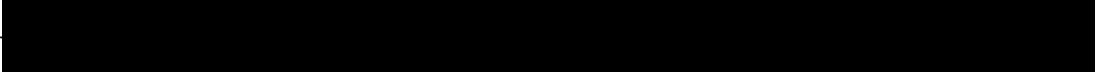


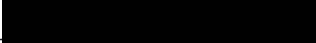
Interviewer: Leslie Bilodeau

INTERVIEW AND TAPE SUMMARY

Name: Carmen Cook

Date and Place of Birth: March 3, 1943 Alton

Address: 

Telephone Number: 

Interview Date, Time, and Place:
11-18-01, 11 AM, Cook residence

Interview Summary (attach additional sheets, as needed):

Her Lincoln place roots, childhood memories of the Community Center, ethnic diversity, foods. Info on Cinco de Mayo, her grandparents immigration, learning to dance, her cousin Reuben Mendoza's legacy, her magnificently decorated home, her career, her art and mask collections, bying the Mexican Club from the Hungarians, Mexican Piastas and music, a scholarship committee she chairs that honors her late uncle, the unspoken bond among Lincoln Place residents, ~~pinjata~~ pinatas, parties

Note any special circumstances involving the interview:

Attached is a press release that was done by Mrs. Cook & Mrs. Mendoza

Biographical Summary of
Carmen C. Cook

Written by Leslie Bilodeau

Although she grew up in Alton, Illinois, Carmen Cook's childhood memories are of Lincoln Place in Granite City. Carmen and her mom, Lucy, spent weekends and summers hanging out in "hunky hollow" with Mr. and Mrs. Ceneobia Gonzalez, Lucy's parents. Carmen told me that as she grew older, her mother would put her on the streetcar in Alton, and she would allow her to travel to Lincoln Place on her own, because there were relatives who were always happy to meet her at the other end. Carmen made that trip quite often as she grew into a young woman.

The Gonzalez' came to Granite City when Lucy was five years old. Her father, Ceneobia Gonzalez, worked for American Steel, and they settled in a home on Olive Street. Although Lucy lived and worked in Illinois all her life after that, Carmen does not know if her mother actually ever became an American citizen. But she lived as if she were.

Carmen, who considered herself very popular in high school, volunteered information about other relatives who were respected members of the community as well. She spoke of her cousin, Ruben Mendoza, whose life was instrumental in the athletic community. Ruben's accomplishments in the sport of soccer made him a member of the Granite City Hall of Fame. He established soccer as a community sport in Granite City, and made his living coaching, refereeing, and sharing his passion for the sport.

Carmen's uncle, Joseph Gonzalez, was a counselor at the high school for many years. After he died, the Mexican Honorary Society developed a scholarship fund in his memory. Due to Carmen's efforts, the efforts of other committee members, and those who contribute to the fund, those scholarships are still awarded today, 31 years later.

Carmen has built her career working in domestic settings and doing medical transcription, on average, 15 hours a day. She mentioned her pride in her Mexican heritage, crediting it for her hard-working style and sense of loyalty. She has been trusted and admired by those she works with and for. Her home is the legacy of their generosity. She has artwork, statues, and sculptures from around the world. Carmen tells me that she has worked for 60-70 physicians in her business, and they brought her these beautiful souvenirs from their travels around the world. Carmen collects various types of rare sculptures and masks. Considering the value in these rare gifts, she was obviously highly respected and valued by these individuals. When I approached her about her selection style, she confided that she never bought anything she didn't like very much. And once she made an artistic choice she never tired of it. I understood why.

Carmen met her husband at Blubby's in Lincoln Place. She remembers many days when they would while away the hours eating cho-chos on the patio at Blubby's. Cho-chos were her favorite ice cream. She described it as a malted mild square that was absolutely delicious. Because Carmen recently lost her husband, and was obviously still grieving, we did not discuss this topic in further detail.

Although she was raised in Alton, Carmen lives with her daughter and granddaughter in Granite City. She told me that once you get Lincoln Place inside your memory, you never again experience anything quite like it. She described the memories as "homecomings."

Carmen has spent the biggest portion of her life giving her expertise and loyalty to support members of the medical community. Today she entrusts her life to those loyal members as she struggles to win perhaps her biggest battle yet, her fight with cancer.