I would walk her halfway home down Weatherby, and then we would stop and talk for an hour, and then she'd go home, and I'd go home, and I turn back the other way, and that became sort of a ritual, and she was someone that I trusted. She would tell me the deepest secrets, and she knew that I was very um... She knew that I was quiet and I didn't come out a lot, but she trusted me to tell me things and knew that I wouldn't judge her because I mean she was doing things... I mean she had a...God she had a boyfriend for God's sake. She was going with a... that was... when we were in high school... OK we were what? ...Fifteen, and she was going with a guy that was like in his mid-20's, so she was very (laughs) um... She was what... we would have called girls... fast, but she did not act fast. I mean she wasn't uh slutty or... anything like that. She was a good person. It was her environment. That was what she saw, and that was what she knew, but she was a good person. Since I've grown up I haven't talked to her in years, but I knew that um... her family have all died out except for her, and her youngest brother, Henry, but she has called me since I've lived here on Elsmere. She's found my number, saw someone in Cincinnati, got my number, and we've talked. And then, we've lost touch again, but I know that she got um, into drugs, so right now I don't know what's happened to her. I miss her. I wish I would hear from her again, but I—I don't know.

Bethany: Where was she the last time you talked to her?

Janet: Still... In Cincinnati

Bethany: In Cincinnati still?

Janet: Uh-huh. She lived downtown somewhere in Cincinnati, and she had two or three children um who are naturally grown now, but yea she was my buddy.

Bethany: So, after high school what were your plans? What did you—yea, what were your plans? What did you have in mind to get your...

Janet: Well, I always knew that I wanted to go to college. It was like that was expected, but um... I always knew I wanted to do something in the medical field. Um, I used to want to be a doctor, but I wasn't smart enough to be a doctor, and I didn't work for that. I think that was more of a dream than anything. I loved children, and I wanted to be a pediatrician, but um... it didn't work out that way. I became a nurse.

Bethany: So what'd you...I mean...So, what did you—right after high school. Did you enroll right in college? Was that the goal, or do you stay home for awhile?

Janet: No. Um, actually I did. Things didn't go as I'd planned, and I realized that, that I didn't take enough initiative on my own behalf when I was in high school. I think all of a sudden I realized all of a sudden I was there. I took college prep in high school, but back then if you were in college prep you didn't take typing, you know, that was a whole separate course, secretarial, academic, or college prep, or homemaking. So that wasn't offered to me. So um... my mother um... just kind of said to me and my sister um... Well actually my sister went off to Kent State first, and then when it came time for me—She went to Kent State. She and my cousin Beryl, and they had this big send off, and I just kind of expected when it came time for me that would happen, but my dad told me, you know, we don't have any money to send you off to stay in...in a dorm. He said if you wanna go to college you'll have to go to UC, and come home every day on the bus, and at the time I wasn't thinking past, well at least I can still get an education. I was thinking, "well I wanna go stay in the dorms, and I wanna pledge on a line, and become an AKA or ya know, join a sorority, and all of that, and I ended up getting a job at a—the telephone company after high school, and I worked as a telephone operator, and I saved money to...say that when I could go to school I'd have some. So, that was very shocking news to me to realize that my parents don't have money to send me to college. So, I got a very nice job, actually at the time, at Cincinnati Bell. Um, one of my friends, Delores Weiler, we were good friends, we both went down and applied for the job, and um, you know, and I got hired... It was a fun experience actually. They treated uh...their women very well. If you can believe this, I used to work um... different shifts at the telephone company. I worked either 9am – 12noon, and then I had a break and I worked from 3-6. So, for three hours I had to just walk around downtown, Cincinnati (laughs) by myself, and find something to do because I didn't have a car. I worked that shift or either I worked 6-midnight on the switch board, and when you worked 6-midnight when you got off the telephone company supplied you a ride home. You'd come out of work

and all these taxi cabs would be lined up, and they would just put you in a cab, and they'd take you home for free, and wait until you got in the door. Can you believe that?

Bethany: That's kind of neat.

Janet: Yea, it was, but if I got off at nine then you know Sharon a lot of times would come down and pick me up 'cause my mother didn't want me taking the bus home that late, but twelve...if you got off at midnight you got a ride home.

Bethany: So, how long did you work there?

Janet: I worked there about... a year and then I saved up some money, and then um I went to um... Central State for a quarter, but I knew that's not what I wanted to do. I wanted to... By then my mother had told my sister and I that we were going to be nurses. She told us because she said that's a good career. She said you'll always be able to take care of yourself. She said it's fine to get married, but you have to be prepared to take care of yourself in case something happens, and it's—it was the best advice ever. It's the advice that I been telling you (chuckles). Be prepared to take care of yourself. Um, back in the 50's and even the 60's women didn't work. They stayed at home with their children, and that was the trend. I'm gonna be a housewife. That's what women grew up to be, but naturally times have changed, and my mother was progress—my mother was ahead of the times. She was. She was ahead of the time. If my mother had been born now, my mother would have had a PhD. I'm sure of it. I'm sure of it, but she pushed us, and um... she made sure that we were taken care of, and it's something that I'll never forget.

Bethany: Well, 'cause that sounds progressive for the time to say, "You need to be able to take care of yourself". Well at that time it would seem at the time that women didn't even

Janet: Right. That was the time 70's...60's and 70's

Bethany: ...work that much, right?

Janet: Right. A lot of them... you were starting to see... in the 60's when Sharon and Beryl went to Kent State they had just allowed girls to wear pants on campus because you wore skirts everywhere. So I mean it was a very, very different time. So the 60's brought about change for everybody on all...in all aspects, but um... I went to Central State for awhile, but I wasn't happy there. Again, I was too quiet, and I wanted to go to nursing school.

Bethany: What were you at Central State for?

Janet: I went um... your dad was going there and his...um, and he knew that I didn't have any money and actually your grandfather, Bob, was—wanted to pay my tuition to go, and I wasn't

gonna have that. You know, I had parents, and they wouldn't have allowed that anyway, but I had some money so I just thought maybe I'll just go and get started maybe in education. So, I went up there, and um... I did very well. I always thought you know I'm not a very smart person. I did OK, but when I got there after going to Catholic school, and getting reading and, and writing um...was, was stressed so much that when I got there I felt like I was in...

Bethany: Like you've regressed?

Janet: Yea. I felt like, man this is so easy although... but it was also a time that I learned how to study. I learned how what it took for me to do um...keep things in my head 'cause I never had a great memory, a long memory. I'm not one of these people that can see something, but I knew I had to concentrate, and think... and I had a quiet roommate so that made it easy.

Bethany: How long were you at Central State?

Janet: Just um... not even a full year. Um, because oh...what happened was that I got accepted to—at a the nursing school in Harlem, and I was so shy and I was so unsure of myself that I wouldn't even fill out the application for nursing school because I—I just knew that I wasn't going to get accepted. So my mother filled out the nursing application (laughs), and filled out all the paperwork, and sent it in, and um then I look up one day and I got a note that I'd gotten accepted so that was what I wanted to do. Sharon was already there. She had gone too. My mother thought it would be a good idea... She had sheltered us so much that she realized that she needed to push us out into the world because she was very uh... she had sheltered us a lot. I didn't even know how to take the bus downtown by myself, and I was what? seven...eight...seventeen-eighteen years old.

Bethany: Yet you were going all the way to New York?

Janet: Right. So I went from not knowing how to catch the bus to go downtown to jet-setting off to New York by myself, with all of my luggage, a TV (laughs), so I did that. Um yea, I went to New York by myself.

Bethany: What year was that?

Janet: a 1972. So I was out of school for two years.

Bethany: And your sister was already there.

Janet: She was there, and she was actually um... she had like I said done some time at Kent State and she didn't do well there. She was too busy partying. Um, that was the time of the... you've heard of the uh, incident at Kent State 1970 when the Ohio guardsmen... the national guardsmen killed four students? Maybe you haven't read that. Maybe you might want to look

that up. This was during the time of protest of the Vietnam War, and students were protesting, and they were... and that was something you did in the 60's... protest, and they were protesting the war, and they sent the National Guard there to keep the ruckus down. You know, and the kids were...

Bethany: What were they protesting?

Janet: The war.

Bethany: Oh... the war. OK.

Janet: Yea, so um... the National Guard went there to keep peace, and uh four students ended up getting shot and killed. One of them...

Bethany: By the national guards?

Janet: Yea. If you listen to the Ohio Players have a song nat—Well it's an old song, but the name of it I think was "Four Dead in Ohio" so you might want to look up that...

Bethany: That song sounds familiar.

Janet: Yea, "Four Dead in Ohio". Yea, one of the girls Sharon knew, was in her dorm so... yea...

Bethany: So did that go to the courts or anything, or was it legal to have killed those people?

Janet: Well, I can't remember the outcome no, but I mean there was a big investigation, and everything. I don't know how it turned out, but regardless four par—four groups of parents lost their child.

Bethany: What influenced you then to become a nurse? Was it your mother?

Janet: My mother and all her sisters were nurses. They were LPN's, but my mother told us that we were going to be RN's, registered nurse. She didn't want us to be um...She wanted us to go further. You know every mother wants more for their child so um that was the goal to get in school and become a nurse.

Bethany: And that's what you wanted to do too?

Janet: Uh-huh. After um... Really I hadn't thought about it. I thought I'd be a teacher, but it was because of my real lack of vision and that's what happens sometimes when you just... don't take charge of your own life (chuckles). You know, you're never too young to start planning, and some people know at a very early age what they wanna do. Like I said I always thought I knew that I wanted to do something in the medical field, but being a doctor was just a dream. I wasn't working towards being a doctor. I wasn't working towards getting the best grades, and

um it was...it was a thought, but I knew that I wanted to provide care to someone less fortunate. I knew that.

Bethany: So, what did you do after college? When did you get married and decide to start your family?

Janet: Actually I got married after my first year in nursing school, but I didn't tell my parents. I came home for Christmas and your dad insisted on "Let's get married. Let's get married", and um and I knew that eventually we would get married, but I wasn't thinking about it then, and I don't know if he was thinking, "God, she's in New York she's not gonna come back" (laughs) and he just kept... but I knew that I loved him, and we probably would so I came home for Christmas vacation and we just snuck off to Kentucky and got married, and just kept it a secret.

Bethany: For how long?

Janet: Until... my last quarter of school, so I guess we kept it a secret for two years because I figured if my parents found out they would get all upset, and that... I don't know. I look back on it, and I don't really know. I just figured I'd rather get out of school first because I'm still living with them. We couldn't afford an apartment or anything at that time anyway so I thought it's just better to just, you know, not say anything, so I didn't...we didn't.

Bethany: You told them afterwards and they were OK?

Janet: I told uh my mother, uh, actually, um because we wanted to get an apartment. Um, I had one quarter left at school, and it was the summer. We wanted to get an apartment by then so I told her. We were gonna go ahead and get married in the Catholic Church um over, but it was a lack of time, and I knew that we would have to... he wasn't Catholic, and um and I knew that was gonna be problems. They would want you to take all of the religious preparation, and it was a matter of time and that was gonna take awhile. I—I did actually talk to a priest, and then when I realized what all was involved we just thought, "oh let's just tell them", so I told my mother, and um...knowing my father, your grandfather, she told me, she said, "He's gonna have a fit, so this is what I want you to do: I want you to go to him and tell him that you got married, and he's the only one that knows, and you don't know how to tell me—your mom (laughs)

Bethany: Uh-huh.

Janet: So I did, and you know, God love 'im, he sucked it right up. I said, "Dad, God, I don't know how to tell Mom that we got married". I said, "We got married", and you know, he took it very well. She knew him. He just played—He said, "You just leave everything to me." (laughs)

Bethany: (laughs)

Janet: “I’ll talk to your mother”, and first when everybody found out they... then again, all the guys...all three of them: my dad, then when my brothers found out, all of them said, “Well I wanna see the marriage certificate (laughs). It’s like none of them believe me. Yea. It’s like we’re not giving you away—I wanna see the—Sharon didn’t ask, my mother didn’t ask to see it, but all three of them individually—not even around each other—all said the same thing, but he went and told my mother and to the day he died my father never knew anything differently. It was just a woman knew her husband, and she said he would just never get over this so this is what you have to do, and she was right. So I didn’t like the idea of deceiving him, but it was the best thing to do...

Bethany: Right.

Janet: It was the best thing to do at that time because we didn’t want to keep playing games. We were ready to go ahead and set up our housekeeping. You know, when I came home from school in January, I wanted to have my own place to go to. So that summer we found an apartment that we loved. Your dad was working for his father, so we got an apartment... and it was just really cute, and I went back to nursing school for one more quarter.

Bethany: And I know you moved a lot I’ve heard as a young married couple. Could you tell me a little bit about that and where did you finally settle permanently, and why did you finally settle there?

Janet: Well our first apartment was um... my favorite. It was my first apartment. It was called the Marybeth Apartments, and Marybeth was actually a nickname of mine, and it was small. It wasn’t a big complex. It was close. I could actually walk to my mother’s house. It was pretty decent walk, but I could walk it, and so um and we lived there for awhile um... And then we moved to another apartment close to Mount—in Mount Airy. Actually we had to leave the first apartment because we were poor. I hadn’t gotten my nursing license yet so I was just doing some uh... day work. I didn’t uh... I guess basically working like a nurse’s aid a couple places, and your father wasn’t getting very much work with his father, and we just couldn’t afford our apartment anymore so we had to move out to a cheaper one. So we moved to a-a-less expensive apartment, and then I got my nursing license and I was working, so we had more money too, and we could afford... After that we moved to a little small one and then when I got my license we moved to a bigger apartment, and then um we decided we gonna—we were adventurous, I guess. Your dad hitch-hiked to—thumbed what we called it back in the 70’s—to Washington DC to look for a job, and he found one, so he came back, and we just picked up, moved, put all of our stuff in a U-Haul and got on the road to Washington DC, didn’t have an apartment, didn’t even know where we were going (laughs). We had all of our belongings and our little Volts wagon hooked to the back of this um U-Haul, and his cousin lived there so we stayed with them a couple of days, and then we went out and looked for an apartment, and we

found one, right up there next to Howard University. Um, right next to it. We could see their stadium, and that's where we stayed. Um, it was my intention was to get my BSN at Howard University, and I actually enrolled, but again it was the money thing, and trying to work and... didn't plan it, didn't...just young and um... impulsive, I guess. We wanted things. I—I 'cause I knew what I wanted, but I wanted to have my degree, but it just wasn't the right time. And I got very, very homesick up there. I missed my family so bad. I was used to the Midwest, what you could get here. We lived in this little two-room apartment back then and paid like \$235.00, and that was a lot of money. The apartment that we, our first apartment was a \$175.00, we had two bedrooms, kitchen, a balcony, and I was just so homesick for Ohio that um, you know, I just said, "We have to go back home". So we um packed up. I came home early, and went to Columbus, and um found a job. My cousin, Wayne, took me to Columbus. Ike gave him his car, and your dad was still in uh Washington working, so it was my job to go and find us a place to live, so we went up there. I got an apartment, got an apartment guide book. Didn't know anything about Columbus, but um we didn't wanna move back to Cincinnati. We wanted to be back in Ohio. We wanted to be close enough to our family, but um, and I don't know why we picked Columbus. I have no idea. Well, actually I do. I take that back. Your father—I'd told him that I wanted to go back. He had gone—thumbed it back to Ohio (laughs), and got a job at the Ohio Penitentiary. Um, so then so we... then I went...He had to get back to work so I don't know. He was gone for a few days or whatever. Back then you could get a job just like that (snaps finger), you know, so he went and got a job and then came back and we packed up. Our Volts Wagon was on its last leg. Um, it wasn't running. It was burning oil, but we were gonna um... The first time we were gonna come back to Ohio to look for a job. We started out in our Volts Wagon, and it was burning oil so we stopped and bought like 24 cans of oil (laughs)

Bethany: (laughs)

Janet: And put them in the trunk, and um that was how we were gonna get back to Ohio. I think we had to stop like, I don't know, every ten miles, and put oil in it. God, we were adventurous. My goodness, the two of us have done some crazy stuff. I am not kidding, but when you're young like that... and all we had was each other, and we depended on each other, but we learned how to make it on our own. We just did without, but we came back, and then I went and got a job at the Columbus State Institute, and at the time I was making big bucks. They were starting me at \$6.52 an hour, and I thought Oh my God I can't believe I'm making that all that money! Because in Cincinnati I was only making \$5.25 an hour and I thought that was big bucks. I was like, "Wow! I'm making \$5.25 an hour!" and the girls with their degrees were making \$5.35, you know, so I thought, "Wow". So, I just, you know, that's how we go to Columbus.

Bethany: And what made you finally come to Dayton?

Janet: Back in Dayton... Your father... let's see...His job... He went looking for another job. Um, his job... He was at the Ohio Penitentiary, and I'm not really sure if he got tired of that. My memory is lapsing right there, but we thought we wanna get a little closer to home again, but still we didn't wanna go to Cincinnati. So we decided to just take a look in Dayton. We came one day, and we were looking in our car, and then we didn't know Dayton, so we just had to start looking around so we just got off at Needmore, and... 'cause there was a Frisch's we thought we'll let's eat (laughs). So we got off, there was a Frisch's there, we ate, and we thought we don't know where to start, so we went down Needmore and turned down Dixie, and we were just riding, and we saw some of those apartments and we were like, "Ew, that doesn't look too good", and we just kept going and then all of a sudden we got to Benchwood and we thought well, what's that back there because you couldn't see a whole lot. There were buildings there and we just turned down that street, and we thought, "Man, this is nice!" I mean, back in the day it was really, really nice. It had all of these doubles, and then it had townhouses, and we thought it looks like a lot of professional people live there, you know. So we just thought well let's just stop in the office, and see, you know, and we met Fanny, and she was like, she showed us the apartment, and we just loved it, and I mean and we got it like right then and there so we moved back and um one of the girls that I worked with in Columbus told me that she was from Dayton so she said, "When you go to Dayton", she said, "go to Miami Valley Hospital to work". She said, "That's where I was born. It's the biggest hospital". So, that's where I went. I found out how to get to Miami Valley. I caught—I looked it up in the phone book, and they told me how to get there from where we were, and I walked in and got a job that day. Back then, they ask me when I wanted to start. Tomorrow? (laughs) and I was like, "I don't know I have to unpack the truck, you know, we hadn't even unpacked, but I had a job right away, and that's how I ended up at the Valley.

Bethany: What year was that?

Janet: 1978.

Bethany: So did you enjoy being more on the floor in the hospital, or did you enjoy the desk job? You did both right?

Janet: Right. When I went to Miami Valley Hospital I loved it. I had worked at Good Sam Hospital in Cincinnati and I really didn't like the feel of the place. I didn't like it. I didn't like when I went there um... it was run by nuns, and I grew up with nuns because I'm Catholic, but I didn't like the Sister. I—I just... you know how sometimes you can just not click with someone. Well, she told me... I had a cousin who was a nurse. Her name was Sharon, and she and my sister Sharon were cousins and friends. Sharon was one year older than my sister, Sharon, and she was a nurse, and this nun, just talking, she told me like when you have to take state boards when you graduate, and she told me that um... out of the clear blue that Sharon Franklin hadn't

passed her state board the first time, and I thought that was just totally inappropriate. You know, and I didn't like that. I went ahead, and took the job there, but I never felt comfortable there. I always felt like an outsider, always, the whole time. I just never felt right. So that was when we had left before we started our adventure to uh Washington DC. I quit like on a Friday and packed up on a Saturday and we were gone.

Bethany: So tell me about your career in Dayton. You worked you said at Miami Valley Hospital.

Janet: Right.

Bethany: Did you find fulfillment in that job there?

Janet: I did. When I went to Miami Valley, like I said... I lost my train of thought for a minute. When I went there um they had what they call... I had hated Good Sam so much, and I wasn't working in that time in DC. I kind of became reclusive and-and afraid of everything up there um because I went to school for a little while and then realized I didn't have enough money, and it was just a bad time so Miami Valley when I went in I was greeted very warmly um there weren't many black RN's in those days. I could have counted—I think there might have been two or three of us in the whole hospital, so um... they always wanted to make me or a LPN or a nurse's aide. You know, when you go fill out an application that's what they want to give ya, oh you're here for a nurse's aide without even asking, but I didn't have that problem there because I had had that in a couple of hospitals that I just turned and walked out. And um, I liked the whole idea of nursing. I had to work second shift start which I knew I wouldn't get a day shift job, and I just liked the whole set-up. I met my head nurse. Her name was Joy Lucas, and she welcomed me with open arms, and um, I liked the idea of the nursing... it was um primary nursing and you did everything. You gave your medications, you did their bath, you did their treatments, but I felt like I'm really am a nurse. I'm a real nurse, and I just really liked it. I—I learned a lot. I worked on a medical surgical floor, so I got to send people to surgery so I learned that aspect, and I got to deal with their medical issues too so it was good. We had a real comradely on the floor. I just liked it.

Bethany: Verses being like... 'cause you did Pre-admission testing too later.

Janet: That was later. That was later. That was after I had kids, and I worked on floor for several years, and then I had kids, and um... when you all were little you had a baby sitter, but then I didn't have that anymore, and I kept thinking... I mean every... I had to work every other weekend so um after Mrs. Jemison didn't watch you all anymore Sharon uh started watching you all every other weekend, which meant that I had to drive to Cincinnati on Friday when I got off work I'd come home, feed you all, get you ready, pack you up, and take you to Cincinnati so that I could work Saturday and Sunday 'cause there were no... 'cause your dad was working so

there was no one, and then on Sunday after I'd get off I'd have to go back. So I was doing this every other weekend, and I just kept thinking I need a job with weekends off. You know, you all were just barely school age, you know, so um a nurse I used to work with, when I first went to the Valley up on Sixth was working up in pre-admission testing, and they had an opening and she called me for it. You know, I don't know how she got my—or why she thought of me, but she did and so that got me off the floor, and it got me with my weekends and holidays off, and that's how that happened, and I stayed with pre-admission testing until I left in 2005 and so I worked there from '78 to 2005.

Bethany: So what made you seek an education later in life?

Janet: I always wanted to have my BSN, always wanted to have it, and um I had gone to Wright State before, and I thought oh man can I do all that? And... it just seemed so much work they were making you go through. I was already a nurse, and they wanted you to take some of the same things you'd already taken so um a lot of the nurses were trying to go back then, and they were going for the same thing. They'd go to Wright State and have to take all this stuff and it was taking them forever. It was like starting all over again, but then they started coming out with some program for nurses that were already nurses, and one day um this nurse that I had oriented, she no longer with us, but I had oriented her, and she came over to pre-admission testing and she was talking about she had just gotten her degree from Indiana Wesleyan, and I said, "I've always wanted to get my degree", and she said, "Go to Indiana Wesleyan. It's the easiest for an RN", and she just gave me the information, and I thought wow. I mean she just made it sound so exciting, and I thought I've always wanted to do that, and she said you only go to class one day a week, it's for four hours, and you have to meet with a study group, and blah, blah, blah, but it's doable, and she said—and when she said it's doable, I thought well may be I could do this so they were having um... I got the number, I called, and they said they were having um just uh information session on... in like a couple of days in some hotel, so um I got the directions and I went. You know, and when I got there I was like man. There were like twelve of us or thirteen in a room or something, and she said if you're interested... She said if you all sign up now, you know, that you waive all of uh, application fees and all of that, and I knew in my heart that I wanted to do it, and they told me everything, and I thought man, I can do this, and in less than two years I can have my degree, and still work and so I signed up and within a month I had started school. So, I didn't know anything about a computer, you all had to help me

Bethany: (laughs)

Janet: Man, I remember just feeling terrified about that.

Bethany: So, how have your motivations for engagement and service changed over time. Like for example, I know you are a nurse, but you have done other things in the community.

Janet: I have. I love my neighborhood. This is where you all grew up, and um you always want to try and give back a little bit and there wasn't anybody really um... stepping up, I guess, I to the plate. Nanette, who used to be the President of the neighborhood association had talked me into becoming vice president, or I think I was like the Harrison Township representative, and I wanted to um be involved in the neighborhood, and so I started going to the meetings. Well, like anything, things change, and the president that we had at the time worked for—she got a job working for Mayor McLin, so she um... she had to step down from this position, and it was like conflict of interest somehow, that she stepped down from the job, and she moved out of the neighborhood, so Nanette stepped up, and wanted to be president, so then she just asked me if I'd be vice president. So I—I took it on, and then Nanette ends up leaving the neighborhood, and it's like no one wanted to speak up because I really didn't want to be president, but I cared about the neighborhood, so I just thought well, I'll do what I can because I'm not a civic person. I don't know a lot of things about that stuff, but I just stepped in and did the best I could, so that's how I got into that role, just doing things in the neighborhood that had always been done since you all were little. The Easter Egg Hunt, and luminaries at Christmas time, and just any other activities that I could think of, the mayor's walks, which Rhine McLin started, which I thought was a great idea. So the last one... we did do one this summer with the new mayor, Gary Leitzell, and you know, I just think it's important for people to become engaged in their communities and your community is as strong as the people that live there, and I believe that it's been hard getting people involved. If I hadn't gotten so busy with life, my job, taking care of a grandchild five days a week, and working a full-time job got to be just too much, and I had to back away, but that's why I haven't been as active, and I asked Veniqua to take over as president so I'll still stay involved, and do what I can, but I can't—I couldn't keep up that pace, and I'm 58 years old now, and that makes a difference in how much you can do. What I could do when you all were little, when I was 35, I could clean three stories of this house, do laundry, bathe you and Elliott, cook. I did it all. I did it all. I could do—this house if you look back at pictures of your bedrooms' they're spotless (laughs). I mean it looks like...

Bethany: They were spotless, and I do see... because I have friends that have kids now, and I don't see how you could do it.

Janet: I did it.

Bethany: I just have Abbi and Cameron every other weekend if we can—if were that lucky, and I can't keep the house clean for the weekend.

Janet: Well, this house was large so you all had a place to play, and I was just... I guess OCD. I was just compulsive that way 'cause I look back when you were a baby and I think man I should have been asleep. I jokingly told your father, I've been tired for 25 years (laughs)... Since yea, I'm mean 27 now, but you're gone, but it's ... when you were taking a nap I'd be in the bathroom with an old toothbrush scrubbing the grout. I was just obsessed, totally, but you live and you learn what's important.

Bethany: And finally, what lessons do you carry away from your involvement in the community and community service?

Janet: Again, that your neighborhood is as strong as the people that are there, and I believe that you can make a difference. Um, I've had a lot of frustrations with trying to plan activities and people don't come out, uh the most recent was Christmas, the luminaries. I got um a late start actually because I had uh Gracelynn um... Jessica didn't come by in time. By the time she got—she came it was dark outside, and we usually start those at 3 'o clock, putting them together, but I had put all the sand bags together, but I didn't have uh, any help. You know, your dad did what he could, and I had those two little boys that came to help, but what was gratifying was that when we were putting them out, and it was cold and we kept stopping and trying to light 'em, and move—and put the bag down before it would blow out. People started walking around the neighborhood. They saw 'em and a couple of people started commenting on how beautiful it was, and thanking us for doing what we were doing, and that's—even if just—it was just two people, two women walking around. Well, a few more people said something, but just those few people saying something made it worthwhile. I looked at it, and thought it's beautiful. I think it's beautiful. I remember how when you all were little, and I was trying to keep that going because what I can remember when I was here, and having young children, and I wanted you all to grow up in a good neighborhood, something that you can remember, look back on. Like oh my God this was the perfect—this was the perfect neighborhood, I think, for you all to grow up in. It was a diverse neighborhood, and that's what I wanted some younger couple to look and think God, look at what people are doing to make it worthwhile living here, to make it a um... family oriented neighborhood.

Bethany: It was. We had fun. We had lots of kids.

Janet: Yea.

Bethany: Parents all interacted.

Janet: Right. They did. It was—you all could go from one yard to another. Nobody was gonna say, "Get outta here!" You know, you could... at any given time, I might look up and hear somebody in the backyard bouncing a basketball. You know, and then they'd leave go somewhere else, but it was...it was a kid friendly neighborhood, and I will never forget that.

Things change, but again I feel that if people would become involved in their neighborhoods and speak out against things that are happening that's our responsibility. I spoke out about the kid, that was out there with his music blasting, and unfortunately he got it because I was already in half of a bad mood, and then he came down the street with that music blasting and he was very respectful, and went over and told him, "this isn't that kind of neighborhood", and he said, "Yes ma'mam" and turned it down, and I realized that when I went I was already angry about something else, but I'm glad I didn't say anything out of the way, just that I was feeling a little bit irritated about something else that had happened.

Bethany: But were you rude to him?

Janet: No, I wasn't rude, I was matter of fact.

Bethany: Then I think it probably takes more of that... People seem too scared anymore to say anything to people and that in itself is a misconception because, like you said, I mean, the perception might be this kid's a thug and he's gonna cuss me out if I said anything.

Janet: Right. Yea.

Bethany: You said something to him, and he respectfully turned it down.

Janet: Right. He did. In fact, I think this kid went to CJ. Your dad knew his name or something. He lives next door, but... yea

Bethany: But thanks so much for your time Mom, and I'll remember this experience forever in my mind, but the coolest is now it is also forever in oral history, so thanks and I love you.

Janet: Love you too Beth.