

**Narrator: Vicky Andria Siers**

**Interviewer: Kendra Payton**

**Date and Place: November 5, 2001 at the home of Vicky Andria Siers at [REDACTED]**

**Payton:** Tape 1 Side A I'm Kendra Payton and I'm interviewing Vicky Siers in her home. Today's date is November 5, 2001 and the time is 6:40 p.m. Vicky could you please state your full name including maiden name, your date of birth, place of birth and occupation.

**Siers:** My name is Vicky Andria Siers. I was born August 26, 1944 in Granite City, Illinois and I'm a secretary.

**Payton:** Okay. Andria is your maiden name?

**Siers:** Maiden name.

**Payton:** Okay. Thank You. Okay. Just to get us started Vicky, could you give me some background information about yourself and your immediate family and please include your ethnic background.

**Siers:** Okay. My mother was Hungarian, both her parents were Hungarian. My father, his father was Macedonian and his mother was Bulgarian. I think I have that right, I might have that backwards. But my parents were both born in the United States. Actually I think my father, grandfather is the only one that was born in the United States, he was born in Macedonia, he came here as far as I remember when he, of course this is what people told me when he was eighteen years old. And he came by himself and not with his family. He was alone when he came. He had a brother that still lived over there. In fact, I have cousins that live over there that were my dad's first cousins.

**Payton:** What brought your family to America?

**Siers:** Work.

**Payton:** Work, Okay.

**Siers:** My grandfather wanted to make a better life.

**Payton:** where did he first work when he came to America?

**Siers:** Again I'm not 100% sure on this, but he went to work at Commonwealth, which was General Steel Industries. He worked there, my father worked there. It was walking distance from Lincoln Place so I'm sure you heard this a lot of times from different people that was one of the steel mills was what brought people here. And that's why they came here, that's why he came here.

**Payton:** Okay. When did they first come?

**Siers:** I don't know.

**Payton:** Approximately beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? [20<sup>th</sup> Century]

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** Any later than 1910 maybe?

**Siers:** I don't know.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** I really don't know.

**Payton:** Okay. So we'll guess early 1900's?

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** Okay. Safe to say...

**Siers:** Maybe, yes. I think so.

**Payton:** All right. And how did they come?

**Siers:** He came through Ellis Island.

**Payton:** Through Ellis Island...

**Siers:** My grandfather came through Ellis Island.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** Yes, he came through Ellis Island. In fact um, his last name was not Andria. His last name was Gestakoff.

**Payton:** Can you spell that?

**Siers:** G-E-S-T-A-K-O-F-F, maybe, Gestakoff.

**Payton:** Okay. Good!

**Siers:** and when he came he couldn't speak English and when they were filling out papers, his father's first name was Andria. That became his last name. And so that how we became Andria, that has confused people for years.

**Payton:** Yes.

**Siers:** Because they couldn't understand we were Macedonian without our "off" on the back of our name [laughing].

**Payton:** Yes. O.K. do you know how your family funded their trip to get to America?

**Siers:** No, I have, no I don't.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** I do not know.

**Payton:** Okay. That's fine. Do you know if they came in a large group or a small group?

**Siers:** I don't know.

**Payton:** Could we assume that maybe a large group coming through Ellis Island.

**Siers:** I would think so, yes. I would think that he did, but I honestly don't know. I know that he had a lot of friends they used to all get together at his house and the men in the living room and the women in the kitchen.

**Payton:** Yup!

**Siers:** And I don't know if they came over together or not. They were just always Detto's friends. You know, so, I don't know.

**Payton:** Okay. What has kept your family here, you know generation after generation?

**Siers:** Well my grandfather came and worked at the steel mill and my father got a job there until Commonwealth closed. And I'm still here just because my parents were here.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** And I have three children that are still, one of them lives in St.Louis, the other two children live in Granite City.

**Payton:** O.K. Have you or any members of your family ever visited your homeland?

**Siers:** My sister did.

**Payton:** O.K. How long ago has that been?

**Siers:** Twenty-five, thirty years ago she went with my grandmother.

**Payton:** What are some things she mentioned about her trip?

**Siers:** [deep breath] I don't remember, I don't remember at all, I just know that she went.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** And visited family that was there.

**Payton:** Do you still have a large amount of family that is?

**Siers:** The only people that I really know about are my father's first cousin. It was his father's brother's children. A son and he actually came to the United States when I was [pause] a teenager or maybe even younger than that. He came to learn English and he was going to a school that my father would drive him over there to and then when I guess in the mid seventies he came back with his wife, brought her and then his daughter, he has two daughters but one of them has been her and visited a couple of different times and she actually now works for the Peace Corps over in Macedonia.

**Payton:** Oh, wow!

**Siers:** She's a translator.

**Payton:** So she's a cousin?

**Siers:** It's, she would be my second cousin.

**Payton:** O.K. [pause] Well now that we've got some family background, let's talk about Lincoln Place, the neighborhood we're in here. I know that there are several different ethnic groups that immigrated to this area. Can you tell me some information about the different groups that are here?

**Siers:** Well, when I was growing up I lived a block over from where I live now.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** And on my street there were [pause] Armenians, Hungarians, Macedonians, Mexicans [pause] that may be all. But we played together all the time, we were always there was a Mexican family down the street that we played with constantly. We played kick the can and all the games that we kids used to play. I don't know if they still play them anymore? My kids never played the kind of games, you know those kinds, but we would hide in people's yards and play hide and seek and we would always, it was just the safest place to be. You didn't have to be in when it got dark because it was just safe. It was really just very nice. It was very nice just growing up down here. I really liked growing up down here, and a lot of the people that I grew up with down here are still in the area. They're still I consider them my friends. You know there was many different

ethnic people Armenian. The most people that I was friends with were Mexicans and Armenians.

**Payton:** So all the ethnic [tongue twisted] here in Lincoln Place they've always pretty much gotten along and?

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** A common bond they have together.

**Siers:** Yes, I wish I could remember the year they had a huge block party. We blocked off Neidringhaus. Which is not an easy task, since it's a straight through you know, but we had all of the different ethnic groups had a booth with food and we had different kinds of music and stuff. We were all there. That's just the way it's always been. We've just always had a good time together.

**Payton:** From what I've understood just looking at different things about Lincoln Place it's kind of everybody's got their different ethnic groups, but it's kind of become like a close knit family.

**Siers:** Its, yes.

**Payton:** Because these people are the only family that you have here per say?

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** Or you've become family.

**Siers:** Well it, it just was. And everybody watched out for everybody's children.

**Payton:** Yes.

**Siers:** You know my mother never had to worry about where we were because if something was not right a neighbor would see.

**Payton:** Right!

**Siers:** This was of course, in the years when. I'm 57 years old. Fifty years ago you could play outside, my mother didn't work. You could play outside and everybody knew whose kids you were and if you weren't suppose to be there or and everybody kind of took care of everybody else. It was just that kind of atmosphere.

**Payton:** Yes.

**Siers:** we didn't lock doors, you know and it was safe. There was a mission over there that everybody went to.

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** all of the different ethnic groups went to the mission and the two women that ran the mission were here last summer. Everybody met with them, they still wanted to see them and some of the people still communicate with them. You know they just, I don't know, I don't know why or how it happened or anything but it's just always you see these people and they just like, like family it's like family that you haven't seen for a long time. But it's still there's a closeness there.

**Payton:** Neat. Can we talk about childhood memories of your's living in Lincoln Place?

**Siers:** Sure. One of the things I already talked about was playing the games.

**Payton:** The games, Yes.

**Siers:** We were always outside. I have some pictures [getting up to get pictures] that are one of my very nicest childhood memories.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** This was the Lincoln Place mother's club.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** They, It's obvious what they were and they had Easter egg hunts for the kids, they had Halloween parties for the kids, they had Christmas parties for the kids, the Santa Claus in that picture is my grandpa.

**Payton:** Oh, neat!

**Siers:** So that was just something that they always did and my grandmother and grandfather, this is my mother's parents.

**Payton:** Uh, huh.

**Siers:** Cause before I was talking about my father's.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** My mother's parents were Hungarian, actually this was my step grandpa, but he's the only one I really knew and he was also Hungarian. They were caretakers of the

Hungarian home, which is just a block over this way [pointing to the northwest]. Its now the Mexican Honorary Commission hall. But it was the Hungarian home.

**Payton:** Huh.

**Siers:** And they were caretakers of that and they had to, they cleaned it and like the, they would have meeting there they would have banquets there, American Steel used to have dinners down there. They had a basement and then they had a hall upstairs with the stage and different things would go on there. There were weddings there you know just whatever just the same thing like any kind of a hall like that. But my grandparents were caretakers and of course like all clubs, they had a bar.

**Payton:** Yes.

**Siers:** And my grandfather tended bar and my grandmother would do most of the cleaning. And, but they would get bored, but they had to be there. So I used to go over there all the time after school and I would play cards with my grandma just so that she wouldn't be so bored. So that was kind of, I guess kind of a bad, but it wasn't ever played for you know it was just to keep her occupied and stuff.

**Payton:** Yes.

**Siers:** And then my grandmother was instrumental in giving and seeing that the Hungarians, that the Mexicans got the hall from the Hungarians. I don't know the exact details of that, but I know that it was sort of like they didn't have to buy it, kind of thing. I think they did something.

**Payton:** Donation type.

**Siers:** Yes, and I'm not sure so I just know that she was she had just helped a lot with that.

**Payton:** Yes.

**Siers:** And the Mexicans were always very good to her after that.

**Payton:** Uh, huh.

**Siers:** They brought her a Christmas basket every year. Just their way of saying thank you.

**Payton:** Uh, huh.

**Siers:** You know and that another thing everybody always remembered to remembered who was nice to them.

**Payton:** Right!

**Siers:** And did something. Another one of my childhood memories there used to be a bakery a couple blocks, a couple of blocks down on Neidringhaus. And I don't know the man's last name, I only knew him as Chris. And we used to go down there and get hot bread right out of the oven and he made little breads for the kids and we would have to buy extra bread when we went to buy it because it was always, a loaf always gone by the time we got home.

**Payton:** Laughing.

**Siers:** [laughing] It was so good! Yes.

**Payton:** Yes. Now you're talking about bakeries and this brings up thoughts in my head. We did a walking tour not too long ago as a class and different things were pointed out in the neighborhood what this used to be, what it is now.

**Siers:** Uh, huh.

**Payton:** How much of that, how much has changed over the years?

**Siers:** A lot!

**Payton:** Yes.

**Siers:** There used to be more taverns. There were taverns on [pause] I know there were at least one other tavern, there might used to have been two other taverns. There was a filling station down there [pointing to the front of the neighborhood] Russians owned the filling station, that's an ethnic group I didn't.

**Payton:** Oh, Okay.

**Siers:** Didn't mention. They owned the filling station and that was where everybody, you know that was where we all, we all went. [pause] I think the corner of the lot is still there empty. I don't know I don't think there is a building there. The bakery is gone that building is gone as far as I can remember. [pausing] but basically, most of the buildings are still here.

**Payton:** Uh, huh.

**Siers:** There is a building that there was Louie's Market down here [pointing to the main street] best meats in town. People used to come from other cities to get the meat there. Vartans Market was there, the little markets, you know the little mom and pop stores.

**Payton:** Right.



**Siers:** There was a confectionary that the man's, it was Duke's confectionary and it was the building is still there, but it's not, it's I think one of the taverns uses it as storage now. They bought it and use it for storage. Sammie's tavern has been there forever and ever. It used to be actually I believe that that was the tavern that was owned by my grandparent for a while. And now it's Sammie's. The people that own it are Armenian. There is a tavern across the street that I honestly don't know who owns it now, but it used to be owned by Armenians.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** And then Ernie and Annie's is I think that is owned by Mexicans.

**Payton:** Is it the Valencias?

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** O.K. they have good tacos.

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** Very good! [coughing] Now when we were given the tour some of the things were mentioned about the different taverns, you know the grocery stores you just mentioned.

**Siers:** There was another grocery store; Mitzeff's. It's Gone. Mitzeff's was a good grocery store. That was where we went all the time.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** It was on my block. [laughing, both of us] So that's where we went.

**Payton:** Now, the boundaries of Lincoln Place [pause]are there any existing boundaries, you know?

**Siers:** Yes. I'm sure you've heard this already, that, that,

**Payton:** Some.

**Siers:** But we are Lincoln Place we are not West Granite. You know, you said, "Was there any, did anybody have any, did everybody get along?" Lincoln Place people got along fine. We didn't want to be called West Granite people. And, the border, it's now kind of "iffy". It was American Steel.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** But, then it kind of went a little bit [pause] like definitely no further than West 20<sup>th</sup> Street which is down that way [pointing to the north}, which is the end of American Steel that way. All of that is West Granite. There were [pause] that last block between [pause] a block away from here, which is St. Louis Avenue and 20<sup>th</sup> Street, there is kind of [pause] that's kind of a gray area.

**Payton:** Ok.

**Siers:** [Laughs] That's where The Hungarian Home is.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** You know, but it's, kind of like this whole section here is Lincoln Place.

**Payton:** Ok. And how far down would that be South, that's where we're sitting?

**Siers:** Yes. I think it only goes a block.

**Payton:** A block. Okay. So basically,

**Siers:** It's very small. It's from the Railroad tracks.

**Payton:** To route 3.

**Siers:** To the Army Depot.

**Payton:** Yes.

**Siers:** Cause the Route 3 didn't use to be there.

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** And that street used to be called Pacific. Neidringhaus used to be called Pacific.

**Payton:** And Pacific only to the Railroad tracks?

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** And can you give me some history behind that?

**Siers:** Well, I heard this just when we [pause] this group first got together [pause] when they were telling us about your class doing this, so I honestly don't.

**Payton:** Don't know a whole lot.

**Siers:** Know a whole lot. I don't know that that's true or not. I have no reason to doubt the person that said it. But, the person that said it said that when the basketball team that was Granite City's State Champions won the basketball team, the Mayor said "ok, we're gonna make this Neidringhaus all the way down because of a lot of the basketball team was from Lincoln Place".

**Payton:** Okay. Now...

**Siers:** Cause we were always the other side of the tracks.

**Payton:** Right. And how did that [pause] affect is a bad word to use but [pause] How did that...

**Siers:** That was before my time.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** So I really, I really don't know.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** I just know that I know that it was Pacific Avenue because my father, every once in a while, would call it Pacific.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** And as a, when I was a kid growing up, I didn't know what he was talking about, but as I got older, when he said Pacific, I translated that to mean Neidringhaus.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** I have another really great memory. [Laughs]

**Payton:** Go ahead.

**Siers:** So, I'll tell you.

**Payton:** Sure.

**Siers:** Simm's confectionary.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** It's now a hair salon. Planet Granite.

**Payton:** The Planet Granite?

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** Armenians owned it. Their names [pause] her name, let's see, [pause] his name was Harry and her name was Osney. Which we always thought was funny because they were Osney and Harry. And [laughs] that was on [pause] you know [pause] when Ozzie and Harriet came on TV, it's like "Wait a minute!" [laughs].

**Payton:** Yes. They were already here in Granite before...

**Siers:** Right. But, Osney was the woman and Harry was the man. And, they had... we went there for ice cream and for penny candy and, and, all of that. And it was just a great, great, fun place. And my name is Victoria, not Vickie.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** And Osney always called me Victo. She's go, "Oh, Victo!" [laughs] It would [pause] every time I walked in, she would say that and they would [pause] they were just the nicest people. And you just loved going there. And they had a son [pause] they had a son and a daughter [pause] but their son kept that confectionary open for years after they died, and it was the guys went there to play cards and they played pool, and that was anytime anybody came into town, that's where they met.

**Payton:** Yeah, ok. One thing [pause] I was just looking on the newspaper today and I saw an advertisement for like a little teahouse, tea room down here.

**Siers:** That's like, new within the last year.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** I really don't know much about it.

**Payton:** Do you know what it used to be previously?

**Siers:** It used to be [pause] a family lived there as far as I know. That's the only thing I can remember. I remember a family that lived there.

**Payton:** And is that called Garden Gate?

**Siers:** Garden Gate Tea Room I think is what it's called now, and that's... maybe just within the last year.

**Payton:** Yeah. And it was advertised in the St. Louis newspaper. So I didn't know if a whole lot of business was drawn out of St. Louis...

**Siers:** I can't...I don't know. I have never been there.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** So, I really don't know too much about it. It's just that it's been open, and that they haven't done any...I haven't seen any advertising, so I'm glad you said that because I was thinking, "They gotta do something to get people there".

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** You know. Cause it looks kinda, it is cutsie looking.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** So I...

**Payton:** It's very inviting looking.

**Siers:** ....I'd kinda like to go there. [Pause] So what else can I tell you? Well, I moved back here...I told you that I moved away...

**Payton:** Uh, huh.

**Siers:** I moved away...I was in the seventh [pause] in seventh or eighth grade. I think the eighth grade, cause I was going to Coolidge. And then I moved back here in 1970. My grandmother, my mother's mother, lived in the house next door, and she was getting up in years, and but she was a very proud woman. She didn't want to admit that she needed somebody to take care of her. And I had...this was an empty lot.

**Payton:** Yes.

**Siers:** This was actually used to be...my grandmother and grandfather gardened this whole lot. And, I had just gotten divorced. I only lived in a mobile home. And I moved my mobile home down here. I bought this lot from my grandma cause she owned it. I bought this lot from my grandma and moved in. It helped me out because it gave me a place...but it was the main reason that I moved down here was to take care of, to my grandma without her knowing that's what I was doing. And it worked pretty well [pause] it worked pretty well. Um, I moved here in 1970 and grandma lived another 15 years.

**Payton:** Oh, wow!

**Siers:** So, it was a [pause] you know [pause] it was a good thing.

**Payton:** Yes. Beneficial for both of you.

**Siers:** It was, yes. And, so then what I was getting to was my kids then grew up here.

**Payton:** Ok.

**Siers:** So they have, you know, they have a lot of memories. And they went to the clubhouse for things. We've had things at the clubhouse [pause] they have, I think my one daughter, well, my one daughter, my oldest daughter, her best friend used to live across the alley, and her parents still do. And she, they kind of got away from each other for a while, but now they're back best friends again, doing things together. Um, she, my daughter, my oldest daughter, [pause] her second husband is, the little boy that she was [pause] was her boyfriend when she was in grade school. He lived across the alley a block over.

**Payton:** Neat!

**Siers:** So, you know, it's just all kinds of still here, still together. The church across the street used to be, and this was before my time. It was the first Orthodox Church in the area. It think it's probably; I know somebody else could tell you that it's [pause] there is more significant than the first Orthodox Church in the area. But was named Sts. Cyril & Methody Orthodox Church. And...

**Payton:** How do you spell that?

**Siers:** I could give you [she gets up to find a bulletin] let me see if I've got a bulletin, because that's the church I go to now.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** But it's different.... I'll spell it for you...

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** It's Saints... Sts. It's an abbreviation, Cyril is C-Y-R-I-L and Methody M-E-T-H-O-D-Y.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** And Sts. Cyril and Methodius were brothers... who took the alphabet to the Slavic nations, they made... they created the Cyrillic alphabet so that they could teach ... the people of the Slavic nations the Bible.

**Payton:** Cool.

**Siers:** So that is what this church is named after. My parents were married at this church.

**Payton:** Oh, how neat.

**Siers:** And then they moved the church and I don't really know why. They moved it to [pause]church in Madison.

**Payton:** Uh-huh.

**Siers:** Called Holy Trinity and then a group moved from there to the [pause] we have a new St. Cyril – Methody church out on Maryville Road. But this was [pause] the [pause] first church that was built by the people around here [pause] it was [pause] it was an Orthodox Church and then it was empty for a time, I believe, for a time there were [pause] a Pentecostal group had it and then again it was empty and when we were growing up [pause] we, and I don't know where this came from some kid started it and it got [pause] you know how those stories...

**Payton:** Yea.

**Siers:** Go down. It was haunted.

**Payton:** Oh, Okay.

**Siers:** [laughing] I never saw anything that it was haunted, but ... to, to be... one of the in kids, and of course nobody owned it, anymore, it was kind of like, just...in limbo and the grass would really get high and stuff and to be really with it you had to cut through the church yard ... you know...

**Payton:** Oh.

**Siers:** It was like one of those things and it got...windows were broken out and it was really very, very sad.

**Payton:** Um.

**Siers:** And then the Armenians bought it and they had it for years and years [pause] and [pause] then they built their new church out on Pontoon Road. And now a group has it that's non-denominational group.

**Payton:** Okay. So, the building is in use right now?

**Siers:** It is in use right now, so its, there were, there were some years that it wasn't in use, but its been used as a church for a long, long time.

**Payton:** Yeah. Now, how many churches are within the boundries of Lincoln Place?

**Siers:** Two.

**Payton:** Two. What is the other one?

**Siers:** [Pause]. I'm not sure.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** I'm really not sure. I want to say Baptist, but I'm not sure. [pause] It's on the corner of Neidringhaus.

**Payton:** When you first come in.

**Siers:** Uh-Huh.

**Payton:** I, I noticed the building, but I didn't notice...

**Siers:** Yeah.

**Payton:** Baptist, seems ...

**Siers:** Yeah. And I'm not sure for sure if that's it. The clubhouse down the street...

**Payton:** Now is: are you saying clubhouse what I know as Community Center?

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** O.K. Just wanted to get that straight.

**Siers:** Yeah. Community Center. We, its always been the Clubhouse.

**Payton:** Clubhouse, Yeah.

**Siers:** Always been the Clubhouse [pause] that was [pause] that was where the Lincoln Place Mothers club held their meetings.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** And we just always went there and there were rooms and we did, and you know some of them we had [pause] like day care kind of things.

**Payton:** Uh-Huh.

**Siers:** Were there and some of them we had...you...there's a gym down there and there's...used to be a little swimming pool. Like a wading pool...

**Payton:** O.K.



**Siers:** Kind of thing. And, and used to be able to go down there [pause] that's just always been and then [pause] I guess maybe, I don't how many years ago, ten?... Years ago. Stan Fornachsky's band that plays at the park. Every summer. He used to go to the different parks in, in Granite. Now he only plays at Wilson Park. But, he used, in the summer he would have free concerts and he would go to the different parks and he used to come down here and play and so it was always kind of neat. People would walk down there and get to hear the music...

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** And stuff and that was always nice.

**Payton:** Okay. Now, I know that there's an important teacher from the area? Mrs. Prather? Did any of your family members study under her?

**Siers:** My Father.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** Yes, my father.

**Payton:** Okay. And...is there anything you can tell me about.

**Siers:** No.

**Payton:** No?

**Siers:** No.

**Payton:** Okay. [pause] I know some, I've been told that there was a sewing club? Is that anything that anybody's ever talked about in your family?

**Siers:** [Pause]. My grandmother, my mom's mother, used to do quilting.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** But I don't know... No.

**Payton:** Okay. Growing up in Lincoln Place, where did you have to go to school at?

**Siers:** We went to Washington School.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** Which is over on West 20<sup>th</sup> street.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** My father went to Washington School. I went to Washington School and my children went to Washington School.

**Payton:** So, three generations.

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** All in one school building. Now is the school building still running?

**Siers:** It's gone.

**Payton:** Gone.

**Siers:** They tore that building down.

**Payton:** Okay. Then I heard you mention Coolidge...

**Siers:** Coolidge Junior High School.

**Payton:** Then you moved away?

**Siers:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Payton:** Okay. And ... did any of your children...go to Coolidge?

**Siers:** Yeah.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** Yeah.

**Payton:** So,

**Siers:** My grandson is going there now.

**Payton:** Ooh, that is so neat.

**Siers:** [Laughs]. My grandson didn't get to, he didn't go to Washington School because it was torn down...

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** But, when in fact they closed Washington School, my kids went to Prather School...

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** Which is in west Granite and that's where my grandson went to grade school...

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** Now he's in Coolidge Middle School. It used to be Junior High.

**Payton:** Now Coolidge is the one that's connected to Granite City High School, right?

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** Okay. and then ... I assume you went to Granite City High School in the building that is existing there?

**Siers:** Yeah.

**Payton:** Is that where your father went? Or...

**Siers:** My father, went to high school there, but he did not graduate.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** He went to work, [pause] I believe because of the war.

**Payton:** O.K. Now was your father...

**Siers:** My father

**Payton:** In the war?

**Siers:** No. He was... oh, a pattern maker at the steel mills and they made... tanks.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** So, he was actually a big part of the war.

**Payton:** A benefit to the...

**Siers:** Yeah.

**Payton:** Ones who served.

**Siers:** Yeah.

**Payton:** That's neat. [pause]

**Siers:** My father's mother, [pause], was I believe the first president... of the Macedonian-Bulgarian Lady's Aid Society.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** That organization, I think, just... ceased to exist a year ago. [pause] Mrs. Kirchoff was the last president and she's been president of it since, gosh, for years and years and years. Um, but they just [pause] they, the people that were in it had gotten so, you know they have aged...

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** It was just too much for them to do any more and they donated the money to, well they gave some to the [pause] Holy Trinity Bulgarian Church in Madison and St. Cyril-Methody, our church. The church I belong to which is out on Maryville Road. Because, its members belong to both of those churches...

**Payton:** Um-huh.

**Siers:** They gave some, I don't remember what they gave, but they gave the money to a lot of different [pause] charities in the areas because they had a lot of money.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** But they just, they just [pause] kind of [pause] that was another, you know, let's stay together kind of family kind of thing and that was, that organization I know has been, well, I'm fifty-seven years old and it's been around since before my time...

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** So it was around for over fifty years.

**Payton:** Okay. Now this is a question that you don't have to answer if you don't want to, but what do you consider the American Dream? [Long Pause] And this is a big question that can be answered any way.

[Long Pause]

**Siers:** To be able to provide a comfortable...home for your family.

**Payton:** And do you think all of the generations of your family that have been in America do you think they've achieved that American dream?

**Siers:** Yes.

**Payton:** O.K. It sounds like it. Sounds like everyone has had a good life here.

[Break in taping.]

**Payton:** Alright, growing up in Lincoln Place, is it something that was very memorable? Something that you enjoyed?

**Siers:** I loved growing up in Lincoln Place. I... never ... really wanted to move...but it was, my father thought it was the thing do.

**Payton:** Uh-hum.

**Siers:** So we did. I obviously liked it so much I came back.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** Like I said I came back for my grandma, but if I didn't want to live down here. I would not have come back. I've lived on this back here in 1970 and so I've been here for over 30 years.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** Again. And...

**Payton:** So you've spent the majority of your life...

**Siers:** I've spent the majority of my life in Lincoln Place. I [pause] there were you know from the seventh grade until which [pause] let's see, I graduated in 1962, so [pause] take five years off of that...

**Payton:** Six years.

**Siers:** Yeah. But, um, the house I grew up [pause] in on Olive Street is gone. Which is probably a good thing because, the last people that lived there didn't take care of it and it used to sadden me...

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** to see it. So I was actually glad to see it gone. Because it was, it is better to see the empty lot than to see that.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** My father's parents lived on Olive Street. Their house is still there. My one daughter actually lived in the house for a while. It was still [pause] belonged to part of

my [pause] cousin owned it. After my grandmother died, my cousin bought it and had it pulled off and my daughter rented it from him. [cough] This block here has changed in the fact that a lot of the people have died.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** But a lot of them are still here.

**Payton:** Uh-huh.

**Siers:** [pause], there's, the people that live across the street have lived here since I was a little girl. Since I lived down here the first time.

**Payton:** O.K.

**Siers:** The husband just died within the last year. A couple of houses down the street, a lady lived there and I don't know if I ever knew her husband. I can't remember ever knowing her husband. But, she and my grandmother, who lived next door, were very good friends and we lived a block away and we used to cut through Mrs. St. Ivenies yard to come to my grandmother's house. She just died in the last year. She was ninety something. [pause] A lot of the people, quite a few of the people are gone, but a lot of them, their families are still here. Their children who either, bought houses right away or have come back. There's a couple of boys down the street, uh, I say boys because they, their men, young men...

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** They're probably, I don't even know, I guess their in their thirties. They have their [pause] their parent's house. They actually, [pause] their parents took care of an elderly man who gave them his house when he died. And their parents moved to that house so they kept their parents house and now their parent's are gone and so one boy has one house and one has the other house. So their still here. And a lot of that is still here and I still feel very safe here.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** I have never had any trouble here. I've never had anything stolen. I've never had my house broken into. Never had any, any problems here.

**Payton:** So common misconceptions about the neighborhood are probably false?

**Siers:** Yes!

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** Yes, in fact, good friends of mine who lived over on Olive Street moved to [pause] a better neighborhood. And [pause] within a year after they had moved their house had been broken into twice. [pause] And I laugh at them all of the time and I say “Oh, how does it feel to live in “safe” you know.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** So, its just, I still, you know there’s a few things; there’s a few houses that you wish something would happen, but that’s in any neighborhood.

**Payton:** Neighborhood. Yeah.

**Siers:** I still feel very safe here.

**Payton:** Yeah. And that’s important.

**Siers:** Yeah and I’m here by myself.

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** I have Will [her dog]. Yes.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** Yeah. I still feel very safe here.

**Payton:** Good. Um, Now you spoke of your children earlier. You have three children right?

**Siers:** Um-huh.

**Payton:** Could you give me some information about the kids; where they are now, what they are doing in life?

**Siers:** {Sigh} My oldest daughter, lives over at West Granite. She is a teacher’s aid for special school district in St. Louis.

**Payton:** Cool.

**Siers:** She has two children. My son is, um, is thirty-three years old and he just a year ago bought a house in St. Louis. He works for A.G. Edwards in information technologies [pause] My youngest daughter, who just bought a house in Granite City [pause] works in the same area as my son at A.G. Edwards.

**Payton:** Okay, [long pause] you said talking off tape that your children still come and visit you on a weekly basis and are still in the neighborhood.

**Siers:** My daughter with the kids is here probably more frequently than the others, um, my son is here once a week. He's a very good son. He comes and cuts my grass, every week. Even though I tell him I don't need it; that I can cut it myself. He won't let me. So he's here at least once a week. My other daughter [pause] doesn't come here all that much, but I see her. We go to the same church. I see her there. So there's still, we're very close family. Very close family.

**Payton:** Good, good. [pause] Is there anything else you'd like to add to our interview here that we might have missed? I know we've covered a lot of information.

[Break in taping.]

**Siers:** Yeah. I can't think of anything. I'm sure I will when you're gone.

**Payton:** Yeah, that always happens.

**Siers:** I should have told her this. But I have your phone number if I think of something.

**Payton:** You do. That's absolutely true. I just want to thank you for taking the time out of your schedule

**Siers:** Oh, that's O.K. That's O.K.

**Payton:** I appreciate it a lot and I'm sure this will benefit everybody who comes down here.

**Siers:** I think [pause] I'm very excited about this...

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** I think this is a very nice thing.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** That's being done.

**Payton:** And a lot of history will be brought up through these tapes.

**Siers:** Yeah.

**Payton:** That could have...

Tape 1 Side B [verbally didn't pick up on tape]

**Payton:** A continuation of my interview, Kendra Payton with Vicki Siers. O.K. Vicki.



**Siers:** O.K., and I don't know why I didn't think of this when we were talking about the basketball state champions, but there was, and I'm sure you've heard this already. Lincoln Place... LAC, Lincoln Athletic Club which was called the LAC... and it was in a little building over on Neidringhaus... and... it was; you had to belong... to the club to go. And my father used to tend bar there, I mean he belonged to the club...

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** He used to tend bar, and my mother's sister who, [pause] her, she [pause] when she got married they lived in East St. Louis. They would come over here all the time and my uncle would go down to the LAC with my dad and we would be stay at my house and my cousins and I would always call my dad... at the bar... and [laughs] and this is one of the silly kid jokes that she'd do. "Do you have Prince Albert in a can?" [Laughter] and my dad would say "Hey, you guys", every time he'd do the same thing, he knew who it was, he would go along with our joke and say, you know, and it was just one of the silly things. But, the LAC did a lot for the young men down here. It was... I have to say the LAC was very chauvinistic, but that was the time when that's the way things were.

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** Just like my grandfather and all of his friends were in the living room and the women had to be in the kitchen.

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** That's the way it was. But the LAC did a lot of things for the young men down here. They had, they had basketball teams, they had sports things that they, that they had somebody that coached the young man and helped him and everything. And that was very, very positive thing.

**Payton:** Yeah. Now I went and thanked you for doing this interview and we've had all kinds of things come up since we turned the tape over now. [Laughter] So...

**Siers:** I'm sorry.

**Payton:** Hey that's fine.

**Siers:** I'm, I'm a mixed up person. So

**Payton:** Me too. Talking about the basketball team. How many of the guys that were from Lincoln Place that were on the basketball team are still living today?

**Siers:** Only one that I know of and I can't right now think of his name, but I remember he was at that meeting.

**Payton:** O.K....It seems like there were two.

**Siers:** There were three.

**Payton:** O.K., but it seems like there were two that are still living. I think there was another name.

**Siers:** Yeah, well. Danny Eptimoff just died in the past year.

**Payton:** Okay

**Siers:** He'd moved to Chicago. He was living in Chicago.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** And Andy Phillips just died in the last year. He was living out in California.

**Payton:** Okay. So that one.

**Siers:** So, and, there are two...Hagopian...

**Payton:** Um-huh.

**Siers:** Hagopian is the and then whoever this other man that was at the, that meeting. I don't remember [pause] I don't, I don't know who he was, I don't his name. So there are two that are still alive.

[Break in taping to search for Basketball players names.]

**Payton:** Okay, we were talking about the 1940 state basketball championship team and the guys that were from Lincoln Place that played on the team and we realized that John Marcarian and Andrew Hagopian are the two still left alive. That we had mentioned off tape there were two others.

**Siers:** Two others: Danny Eptimoff.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** Who moved to Chicago many, many years ago. He passed away just in the last year. And also Andy Phillips, who was a member of that team, just passed away this last year. Believe Andy Phillips played pro ball.

**Payton:** Yeah, that seems like something I've heard.

**Siers:** And he just passed away.

**Payton:** Okay.

**Siers:** Within the [pause] probably six months maybe a little longer.

**Payton:** Okay...and these other two are probably getting up in age and the memories they have are precious right now.

**Siers:** Yeah. They are. Yeah. I don't know John Marcarian, but I know Andy, Andrew Hagopian, he's Huggie. He's always been Huggie. He's just always been very, very nice man. Never...never hesitates to say hello. Knows my name, calls me by name, you know. That's the kind of thing that you had down here.

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** Everybody remembers...you. Everybody knew you! Your family and you know, your who family and how everybody was and everybody always cared.

**Payton:** Yeah, that's part of that family bond that grew...

**Siers:** Yeah...yeah and unfortunately now you tend to see these people more at funerals.

**Payton:** Yeah.

**Siers:** But, of course, as we all know funerals are a time when everybody talks about the old times.

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** That's always kind of a, [pause] get to...another reunion kind of thing...

**Payton:** Right.

**Siers:** For people.

**Payton:** And a lot of memories are brought up of...

**Siers:** Yeah.

**Payton:** Past of those people and others who are related and tied with those people. Okay.

**Siers:** Okay.

**Payton:** We can stop now, because we got a lot of information.... I'll thank you once again for taking the time

**Siers:** You're Welcome. I'm very happy to do it.

**Payton:** Thank You.

**Siers:** I think this is an exciting thing.

**Payton:** Yes, it is.