

Narrator: Mrs. Dena (Spiroff) Lovacheff

Interviewer: Anne Valk

Date: November 29, 2001

Place: Lovacheff home, [REDACTED]

Anne Valk: yeah, I think it's a weird thing, most people haven't been interviewed before. Let's just start off by making sure that we're picking up okay. So, if you want to just say a couple of words then I'll rewind it and make sure that it sounds okay.

Dena Lovacheff: okay, just like my name is Dena Lovacheff

[rewinds and checks tape]

Valk: okay this is Annie Valk and I'm interviewing Dena Lovacheff, that's how you pronounce it? On Thursday, November 29, which, she's corrected me on that, at her house in Granite City, and this is Tape 1, Side A of our interview. And the focus of this interview will be the Lincoln Place neighborhood and your experiences there, but I wanted to start off with some background and get you to talk a little about maybe your family, your family background.

Lovacheff: okay. I wasn't born in Lincoln Place, my husband, well, he wasn't born there either, but he lived there from early childhood. We got married in 1951. We had three children, two girls and a boy. And none of them live in the area now. My oldest daughter was born in 1953, and she is married and has two children and they live in Jefferson City. My son is, was born in '55, 1955, and he and his wife live in Deerfield Illinois and they have two children. And my youngest daughter was born in 1967.

Valk: hmm.

Lovacheff: and she and her husband live in Edwardsville, and they just have a 2 1/2 year old little boy.

Valk: okay. And when were you born?

Lovacheff: me?

Valk: yes

Lovacheff: 1931. I was born in Madison Illinois

Valk: and, I'm sorry

Lovacheff: and then when I got married, I moved to Lincoln Place.

Valk: so, did you grow up in Madison?

Lovacheff: yes, yes. Actually, on the border of Madison, so I went to school in Granite City, because we were in the Granite City school district. So, all my schooling was in Granite City. Just through high school. I don't have any college.

Valk: okay. And where did you grow up in Madison? Did you live in

Lovacheff: 13th and Grand.

Valk: okay. And was that a neighborhood?

Lovacheff: yes, it was a neighborhood. A lot of ethnic people down there, too, like in Lincoln Place. And, just, you know, the corner grocery store and a nickel for ice cream in the evenings, and go to the corner drug store and get an ice cream cone. The kids all played together. We played kick the can or hide-and-seek, and there was a factory that at 9:00 it blew its whistle and everybody knew that it was time to go home. [laughter] So, we all went home at 9:00.

Valk: so life, at least on some level, was structured by the factory.

Lovacheff: right, right.

Valk: did people in that neighborhood, adults in that neighborhood, work at the factory?

Lovacheff: my father worked at the factory, most of them did. Yes, there were several factories. The Commonwealth, that's where my father worked. Then there was the American Steel, which was in Lincoln Place, but a lot of the people worked there, too. Granite City Steel. So most of the people were factory workers.

Valk: and were most of the women in the neighborhood stay-at-home mothers or did they work also?

Lovacheff: no, I would say they were stay-at-home mothers. I lost my mother when I was six years old. She was 33 years old when she passed away. And I was raised by a grandmother. But I can't really remember any of the women working back then. I think after the war years, like 1945, that's when a lot of the women started working. But when I was growing up, most of the mothers were at home.

Valk: and who lived in your house when you were growing up?

Lovacheff: my dad, my grandmother, who was my mother's stepmother, actually, and I had two brothers.

Valk: older or younger?

Lovacheff: older. I'm the youngest.

Valk: Okay. So, were you babied?

Lovacheff: [laughs] you know what? I don't think we were babied in those days [laughter]. We grew up, basically we had our chores to do, and no t.v., of course. We didn't have our own record player. We didn't have a telephone until, I think I was in high school. But, that was about it. We had a radio and I can remember my dad turning on the news and listening to Gabriel Heatter because he was the commentator that told all the news stories about the war. We'd all huddle around the radio and then got to listen to some of the, I guess you'd call them sitcoms, like Amos and Andy and Jack Benny. But other than that, we made our own games. We played. No air conditioning. [laughter]

Valk: you would have been a young, a young kid during the depression era.

Lovacheff: oh yes, yes.

Valk: were you aware of poverty in the neighborhood?

Lovacheff: not really, because we were all in the same boat. I mean, nobody had anything. We all lived the same. You know, for Christmas, I can remember the Madison police department, which was, we lived on 13th and the police department was on I believe it was 3rd, and we would go down there and we would get a sack with fruit and nuts and candy and maybe a small gift. But we did have a Christmas tree, it was an artificial Christmas tree, and when I think back it was really ragged [laughter] and maybe got a little token gift. But that's what everybody got. My father had a brother who lived in Michigan and he was not married and he had a restaurant business and he was, we always thought he was our rich uncle because he would always send us clothes at Christmas time. I can remember two Christmases I got a velvet dress at each Christmas and my brothers would get, I guess, trousers and a shirt or something. And then one Christmas he sent us coats. You know, things that we really needed.

Valk: right.

Lovacheff: so we always called him our rich uncle. [laughs]

Valk: which I'm sure he liked.

Lovacheff: yeah, yeah, until we grew up and we would tell him that and he says "I wasn't rich." But, you know, these are the memories that you have.

Valk: were, were people's jobs in the mills pretty secure throughout the depression or were folks getting laid off and everything?

Lovacheff: no, I think they were pretty secure. I don't remember my dad being laid off. He worked pretty steady. I can't say, I can never remember him being laid off or striking or anything actually. So, yeah, his job was pretty secure.

Valk: he was a union member?

Lovacheff: I guess he was. I suppose so.

Valk: and you told me on the phone that you were Macedonian.

Lovacheff: yes.

Valk: so how did that, how did that figure into your life as a child or your life in your family, being Macedonian?

Lovacheff: I don't think we really, like I said, a lot of the neighbors, the neighborhood was ethnic. They were either Polish or Macedonian, Croatian. There was a lot of Croatian people. But my grandmother, of my parents and grandparents all came from Europe, from Macedonia, and my grandmother really never learned to speak English. And so we all spoke Macedonian fluently, actually. My dad did speak English, I mean he learned to speak. And my grandmother became a citizen, oh, my dad had become a citizen already, but my grandmother decided when, gee, what year? I was probably 13, 14 years old when she decided to become a citizen and went to citizenship school, and would just, we would teach her. They had a paper, pamphlet, and we would teach her what to say when she needed to go before the judge and get her papers. And it would be funny, because she would just almost mimic us. "What is your name?" And she knew that when they said that, she would give her name. But other than that, we all just grew up with all our ethnic backgrounds. I mean, there was no difference. And when we went to school, I don't think there was anything there that made us different than the other kids. You know, whether their parents were American born or whatever.

Valk: and were there other children in your school who you were aware they spoke a different language at home or they had parents who spoke different languages?

Lovacheff: yeah, I would say so. That, that really wasn't discussed that much in school. You know, I can't remember saying, that people would say, "there, they speak funny," or a different language or something.

Valk: yeah, I can imagine that if you're living in a neighborhood where that's the norm, that you wouldn't see that as an odd thing.

Lovacheff: exactly.

Valk: you told me your maiden name was Spiroff?

Lovacheff: Spiroff.

Valk: Which is SPIROFF [spells out]

Lovacheff: OFF [finishes spelling]

Valk: and did you go to an orthodox church then?

Lovacheff: yes. Church was just down, well, the orthodox church was just down the corner from our house. About a block away from our house was a Presbyterian mission. And the lady by the name of Dora Ashley ran that. And as young children, we all went there. I mean, even from different parts of Madison. We all went there. And we would have Sunday school there, and then she also, I guess, ran like, what we would call a preschool now. And we would learn songs and the alphabet and things like that. And during the summer we would do crafts, weave little baskets or stitch cards and things like that. But our church was basically the orthodox church. That's where my grandmother went. My dad didn't attend church. And then as we got older we would go there periodically. But we went mostly to the mission.

Valk: the mission sounds a lot like people's descriptions of the community center in Lincoln Place.

Lovacheff: sort of like that, except that she did have church and Sunday school, where the community center [Lincoln Place] was just a, it played a big part in the lives of the kids in Lincoln Place. This Miss Prather taught them a lot of the crafts like sewing and embroidering. I think actually, that was, she probably had a bigger following there. And maybe I feel this way because it was right, we had a grocery store in Lincoln Place, my in-laws did, and the community center was right across the street, so I know my husband and his sisters all went there a lot, spent a lot of time there. The mission [Madison] wasn't open much as the community center, because it had basketball, well, a big gym where the kids played basketball. I think they had game rooms where the mission that I went to was a smaller building. And it was basically the Sunday school classes and then during the summer, like I say, we would have these little craft things. But on the same order, just on a smaller scale.

Valk: a smaller scale. Was, do you know, where your grandmother did her citizenship classes? Or do you know where she did those?

Lovacheff: you know what, I don't remember that. It may have been, because I can't think of anywhere else where she would have gone, so that probably was where it was, but I'm not for certain about that.

Valk: and just one last question about that. I wonder, you mentioned this a little in terms of the stay-at-home moms in the neighborhood, but I wonder if there, if you had a sense in your family about expectations for girls being different than expectations for boys?

Lovacheff: I don't think so, because the man was always the head of the household, the women always waited on the men. I think we were brought up that you cleaned the house, you cooked the meals, you took care of the kids, and males worked. And even after I was married, my husband was one boy among three sisters, and lived in the house where grandmother was still living. And he was catered to. I'd say a little spoiled. And it was

the same thing. Of course, I worked in the store and when I came home, my husband was head of the house and he sat down and we waited on him. Of course, things are a little bit different now and I'm glad to see it. [laughter] But I think that was just something that, that's how we were raised and I don't think we, as children or even as young adults, thought anything of it. Until after the war years and the women did start working and, you know, I think it just started evening out a little bit, some of the men would start helping their wives and whatever. But, no, growing up, I don't think we ever thought, you know, that we should not cater to the men. But things are different now. [laughter]

Valk: mostly different, yes. So, you said that you went to the Granite City high school?

Lovacheff: schools

Valk: oh, you went to all the schools in Granite?

Lovacheff: oh yes.

Valk: so, which schools did you go to?

Lovacheff: grade school was McKinley School, which is now a, it's associated with the hospital, I think it's a health center, whatever, I'm not sure what all they have there. 7th and 8th grade, which was junior high school was what we called it, it was called Central School. Now it's a senior citizen hall. And then the high school. Most of the times we walked. Except if it rained or the bad weather, there was a street car that we would catch and it would leave us off maybe 2 or 3 blocks from the grade school. You know, I can't remember, we must have had a bus that took us to the high school, because it was like 3 miles. But I really don't remember taking the bus but I'm almost sure we did. There must have been a bus going to the high school, because there were a lot of kids that lived in the area there that went to the high school.

Valk: do you remember whether you traveled with other, other people from your neighborhood? [nods] So people went as a group?

Lovacheff: yes.

Valk: so how was Granite City high school?

Lovacheff: oh, it was great. I think we had a good school. I, trying to remember how many students were in the school at the time, but I really can't. Our class had like, our, when we graduated we had maybe 270 kids, which was considered a pretty good sized class. Now, there 700, but. And, at that time, there were two classes. There was a January graduating class and a June class. And I was in the June class. But I thought school was great. We had good teachers. I can't say anything bad about the school. I liked school. And I wish I could have gone on to school, but at that time you went to school, you took business course, and you went to work. And then I got married a couple of years after I was out of high school. And I did work after I got out of high school for a year and a half,

I think it was a year and a half, and then I left my place of employment and went to work at the store.

Valk: so you would have graduated from high school in like

Lovacheff: '49

Valk: '49, okay. So, you were just starting high school when the war was ending.

Lovacheff: yes, started in '45. Went to work, it was called Union Starch which was, they made carmel syrup and syrup and I'm not sure what all they did. I worked in the office. And it was a good place to work. I enjoyed working.

Valk: what made it a good place to work?

Lovacheff: just the people, they were nice to work with. I don't know, it was the only real outside job that I had and I think that I just enjoyed being with the different people, bringing home a paycheck.

Valk: [laughs] that's certainly nice.

Lovacheff: [laughs] Of course, that time, a lot of the pay check helped contribute to the home, too, you know. But, again, never thought a thing about that, because nobody had money and we all contributed.

Valk: my sense is that that's a time of a lot of change in Granite City, the war years and then immediately after, with the building of the army depot and the economy picks up some.

Lovacheff: yeah, I would say probably after that, that was true, it started picking up and the army depot had, provided jobs for a lot of people. And that's when a lot of the women, I think, started working too, especially in the Granite City area, because there was a lot of jobs opening up there.

Valk: what were you doing in the office at Union Starch?

Lovacheff: mostly making reports, boy that's a long time ago [laughs]. I don't even remember. I know that I would have to make reports like a couple of times a month and, but to tell you what they were about, I really don't remember, I don't remember.

Valk: okay. How did you meet your husband?

Lovacheff: my friend and his sister were going to the movies and asked me to go along and he picked us up after the movies were over. It's funny because our families knew each other, but I don't know, we never, it was after that, he picked us up and I believe we went to his house with his sister and stayed there a while and then he took me home and asked

me for a date. And I said 'sure.' And the rest is history. [laughter] We dated, probably, I graduated high school in June of '49, and we probably dated about a year because I was engaged, I got my ring in December of '50, got married in June of '51.

Valk: and how did your families know each other?

Lovacheff: just from being Macedonian, through the church, and different places. They would have dances, the Macedonian, I don't even know who put on the dances, but they called them [vicherincy?] and everybody would go and they would either, some of the people would put on like a little play or something, and then they would clear the floors and push the chairs aside and have a dance. There was a Macedonian man, his name was Jim Todoroff, and I know his daughter was interviewed,¹ and he had a band and he played all the Macedonian music and American music too. And everybody just, you know, knew each other, would go to these dances and visit and play, and that's how most of the people just got together, I guess.

Valk: so there was, a sense of a Macedonian community?

Lovacheff: oh yes, oh yes.

Valk: where were the dances?

Lovacheff: they were held at, right now, the, it was called the Crystal Ballroom, it was a tavern in the front and then they had the big hall behind the tavern. And they rented the hall. And there was a lot of things that went on there. There was a stage and that's where they would put on their performances and then they had their dances. But it was a separate opening. You could go into the bar from the hall, but usually you didn't, you know. And they had a side door, where that's where you went into the dance. That's the only place that I really remember them having. Now, I think in Lincoln Place, and this was later on, they would have doings at what was called the Hungarian Hall, which is now the Mexican Commission, and they would have doings there. Which, most of the Lincoln Place people would attend. But at the other, at the Crystal Ballroom, they came from Lincoln Place, and Madison, and Granite.

Valk: where was the Crystal Ballroom?

Lovacheff: 13th and Madison Avenue. It's still there now and it belongs to the Orthodox church down there. They bought the hall. And I don't know what they use it for now, the church is very small now. The churches split in 19, oh, when, late 1970s or early '80s, and built another church here on Maryville Road, and that's the church that I go to now. So I don't know what they do with the hall. I know that for a while they had bingos there in Madison. I know they don't do that anymore.

Valk: and that's St. Cyril and Methody that you go to?

¹ Millie Todoroff Chandler.

Lovacheff: yes, yes.

Valk: I want to come back and talk about that some more. Do you know whether this Crystal Ballroom was owned by somebody who was Macedonian or how that ended up being the place where these dances were held?

Lovacheff: [softly] who was the Crystal Ballroom owned by?² I don't know, I don't know.

Valk: and it sounds like you didn't go to dances in Lincoln Place?

Lovacheff: no

Valk: but you knew Lincoln Place people through the dances?

Lovacheff: yes. And then through school we met a lot of the different kids. But, like I say, our parents knew the people because a lot of them were from the same area in Europe. So, that's how they knew each other. Okay?

Valk: so, you got married in June of '51, you said. And you moved to Lincoln Place?

Lovacheff: as soon as we got married, we moved

Valk: oh, and your husband was William, is that right?

Lovacheff: yes. They had a grocery store and they lived up above the store. And when we got married we lived up there. We, when we first got married we just had a room, which was our bedroom, in the building away from the family. They lived in the front part of the building. And they had roomers, you know, men that lived in one or two rooms and all. And so, well they didn't have leases in those days, but my in-laws asked the men to move and then we remodeled the back part of the building and made that our apartment and then that's where we lived and that's where my kids were born and raised, but we all lived above the store. We didn't live directly with my in-laws but we were in and out, you know, all the time with them. And actually when we worked in the store, most of the time my mother-in-law would cook dinner and we would eat dinner with them, because we put in long hours at the store and by the time we got home, it was just too hard to try to get a meal cooked. And, well we lived there until after we closed the store. The kids all grew up there. When my husband and his sisters were growing up, like I say, they spent a lot of time at the clubhouse. That was their playtime. It had a nice yard where they could play outside. There was a little wading pool in there where the kids could play in the water. And then inside, like I say, they had the crafts and things with this, there were three women. There was Miss Prather, Alice Dineff, Alice Sobeleski I believe was her maiden name, Dineff, and Nora Palcheff. And they, not all at the same time. I think Miss Prather was really the main person and all the kids adored her. In fact, the junior high school that is now, well it's not a junior high school, I think it's an elementary, in West Granite was

² Crystal Ballroom located at 1301 Madison Avenue, and owned by Edward Zalewski and Zison Antonopolis, according to the 1948 Tri-Cities city directory.

named after her, Prather. And the kids, my husband and my in-laws played there a lot, and then as my kids grew up, you know, their generation, they spent a lot of time there playing and learning things. Of course, Miss Prather and those women weren't there any more. But when my husband was young, the women took care of it. And it was donated to Lincoln Place by the Commonwealth plant. And I don't know how that worked, whether the Commonwealth plant paid those women or what. But then it was turned over to the park district, and when the park district took it over then they had young people that would take care of it.

Valk: okay

Lovacheff: like when my kids went, it was under the park district and different kids that would apply for jobs at the park district would take care of it.

Valk: so, there were, there weren't a few people who were there consistently over a long period of time, really, like there had been earlier.

Lovacheff: right, right.

Valk: so your husband talked about the community center having been important to him when we was young

Lovacheff: oh yes, oh yes. Everybody went there, you know, it was like a congregating place. And boys and girls alike. They did little crafts and there was, you know, there was, they were all equal then. [laughs] And I think they enjoyed, well I know they enjoyed going. It was something to do, you know, 'let's go to the clubhouse.' And as the kids grew up, too, the 1940 basketball team won the state championship and became known as the Wiz Kids because they all, most of the basketball team that went to Granite High grew up in Lincoln Place and practiced at the gym there and, you know, it just did really well. And so that was a highlight of Lincoln Place.

Valk: yeah, I'm sure that must have generated a lot of interest in playing basketball and kids in the neighborhood wanting to do that.

Lovacheff: yes.

Valk: did you, why did you move to Lincoln Place?

Lovacheff: because that was the thing to do. [laughs]

Valk: to move with your

Lovacheff: well, my husband worked in the store with his father and his sister. And there was, we didn't consider doing anything else. Like I say, I worked for, got married '51, I probably worked, after I was married, probably about six months, because I started working there when I got out of high school and then I think like about six months into our

marriage, and then I quit there and went to work at the store. And so it was convenient. We lived upstairs, we just walked down the stairs and went to work.

Valk: nice commute.

Lovacheff: except, a lot of long hours at the store. It was just family. Then as time went on we would hire like young boys to help clean up or sack potatoes and things like that. But it was, and then my sister-in-law, when she got married, her husband, he worked at the Granite City Steel and after a while he quit and came to work at the store. We had a delivery business.

Valk: just for the sake of the tape and history, this is Louie's Market

Lovacheff: Louie's Market

Valk: at 824

Lovacheff: 824 Niedringhaus.

Valk: and your father-in-law was

Lovacheff: Louie

Valk: and your sister-in-law who worked in the store?

Lovacheff: Evelyn.

Valk: Evelyn, okay. Before we get into talking some more about the store, I wonder if you could just describe the building a little. So, there's a store and there's living

Lovacheff: a two-story building, the store was, there's a door in the middle of the building and the store, the store was on the corner of Niedringhaus and Maple. And back then, Niedringhaus was called Pacific Avenue. And if you're on Niedringhaus, on the right was the grocery, then the door that led upstairs to the rooms, and on the left was another area where, when they first had the store, that was the grocery store. And if I'm not mistaken, I kind of think that the corner building was a tavern. But I'm not certain about that. It seems to me like I've heard this through the years. Then the middle door led upstairs and my in-laws had [counting out loud] one, two, three, four, five, six rooms and a bath up there. And then there were two rooms behind which just, that's where my mother-in-law did her cooking, because she didn't want to get her kitchen all greased up [laughter] and her washing machine. That was her two work rooms were back there. And then there were, [counting out loud] one, two, three, four, five, six more rooms behind that that were rented out to different roomers, you know, men that just had a couple of rooms each. And then there was a big hallway, you went, the door in the middle [from street] went up the stairs and then there was another door at the top which led out the back end of the building, and that was generally locked, because that was their family [space]. And then the hallway and

then were stairs leading down to go out the back way. But on the other side of the hall there was [counting out loud] one, two, three, four more rooms that, that people lived in. One bathroom

Valk: for the whole second floor?

Lovacheff: for the roomers, for the renters. My in-laws had their own bathroom.

Valk: so, if I'm actually, maybe we can try to draw this. I'm picturing this, the family space was all across the front of the building

Lovacheff: that's correct

Valk: and then there's a hall down the middle, separating the family space from the roomers in the back.

Lovacheff: I wish I could, I'm sorry I didn't look up some pictures for you. But this is the building, this was the door going upstairs. [has drawn a floor plan while we talked, in which she's sketched out the location of the various rooms. A facsimile of this sketch is included with the interview materials.] And then right up here was another door that ended the family living quarters. And then there was a hallway going all the way back like this and then the stairs going down [in the back] were over here.

Valk: okay.

Lovacheff: so, my in-laws lived in this part.

Valk: okay

Lovacheff: and then as we asked the people to move, our bedroom, what we did before we got married, our bedroom was the last room over here. And then we eventually took this part of the building [back right corner when facing the building]. So we lived in the back of the building. And there was a door here and we could go into my in-laws either that way or through the hall.

Valk: okay, okay.

Lovacheff: of course, before we moved in we just completely remodeled it and put a bathroom in there for us. And we lived there until 1983.

Valk: so how many rooms did you actually have in your space once you remodeled.

Lovacheff: six. Well, five and one-half, really, [counts out loud] one, two, three, four, five, and the sixth room, which was here, was where we put the bathroom and built a big closet in there, so we broke up that room, so it was like five and a half.

Valk: so, this sounds like it's quite a large building?

Lovacheff: it's a pretty good sized building. It's still standing. It looks terrible now, which, it's very hard to go down there and look at the building now, because it's in terrible shape. After my husband passed away, I sold the building and there's a house next door and that's what we bought. And we moved there in 1983. And my husband passed away in 1986, but, well it was just before he passed away we sold the building and the two young men that bought the building had big plans for it, and they started working on it. They were going to, they were going to make separate apartments and when they would talk to us, you know, it sounded really nice and we were really pleased. They rented out the store building for a while. But whatever happened, it never came to be. And I don't even know who owns it now. But they certainly let it go down.

Valk: well, it must be quite an old building?

Lovacheff: oh, it is an old building. My father-in-law bought it in [refers to page of notes that she'd written in advance] in 1920 and I don't know how old it was then. I have no idea when the building was built, but he bought it in 1920. Then he and Mr. [John] Kirchoff and I don't know when they started the grocery business, but they had the store on this side.

Valk: okay, so when you said if you're looking at the building then the grocery was originally on the left side of the door going up stairs, that's

Lovacheff: that's when they ran the business together. Let's see, I don't know when, let's see if, my mother-in-law and father-in-law got married in 1922, so they were in the business then.

Valk: and your mother-in-law was Vasila?

Lovacheff: Vasiliki, Vasilka or Vasiliki.

Valk: okay.

Lovacheff: they got married, they had their first child in '23 and she died at six months and I can't tell you what she died of. And it was very hard on her [Vasilka]. And so they moved to Bunker Hill about 1925. So I'm assuming that my father-in-law and Mr. Kirchoff had the business probably from 1920, '21, to maybe '24. See, I don't know these dates, that where I wish I had talked to them. But the best my sister-in-law and I could determine, they moved to Bunker Hill about 1925 and they lived on a farm there. They purchased a farm. And my oldest sister-in-law, who's Virginia, was born there in 1927. My husband was born there in 1929. Then they moved back to Granite City. And they, I guess the building was rented out by then and they moved to a house on Maple Street, about the middle of the block. And my sister-in-law Evelyn was born in that house in 1931. And I don't know when they moved to the building, it was sometime in the next couple of years. And they lived above the store. My youngest sister-in-law, Shirley, who's the fourth child, was born there in 1939.

Valk: let me just flip this while [turns over tape]

[Tape 1, Side B]

Lovacheff: and again, I'm not, I'm not sure. I know that my father-in-law and Mr. Kirchoff, whether they had a disagreement or what, but the partnership was dissolved and Mr. Kirchoff rented this side of the building, then and opened his grocery store, and rented from my father-in-law.

Valk: okay. So the right side of the building became a grocery at that point.

Lovacheff: became a grocery store, right. And this one they rented out to different little things throughout the years. Once it was a church, once it was a cleaning business, once, a couple of times it was a store room, just different little things. But when Mr. Kirchoff ran the grocery business, my father-in-law went to work at Madison Coal and Feed, and that was in Madison on 13th and State Street. And worked there until probably '47 or '48, because they asked Mr. Kirchoff to, they wanted to open their own store, so he built the store across the street, the building across the street, and opened a grocery business there. And my father-in-law opened the store, I believe it was in '48, and my husband just came home from service and so they worked, and my sister-in-law, worked together in the business. And we were in business until 1980.

Valk: and I see from your notes, so the Kirchoffs, his independent grocery was across the street at 825 Niedringhaus.

Lovacheff: yes, directly across the street. Mr. Kirchoff passed away in 1950 or '51. It was right in the time we were getting married, Mr. and Mrs. Kirchoff were my husband's godparents. And when we wanted to get married, my in-laws said that we needed to go to them and tell them that we were going to be married and ask for their blessing. So we did. But Mr. Kirchoff was already gone by then. So, I think he passed away in 1950.

Valk: and this is John and Tomea?

Lovacheff: John and Tomea. And then they continued to run their grocery business and, I should remember this date, but I don't, and I think it was 1954, '55, or '56, because my son was born in '55, and I, they closed their business right in that time. Because we bought their building and we were going to run two grocery stores. And we ran it for a very short period of time and it just wasn't working out that way, so we closed the store, their store, and went back, and my husband and I were going to operate that store, and my sister-in-law and her husband were going to operate the other store. But it was just too hard by themselves, by ourselves like that. And so, but it seems to me like that was the time because Woody, my son, I know was just a baby at the time, so that's why I'm figuring it was in '55, '56, those years.

Valk: this is, this is just a page from the city directory, this in 1955, and it shows³

Lovacheff: 824, okay

Valk: and you had a telephone

Lovacheff: oh, yes. [laughter] Okay, it still shows Tomea [Kirchoff] at the grocery at 825 [Niedringhaus.]. And this is 1955?

Valk: yes. I don't, I can look at '56, we can figure that out by looking at them. The next one that I copied though, isn't until '68.

Lovacheff: oh, by then we had closed although we still owned the building.

Valk: yeah, it shows, and then [looks at 1968 page]

Lovacheff: at 826, that's

Valk: is that the warehouse?

Lovacheff: that's this part here [referring to her drawing of the building.] That's 824 [right side when facing building], this is 826 [left side when facing building].

Valk: okay, so the right side of the building, facing it, was 824, and then the middle or the left side was 826.

Lovacheff: right, and then the house here was 828. Which is where the Kirchoffs lived when they operated their grocery store. And then they sold the house to Doc Hammond, who operated, we rented to him, he made name tags, those little plastic [ones]. And he rented 825 from us. Vizer [name unclear] tile rented it before that. They sold tile and they rented it first, oh, gee, there were several businesses in there, but Doc Hammond, I think, was the last one and he rented that and he also rented this part [taps her drawing] as a warehouse for his name tags and things.

Valk: so, even when you closed the grocery across the street, you still owned that building.

Lovacheff: yes

Valk: let's see, this is 1975 [refers to city directory page]. There's Hammond, and Hammond Name Pin at 825.

Lovacheff: 826, at 828. See, he lived there then. When he passed away, we bought his house from his estate. And we bought the house in, oh gee, I don't know when he passed

³ We're looking at the city directory page with entries for Niedringhaus St., 1955. The pages that we examined are included with the interview materials.

away, because we rented it for, we just bought it because it was close, we rented it probably. Do you have anything past this [refers to 1975 city directory page]?

Valk: I have '85.

Lovacheff: no, that's

Valk: another ten years.

Lovacheff: this is '75. Okay, let me see. Jennifer was born, Jennifer's my granddaughter, she was born in, was she born in '75? Yes, she was born in '75, and Alex was born in '77. And Doc died probably about '76 or '77, and we bought it shortly after that, and rented it until 19, probably '80, we moved in in 1983 but we completely remodeled it so it was vacant probably a year, so probably until about 1982. And then it was vacated 'til we remodeled it because we planned to move into it, because, you know, we were living in this building all by ourselves, my father-in-law had passed away, and my two older children were both gone by then, we just had the youngest one. And so we remodeled the whole house and moved into that house in 1983. And my husband passed away in 1986 and then I sold the house and moved here in 1988.

Valk: your in-laws, were they Macedonian? And were they immigrants?

Lovacheff: yes. They lived upstairs and my mother-in-law's mother lived with them. And actually, my, oh gosh, my, let's see it was a mother-in-law? We called her Babastata [name unclear] and she was, was she my mother-in-law's grandmother? Meta was my mother-in-law's mother [Meta Savoff] and Babastata was, I think it was, I can't remember, but she lived with them for a while and she was way older. I'm not sure who she was. But anyway, my father-in-law had these two grandmothers

Valk: wow

Lovacheff: and they all lived there, and then the older one, that I'm calling Babastata, lived with my mother-in-law's sister for a while in Madison. But, yes, they all came from Europe. My father-in-law came over in 1916, he was 16 years old, going on 17. My mother-in-law came in 1920. And I think when my father-in-law first came over, I think he worked on the railroad, which most of the men did, worked on the railroads at the time, and then I believe he worked at American Steel for a while, and then bought the building and went into all the other ventures.

Valk: that's quite impressive that he was able to buy the building that soon after coming.

Lovacheff: yes, see I didn't know that that was when he bought the building but, yes, it is. But he was frugal [laughs] and probably saved every penny he earned except to buy a little bit of food. At that time, there were like several men that lived in one room, they would just use the room for bedding and maybe have a hot plate to cook something on now and then. And he had a hard time accepting people spending money when things got good

during the war years and people were making money and he says "I worked too hard for my money to just throw it away." So we had to be very careful how we spent or what we spent.

Valk: does that have to do with both how you ran the business or the work in the business as well as in your family life?

Lovacheff: not, the only the thing that I could say that it had to do with the business, is if we wanted to go out to eat or go out and get a sandwich or something, he'd say "well, why do you want to do that? You've got all this food down here." You know? But, no, I guess he kept his home life a little bit separated from the, you know, business. But, certainly different. You know, when you think back to how things were then and how, but kids have everything now and we're all guilty of it, you know, kids say they'd like to have and so we would buy for them. But it was different.

Valk: well, and I'm sure for, did he come over by himself initially?

Lovacheff: I think, initially, a brother came with him, but then went back and then when the brother came back he went to Canada and lived there until he passed away. But I think he came to the land of opportunity. Left his mother, his mother was widowed, and I guess he thought he could come over here and, you know, make some money and send it back. I'm sure that that's what most of them thought, you know, and I don't know how long his mother lived after he came over here. I think she, I think he left the mother with a little sister, maybe a couple of sisters. And my folks, my dad, too, was probably 16 or 17 when he came over, but I don't know too much about my grandparents from over there. He had a brother that, like I told you, that lived in Michigan. He came through, he went to South America first and lived there for a while and then went on, came on to the states and ended up in Michigan. They had another brother that never did leave. In fact, he ended up in Bulgaria and he was a photographer. And then they had a couple of sisters that stayed over there. And I really didn't know that much about them. My mother, her father and, well, her mother died at childbirth, and her father, my grandfather, married my grandmother, and she raised her, and I think they came to the states when my mother was, I want to say, I guess she was about 15 or 16 years old. I know that she went to school for a couple of years to learn English. And then my grandfather died in 1930, so I didn't know him. But he built a home and that's where we grew up, at 13th and Grand, and then my mother-in-law, I mean my mother, got cancer and she died in 1933. Or 1938, she was 33 years old when she died. She died in 1938. And then my dad remarried when he was, when I was 16, I believe, and he and my grandmother didn't really get along, so he moved in with his new wife and we stayed with my grandmother. I mean, he supported us and he only lived like two blocks, two and a half blocks away, and he supported us, but we lived with my grandmother, my two brothers and me.

Valk: so your grandmother was really like a mother for you?

Lovacheff: yes. So, that's it.

Valk: well, it's so, I mean I'm just struck by the presence of these extended families and what that would mean for kids and for grandkids to be growing up in a household or in a neighborhood where they've got grandparents and great grandparents, you know, who are all right there and helping raise them.

Lovacheff: there were a lot of them that lived, the extended family. I know my best friend, her grandmother lived with them. I think if a grandparent was, came over with them, I think in most cases they did live with the family.

Valk: which, I guess, makes sense, also, if it's the younger people who know English to a larger extent, that then can help the older generation as well.

Lovacheff: right, right.

Valk: let's talk about the grocery.

Lovacheff: okay. [laughter]

Valk: what kind of a store was it?

Lovacheff: well, it was a mom-and-pop store, what they call now. We had a nice meat department, sold everything, you know, vegetables, bread, canned goods. When frozen foods started, well, before that, I mean, whatever anybody wanted we, you know, sacked the potatoes for them, we sacked the grapes for them, and all that. The meat was all hand-cut, there was no packaged meats. That was when we had the store on this side [right side of the building], when I worked in the store. When they had the store over here, on the other side, everything was packed. Beans, rice, they were in drawers and, you know, you weighed out. "I want a pound of rice." Of course, I didn't work there, that was way before my time. But when I worked in the store, we would weigh out their vegetables, their fruit, and, like I say, our meat was all hand-cut. My father-in-law and my husband just learned by error and trial, trial and error. They didn't go to butcher school or anything. And actually became quite good at it. My husband learned a lot of the cuts of meat and we had, by the time we were in business and closed and our business, we had a very, very good meat business. We sold only high-grade meat. Then I can remember when frozen foods were starting to come out and you didn't know how you were going to compete and we bought this big, six-door freezer and, you know, wow. Stocked it with all the frozen foods and that was really a big step in the right direction.

Valk: frozen vegetables mainly?

Lovacheff: vegetables, juices, pizzas, and then the tv dinners, a few of them, and, you know, it caught on. [laughter] And we had a dairy case for the, well, at first we just had a, like a little refrigerator that we had the milk, the milk and the eggs and butter, no, the butter I think we had in the meat, in the walk-in cooler, and they would have to ask for the butter. And then when we bought the freezer, and then we bought a dairy case, and had eggs, the butters, the milk, and we started handling packaged cheeses, biscuits, canned

biscuits. And then we got a cooler for the vegetables, or we may have gotten that before, for the lettuce and, two coolers, we had one cooler for the vegetables and one for the fruit. And then it kind of became like self-service and people would go through and then come to the check-out counter and we'd ring them out. My sister-in-law and I rang, we had two registers and checked out, and then my father-in-law kind of semi-retired in '66, '67, and I left the register and went back to work at the butcher counter with my husband, you, know, slicing lunch meats. And I didn't cut any cuts of meat, but I could slice lunch meat and make orders. Like I say, we had a delivery business, that people would call and we would make their orders and then deliver them. I could make orders, wrap meats, and I got to know the cuts of meat pretty good. Don't remember too much of them now, but [laughs]. And then my two older kids both helped out in the store. My son worked quite a bit at the butcher counter. He learned to cut meat and my daughter once in a while would, but by then I had the youngest and she kind of helped take care of her, babysat her. By, going back a little bit further back, when my mother-in-law was able and well, we had live chickens in the back yard and she would kill and dress the chickens as people ordered chickens.

Valk: wow, that's fresh.

Lovacheff: Thanksgiving, she did turkeys, and that was a job. I mean, thinking back now, boy, I don't know how she did it. Because we didn't have hot water downstairs. She would have to boil the hot water upstairs and we would carry it down and she would pluck the feathers and it was amazing. I mean, Thanksgiving week was just hard, hard, hard, because she worked hard down there getting, you know, because we'd order them and, like I say, fresh, people liked that fresh. So, she did that. And we also made two or three kinds of homemade sausage. It was hard work. They didn't have, you know, when you go into a grocery store now and you could look in and they have a huge cutting room that's all refrigerated, they had a little old walk-in cooler and they had to bring out one piece of meat at a time and cut it and refrigerate it again. And, you know, the walk-in cooler wasn't even as big as this kitchen, but it was loaded. And we'd have to grind the hamburger and immediately refrigerate it because the ground meat you can't leave out. Every weekend we tore down the whole butcher shop, took everything apart, cleaned out the bottom of the cases, that was basically my job. I would scrub out the walk-in cooler floor. We cleaned the machinery every night. When we closed the store, and the first couple of weeks when we didn't have to go down and would sit home and drink coffee, didn't realize how really tired you were because it was, I mean, every day you got up, you went downstairs, you worked hard all day, and you went home. And you dropped off, went to bed [laughter]. And that's when I started realizing how really tired we were.

Valk: what were, what were the hours?

Lovacheff: [laughs] Initially, when the store first opened, I believe, I believe my father-in-law opened the store at 5:00 [a.m.] maybe. And probably was open until about 6:00 [p.m.]. Then when we got smart, when we got older and we thought this was ridiculous, so we started opening the store at 7:00 [a.m.] and we were always there 'til 6:00, 7:00, 7:30 [p.m.].

Valk: so regularly 12, 13 hour days.

Lovacheff: always, always.

Valk: seven days a week?

Lovacheff: no. Six days. Even when the supermarkets started staying open on Sundays we couldn't do that. I mean, that was our day to clean and get everything ready for the next week. But that was an everyday job. And, like I say, by the time my daughter got married and moved to Jefferson City, if we wanted to go visit her, we had to stay in the store Saturday night after we closed and clean it so we could to Jefferson City in the morning and come back so we could open the store on Monday. But, that's how we did things. So,

Valk: where, when the business was mainly produce and meat, and the chickens, where did they come from?

Lovacheff: we bought a lot of our meat from Tarpoff Packing and we were related to them. My mother-in-law and Mrs. Tarpoff, the mama, were first cousins. We bought meat from the packing houses -- Circle Packing, Hunter Packing, Kreigh [name unknown]. Is there any more? We had, eggs came from, there was an egg man had a farm in, someplace in Illinois and they came around.

Valk: they would deliver them?

Lovacheff: yes. We had Massey Dairy when they were in business, and Dressel,⁴ which is now Prairie Farms, we had both their companies deliver milk.

Valk: and produce?

Lovacheff: produce, my husband went to the market once or twice a week.

Valk: over in St. Louis?

Lovacheff: St. Louis produce row. And then, at that time, let's see, when they first opened they got their canned goods from the Lucido Wholesale,⁵ which was based in Granite, I believe on State St. Then we became associated with Associated Grocers in St. Louis, AG Stores, and there was a group of us. There was us, there was Gattung's Grocery in West Granite, Cionko's Grocery, Emmits' Market, and A&J Market, which was Andy Bukhovac [?] in Pontoon Beach.⁶ And we all belonged to AG Grocers, but we here in Granite formed our own little group and we would go out to dinner once a month or something and just kind of discuss things. And we formed a, we made a circular, a sales circular, which we would put in our paper and it, it, I guess we kind of, I'm sure the AG Grocery warehouse

⁴ Massey Dairy at 20th and Madison; Dressel Dairy at Niedringhaus and Benton St.

⁵ Lucido Brothers at 2248 Madison.

⁶ Gattung and Gardener A.G., 2237 Illinois Ave; Cionko A.G. Market, 2901 Madison.

put it out for us, but of course we had to pay for it, and it was all of us, the five stores in Granite City were all AG stores and followed that ad. And then, little by little, A&J, they closed, and Emmits' closed, and Gattung's closed. Cionko's is still in business, I don't know if they're still doing business with A&G, oh AG Grocers or not. And then we closed. But it was a nice group and we remained friends with all of them. And when we were with them, then they would deliver the groceries, the canned goods, we had to make out our order, we had a big order form and we would make out the order and mail it to them and then we would get a delivery probably, I think it was on Thursdays, and so we'd hear the truck come and go downstairs and unload the groceries. And we could get produce through them, also, and we did now and then. But my husband preferred to go pick out his own produce. That was an early morning, because he'd be at the produce row 5 or 6:00 in the morning.

Valk: wow

Lovacheff: so that would make for a long day.

Valk: once or twice a week?

Lovacheff: usually once, if there was something special we'd run over again or maybe get through the AG. But usually it was once a week.

Valk: and did you carry goods other than food?

Lovacheff: in the later years, there were a couple of shelves on the end of the shelving and we had like [panty] hose and little knick-knacks. We sold some drug items, we had a special salesman come in with aspirin and things like that. Hose and maybe a few spatulas and things like that. I will say we were one of the first stores and only small store to handle ethnic foods, which was the feta cheese and the Greek olives. And then we got a source where we could get the filo dough and we handled that. And we had a whole shelf on the end of an aisle that was Mexican foods. A lot of their sauces and the salsas and spices and we had a lot of people would come in because we had all these ethnic things. After my in-laws came back here and then in 1948, I believe, there was a tornado in Bunker Hill and they had become friends with these people, these two old people who were eventually, one was killed, I think during the tornado, the other died because of it. And from their estate, my father-in-law bought that farm, which we still own, in Bunker Hill. We have nothing on it, it's just land. But we would garden out there.

Valk: in your spare time?

Lovacheff: on Sundays, every Sunday. Planted peppers, the banana peppers, sweet and hot banana peppers, and tomatoes, and squash, and we would try watermelon and green beans. But peppers were our main thing. And we'd have to go out there and pick peppers after the 4th of July, bushels and bushels of peppers and my father-in-law pickled them. And we sold them in the store, pickled peppers. Which was a big item.

Valk: I can imagine.

Lovacheff: we had big barrels, like that big [gestures to about waist high]. Have you ever heard of pickled cabbage? They make cabbage rolls with? Well, we pickled cabbage, and you had to have a certain head of cabbage to do that. And you would make your brine and then you had to empty the water, or the brine, and recycle it, you know, empty it on the bottom and recycle it on the top. And that kept the pickling process going. If you didn't do that, your cabbage would ruin, it would become rotted. So I can remember doing that. And then someone had the, I don't know how they did it at first, because finally someone had the brainstorm to put a little spicket on the bottom of the barrel, which they would turn on. I don't know how they, I guess they just emptied the water from the top and just kind of tossed it around. My father-in-law also was a beekeeper. He had beehives in the back yard and he strained his honey. And we would sell honey in the store, either the big cone or he had the little cones or strained honey, which was very, very good. My husband and my sisters-in-law laugh because they said they never had syrup when they were growing up because they always had honey. And he had some honeybees on his property in Bunker Hill which he would, and the bees never bothered him. I mean, he would put on a facemask and maybe wear long sleeves, but they never bothered him. I went out in the yard once and the bees stung me and I had to go to the hospital. [laughs]

Valk: oh, are you allergic?

Lovacheff: yes.

Valk: Your father-in-law sounds like an incredible entrepreneur.

Lovacheff: I think in these days that's what he would be called, yes. He was an interesting man.

Valk: you talked about the filo dough and the feta cheese and the Mexican spices and all. Was that after you started working in the grocery that you introduced those?

Lovacheff: yes. Well, actually, the Mexican food before I started working there, because I can remember my husband saying that, I guess, that someone had given him the name of Pedro Lopez and he was from Topeka Kansas, and they called him on the phone and, you know, wanted to know if they could buy things from him. And he actually came to the store with some of his products, I guess, and they said he was just a little funny old Mexican man. And introduced himself and through him, then, they started buying this and he would ship it from Topeka. Oh, all the Pedro Lopez products, but just any number of things. Cornhusks to make tamales, and see we, there was quite a few Mexican people in the neighborhood, and so that went well.

Valk: I'm sure. You mentioned the introduction of frozen foods and that was one big change. And then kind of moving from, to gradually more and more self-service.

Lovacheff: right.

Valk: what other kinds of things changed in the grocery while you were working there?

Lovacheff: hmm,

Valk: or how did the business change during that period?

Lovacheff: well, I don't know. I think it just, we tried to become more modernized because you're competing with the supermarkets now. Basically, I think our business was the people, well, the neighborhood people stayed, but we had people that came from, you know, the other side of town, like this side of town [referring to the area where she currently lives], because of our meat, and then when you're in there buying meat, then you're picking up other things. Through a friend my husband learned to make shish kebob, and, oh boy, that was a job. [sighs] We would cut, we made our shish kebob out of beef, pork, and lamb, and once in a while we'd put a little veal on it. And we would make them every other week. And he, as soon as we made them, then he would start preparing for the next time. He would chunk his beef and all and we would put the meat in the freezer. And

Valk: he would actually cook them?

Lovacheff: no, no, we did not cook them. When it came time to make the shish kebob, which was on Thursday nights, we would take the meat out of the freezer and put them in big pans, and usually two pans, this big and this deep [gestures with her hands, about a foot long and five inches high] full of beef, pork, and lamb chunks, and he made his own sauce, which is a secret sauce which my kids will not let anybody have. They have it. And we'd make the sauce and we would season them on Wednesday night and that was my job to get in there and season this ice cold meat.

Valk: and these are like big roasting pans?

Lovacheff: yes, big roasting pans, two of them. And I would have to get in there and, oh man, your hands would be frozen, and then on Thursday nights, our skewers were about that big [gestures with her hands, about four inches]. Thursday during the day, my father-in-law would clean bell peppers and onions, and then we would spear the shish kebob after we closed the store on Thursday nights. So that was always 10:00. But we sold the world of them. A neighbor that lives just a house away passed away about a month ago and they were customers. And when I went to pay my respects and I introduced myself to the son, because I would see the kids but really didn't know them after they were grown and gone. And I told him, I said we had Louie's Market and he says, "oh! The shish kebob!" [laughs] And so many people when I tell, when they remember that I'm from Louie's Market, "oh, the shish kebob! Do you have the recipe?" [laughs] But my kids do make them.

A funny thing. [laughs] I turned 70 this year and my birthday's on the 18th, my youngest grandson, the ones that are in Edwardsville, his birthday's on the 24th. And so, you know, we talked about having his birthday party. His first birthday my daughter had everybody. And I says "are you going to have as big a party this year for him?" And she

says "oh, I don't think so," and she was kind of evasive which, you know, my thick skull. So, they decided they wanted to have shish kebob for his birthday. And so my daughter from Jefferson City is the one that makes the shish kebob and

[Tape 2, side A]

Valk: this is the interview with Dena Lovacheff, on November 29th, and this is Tape 2, side 1. Go ahead, you were talking about the birthday party.

Lovacheff: they decided we were going to have shish kebob, so my oldest daughter says, "we'll come home the week before and we'll make the shish kebob, and have, you know, some for us, some for all the," my granddaughter wanted some, she lives in Maryland Heights [MO]. So we're all here together making shish kebob, here, and I guess we made probably about 60 pounds of them. But we bought the meat and cut it and seasoned it and then we got together and were putting them together and wrapping them like six to a package. And I kept some for me and my daughter from Jefferson City kept some for her, and the daughter in Edwardsville kept some for her. And then we were going to cook some for the birthday and they were all going to come home for Charlie's birthday, then, the following week. And my daughter said "would you make potato salad?" and I said "yes." And my son and daughter-in-law from Deerfield were coming home for Charlie's birthday. And they, the day of the birthday they wanted me to keep Charlie here because my oldest daughter was going to go over there and help her get things ready for the birthday. Well, it turned out to be a surprise party for me which, I mean, I was totally, totally surprised. Because I didn't dream that they were doing this! So Charlie and I celebrated our birthdays together.

Valk: how fun.

Lovacheff: it was fun. And most of my family was there. And it was fun, we had a good time.

Valk: so, your shish kebob is known throughout the region?

Lovacheff: yes. And if we had some of the sauce left, he would put pork steaks in the sauce and have the shish kebob-flavored pork steaks. But none of it was cooked, you had to cook your own, either in the oven or on the grill, or yeah. We didn't have the facilities, really, to cook it. But, yeah, our shish kebobs were really pretty famous.

Valk: so, you described the grocery as a mom-and-pop place, but it also sounds like it was a specialty shop in some ways.

Lovacheff: well, in some ways, because we had a lot of specialty items. But it basically was a mom-and-pop store. It looked big to us, but it really wasn't. And to tell you how big it was.

Valk: but you had a clientele that included people from in the neighborhood, but outside of the neighborhood also?

Lovacheff: yes. Yes, we did. A lot of our customers were from this area, that came.

Valk: were they people who had formerly lived in the neighborhood?

Lovacheff: not necessarily. It was, our meat brought a lot of our customers. And, you know, they would come and say pick up meat and then pick up a few more things and then eventually did most of their shopping there. It was hard to compete with the supermarkets, though, you know, because of course they'd buy on larger volumes and could sell cheaper. But the business was pretty good. It, it, well supported my in-laws, us, and my sister-in-law and brother-in-law. So, you know, we didn't become rich but it supported us.

Valk: right, right. Did you offer credit to people?

Lovacheff: yes, yes, we did have credit business.

Valk: and was that mainly for people in the neighborhood or, again, all over?

Lovacheff: all over. And when the mill paid, that was pay day. And some ran monthly bills, some ran every two weeks, some didn't pay at all. [laughs]

Valk: hopefully not too many

Lovacheff: more than I'm wanting to admit to, but, especially when we closed the store, a lot them, you know, said they would pay but they didn't, and you just write it off.

Valk: so, so your main competition were supermarkets outside of the neighborhood?

Lovacheff: yes. At first, like I say, Kirchoffs were across the street, but when they closed then we got a lot of their customers. And then there was another store on the corner, which was called Mitseff's. But actually, they, they had their own customers and I don't think that that was, I don't want to say too much competition, it's just that they already had their customers. And then there was another one in the middle of the block. Gee, there were three grocery stores, four, within an area. Our's was here, Kirchoffs' was here, Nellie Vartan was in the middle of the block, and then Mitseff's was on the next corner. Oh, and there was a fifth one, too, Stoyanoff's, which was like two doors away from Mitseff's. Gosh.

Valk: this is, Norma [Asadorian's] mother drew this map.⁷

⁷ Vee Throne, who led a walking tour through the Lincoln Place neighborhood for the HIST447 class, drew a map of Niedringhaus St. that indicated the location of businesses she remembered. A copy of that map is included with the interview materials.

Lovacheff: alright, here's our store, Kirchoffs', Mitseff's, Stoyanoff's, and then Vartan's was right here.

Valk: it is a lot. Yeah, I was wondering how, if each of you drew different people in the neighborhood or how people in the neighborhood picked where they shopped?

Lovacheff: basically, yes, see it was [looking at the map], this was ours, it was Kirchoffs' later and then they moved here. Here, Moehle's confectionary, that's where Kirchoffs' store was. Moehle's my sister-in-law and my father-in-law left that building to them. And I don't even know if they still own that building now. And this was years ago, the Busy Bee Bakery was down there. Vartans. Yeah, this is pretty good. This fire, it did not include, actually the fire was, the fire was more here

Valk: this block, between Walnut and Chestnut?

Lovacheff: yeah. It was not here. It was, here, Artis Cleaners was here, it was across from Artis, now this was way before my time. Matoesian's Barber Shop was there. Duke's [coffee house]. I want to say the fire was from here to here.

Valk: so, from Matoesian's across Chestnut?

Lovacheff: it did not burn Matoesians. There was a big building here, which was probably the Koleff Building. And there was, see she's got Abe's Tavern here and I think that was here because that burned.⁸

Valk: well, we can [draws arrow on map to indicate change]. The fire was the early '50s, right?

Lovacheff: it was 1954. September, I believe, of 1954. Boy, that was scary. We thought all of Lincoln Place was going to go.

Valk: what started the fire?

Lovacheff: I don't know. But if it hadn't been for the fire department from the depot I think more of Lincoln Place would have burned. I mean, the Granite City fire department came out but these buildings were old and boy they burned. And the depot fire department really saved Lincoln Place.

Valk: most of the buildings along Niedringhaus are brick, aren't they?

Lovacheff: our's is frame.

Valk: oh, it is? So they would have gone up pretty easily.

⁸ On the map, Abe's is located between Olive and Maple, but Lovacheff thinks it was between Chestnut and Olive, the first building across Chestnut from the Koleff Building.

Lovacheff: there were, there were a couple of brick buildings, but now, across the street where Kirchoffs built theirs, their's was brick. Nellie's [Vartan] was brick. And this was a hotel and a tavern, that was brick. But, Mitseff's, I think that was frame. [looking at the map again] Yeah, this Abe's Tavern, Abe's [pronounced the second time as ay-bees], that was one of them that burned.

Valk: so she's got it

Lovacheff: but she's got it pretty good. The bakery was on the corner. Actually, I think it was in the same building as the cleaners, at different times, I don't think they were together. [referring to Merchoff's Bakery and Kambarian Cleaners]

But, but the grocery store, like we were saying, everybody kind of had their own customers, so they all, all the grocery stores did well for the small area that it was. And gosh, Nellie, she just, she was in business until just a few years ago.

Valk: that's Vartans?

Lovacheff: Vartans. Actually, I guess she was the last one to close, because Mitseff's closed, did they close before us? I can't remember. I don't know. Stoyanoff's closed before us, I know that. I can't remember about Mitseff's. Of course Kirchoff's closed before us. Yeah. And that made it rough for the older people that lived down there, because they would have to go to downtown and a lot of them didn't have cars or didn't drive or whatever. So I know that they were hurting when, you know, these small stores closed. But had to do it.

Valk: were, were these other businesses like yours, mostly family run?

Lovacheff: yes. Buteff's, he was a widower and had one daughter and I think someone is going to be interviewing them soon. Her husband's name is Todoroff, Nick Todoroff, Nick and Nora Todoroff.

Valk: yes.

Lovacheff: and, of course, the tavern was family owned, Mitseff's was family owned, this was family owned. Yeah, these were all, this was family, Nellie, Sammie's Tavern, that was family. Busy Bee Bakery was down there and then they moved to Madison and they were in business up until last year. Haroian's, they had a confectionary and, oh, the kids loved it. It was right, the front porch of their house. And gosh, Mrs. Haroian would get neat candies and Sims, Sims Pool Hall had a confectionary and, oh the kids. We had candies, but they loved either going to Miss Haroians or to Sims to buy their candies because that was really a neat place to go.

Valk: they had a better selection than you did?

Lovacheff: I guess they did. It was different, you know. We mostly had candy bars, not so much penny candies. And, oh, Kakoski's Dry Goods store, gosh, it's interesting. She

had dry goods, materials by the yard. And it was just a little place, but she had a lot of neat things in there, too.

Valk: so did you do most of your shopping in the neighborhood?

Lovacheff: well, not necessarily. There wasn't anything there when we were, we had our shoes repaired there [Sim's shoe repair], went to Artis cleaners. They just closed. Went to the barbershop [Matoesian's]. We would go in Miss Kakosi's just to see what she had. But then we would go downtown Granite, used the Fryntzko's service station for our gas. The kids all went to the Baptist Mission, gee, from the time they were like 3, 4. In fact, Todoroffs [Nick and Nora Todoroff] just came back from Florida and visited the ladies that ran the Baptist Mission.

Valk: oh really? Oh, how wonderful.

Lovacheff: was it last year they came up here? There was two of them, Vivian, Miss Wilson and Miss Diaz, Vivian Wilson and Sarah Diaz. They're like 78 and 80 now. But they were so good with the kids. Now, there was somebody, they had a mission there before and I don't know who took care of it. But when my kids were growing up, these two women Baptist missionaries that ran this little mission. And they would have church and they would have, what did [...] belong to? There were a couple of little girl things, I can remember them with their little crowns. Rainbow Girls were they called, or something? But they, they both came and some of the kids that went to the mission got together a little, sent out invitations and at the senior citizen hall at a little gathering, a little get together, and they showed movies and we all visited with them and had old pictures.

Valk: how nice!

Lovacheff: it was very nice. But Nick and Nora have remained friends with them, and when they go down to Florida, which they do frequently, they visit with them. And they were down there just over the Thanksgiving holidays and visited with them. Said they were very happy to see them.

Valk: that's wonderful. I know that in the, well, let me see, I have dates here somewhere. But the Stamping Works closed in the '50s and then the Commonwealth closed in the '70s. Did those, did the plant closings have an impact on the neighborhood and on your business?

Lovacheff: I can't say that it really did. You know, people had to eat. Because I'm sure most of the people that worked there got jobs elsewhere. I can't say that we really noticed much of an impact. A lot of the people worked at the depot, because when it was going full, it was quite a busy place.

Valk: so, by the post-war years, the, the people who worked in the neighborhood weren't just working at the plants, as they had been earlier, but there was more diversity in where they worked.

Lovacheff: I would say yes.

Valk: did you feel like the neighborhood changed during the period you were living there?

Lovacheff: not the early years. I think the neighborhood started changing mid-70s, maybe. A lot of the older people were dying off and some of the younger people were moving out, to this part of town, and, yes, it started changing then. When, when we were there and the kids were growing up, I think there was more pride in the neighborhood, that people took care of their properties more and all. And there's still, there's still a lot of them that are still living down there, actually, and there's a couple of blocks in Lincoln Place that, to me, have gone down. Chestnut. Spruce St. is still pretty nice, and most of Maple is pretty nice. And then Poplar is next. Yes, it was starting to change

Valk: and you think that change was due to older people dying and younger people moving?

Lovacheff: and I think most of them were renting, then, it wasn't their property so they weren't taking as good a [care of it]. The Mexican people just, they took really good care of their property. I mean, a lot of the foreigners did, but the Mexican people were colorful. They always had pretty flowers and things in their yards and their houses were painted nice. But when some of the younger people started moving in and didn't own the properties, they didn't take as good a care of the property.

Valk: were they, were the properties being held on to by the old families even when they moved out to other areas or were they being bought up by people who were, didn't live in the neighborhood who were then renting them out? I'm just wondering why it switched from owner occupied to rental properties more.

Lovacheff: [pause] I don't think that, I can't think of anyone that moved out that kept their property and rented it. I think they sold the property and, I don't know.

Valk: okay.

Lovacheff: like when the Todoroffs moved, actually, their building was eventually torn down, because it was an older building. [pause] I'm trying to think. So many of these buildings are gone now. [Looking at hand-drawn map of Niedringhaus.] This building here is gone. Now, this place, Sims, the guy that bought it, I can't think of his name, totally remodeled it. He has a nice beauty shop there now, Planet Granite.

Valk: yes, the building looks quite nice from the outside.

Lovacheff: they say it's beautiful on the inside. And I understand he's really trying to keep Lincoln Place cleaned up and, you know, would go out and pick up cans that were thrown on the street, clean the gutters and everything. I think there's still some people down there that are still taking pride in it. In this block, where her [Vartans] was, there

were a couple of little houses and this one woman bought the property and made a little tearoom there now. And that's very nice.

Valk: so, the tearoom is where Vartans used to be?

Lovacheff: Vartans? Actually, the building that occupies that tea room is right next door to where Vartans was. It was a house.

Valk: yes, it looks, on that block it looks like a lot of it has, that there are empty lots where there used to be buildings.

Lovacheff: yes, yes. It's a nice, it's a cute little place. I've been there a couple of times. Actually, I think Niedringhaus, they're trying to keep it pretty nice. But there were some not so nice houses down there. [points to map]

Valk: on Chestnut?

Lovacheff: on Chestnut.

Valk: when you, when you first moved there, were, were there differences in the blocks the way that there are now? That some blocks were in better shape than others or that some blocks had more renters than others?

Lovacheff: when I moved there, it was, it was I think still, everything was pretty nice. They were, a lot of them the old families were still there. It was probably in the '60s, mid-'60s maybe when, I don't know. Maybe there were more rental places down here. Now see, I didn't know too many of the people who lived down here. [points to map]

Valk: on Chestnut.

Lovacheff: I knew a few of the families that lived on Walnut. But mostly Olive, and Maple, and Spruce is where, well, and Poplar. But, I don't know.

Valk: okay.

Lovacheff: but when we first got married and lived down there, most of it was still pretty nice. That's why it's kind of hard to go down there and see our old building. You know, you, you get rid of it but you still want it to be taken care of. You don't like to go down there and see it deteriorating like it is. And as far as I know, there's nobody in it. I don't know if they ever rented out any of the rooms, but I knew, they did have a grocery store, it was a Mexican, that was called [pauses] I think there's a store, they have a couple of stores in St. Louis and they opened one here. I can't remember what the name of it was. But they weren't there very long.

Valk: is that the Tropicana?

Lovacheff: Tropicana.

Valk: okay.

Lovacheff: that's it. And it, I guess, just didn't go. And then it just, nothing else was ever put in there.

Valk: how are you doing? Do you need to take a break or are you alright?

Lovacheff: I'm fine, I'm fine.

Valk: well, I had a couple of more, kind of topics, that I wanted to [cover]

Lovacheff: okay, should we have some more coffee?

Valk: sure. That would be great.

[pauses to take break]

Valk: yeah, I don't know, I mean I guess she's lived there all her life, so I don't know what year she was thinking about [discussing Vee Throne and the map that she drew.]. And some of this is, obviously, that's she's remembering different times.

Lovacheff: yes, and then the Good Neighbor Tavern, and this was a little small ethnic restaurant, Vasil's. He used to cook stews and things, you know.

Valk: I was surprised when you said that there were still roomers in your in-laws' building, because I guess in my head I thought that it was mainly earlier, before WWII, that there had been rooming houses.

Lovacheff: they, they were, but especially, where we had our apartment, no, on the other side, over here, there was a man in this corner place, a corner room, and then there was another Hungarian man that lived here [is referring to the sketch she drew of the upstairs of her building, 824-826 Niedringhaus], and then there were two more rooms. And eventually [laughs], after everybody moved out, they became just junk rooms, you know, they were empty rooms so we put whatever in there. And, oh my, and my husband was a junk collector. And when, after he passed away and it was really difficult trying to get rid of so many of these things that he had. And at first my kids, you know, when he was collecting, oh they just couldn't see all the junk that their dad collected. But they've each got things in their house, now, in their houses, that they thought was pretty neat that their dad had. So, like, he had some graniteware that was made at the Stamping Works, and each of them have some of that. And the older my daughter gets, the more, just, just a month ago she was looking through some more pictures and had pictures copied. She has pictures of different parts, different people in the family, the buildings, and her kids are getting older and they're getting more interested in things like that, too. So I think they'll enjoy listening to this.

Valk: yes, I imagine.

Lovacheff: I can remember when my granddaughter was, the oldest one, when she was in, probably in high school, and for one of her classes she interviewed me about my growing up years. And, you know, just something on this order but on a much smaller scale, it was just a short time. It was for one of her classes. So she learned some things then. But, I think they would like to hear, especially, some of the other stories that are told, too.

Valk: right, right. Yes, I find that with my students, that they're always interested in interviewing family members. That it personalizes history in a way that they find so much more interesting than reading the textbooks or whatever.

Lovacheff: really?

Valk: oh yes, definitely. What was, what was it like raising a family in Lincoln Place?

Lovacheff: it was great. I wish there were more places like Lincoln Place that you could raise your family. The kids all knew each other, they had no, if the kids were Mexican or if they were Hungarian, or whatever, they were friends. The Armenian. They were just good friends. And they all stuck up for each other. They played well together. It was a good blend. I think that made the kids all more rounded. I think it was a very good place to raise kids. The clubhouse then, too, was like a melting pot. They all went there, they all played together, they all shared everything. You knew who your kids played with, you knew their families, you never worried about the kids. I wish there were more places like that now.

Valk: what do you think made Lincoln Place like that?

Lovacheff: just, I think, being all different, from different ethnic groups. I think, well, starting way back, everybody was on the same level, for one thing. Everybody worked either factory, or there was that common thread there. I don't know. Everybody was in the same boat and just raised the same way, I guess. But it was a good, good place to raise kids.

Valk: your, your oldest daughter and your son were born during what they call the baby boom

Lovacheff: the '50s

Valk: so, were there a lot of other children their age [phone rings]

Lovacheff: excuse me a minute. [taping stops]
Were there other kids their age?

Valk: yes

Lovacheff: yeah, there were a lot of kids, there were quite a few kids in the neighborhood then, their age. I would say yes, the baby boomers. [laughs] Sounds funny, but that's what they are.

Valk: they are. People, I guess older than you, that we've interviewed, who grew up in the neighborhood, talk about the sense that Lincoln Place was the other side of the tracks. Did you have that sense that, when you were there?

Lovacheff: not, not so much. I think, like, when my husband and his sisters were going to school, I think there was that. I think once the depot opened up and people were working there, I don't think it was so much the other side of the tracks then. But I know when my husband and them were growing up, there was some, what do I want to call it? They were from the other side of the tracks. And then there was West Granite where the kids went to grade school at Washington School, which is no longer there. There, too, there was the dividing line, you know, these kids were from West Granite and these kids were from Lincoln Place. But eventually that kind of melted together, too. But I think probably the depot was responsible for making it more, well, it's not so bad down there, you know. But I didn't feel any of that. I think when I first got married, for maybe a year, I don't want to say I was considered an outsider, but I was, I was from Madison, I wasn't one of them. But when I started working in the store and started knowing more of the people and all, then there was no problem. I mean, I think they all felt like I did, that I was one of them. Because we became friends with all of them down there. They were, they were a close-knit group of people. So once we lived together and, you know, they'd come to the store, and you know, if we weren't busy, people would stand at the store at the counter and we'd visit. You know, we had a coffee pot in the back room and if someone wanted a coffee, we'd get them a cup of coffee and if it wasn't busy and you could stand, I mean, there was work to be done but still, we had time to have a cup of coffee and talk a little bit. So, but yeah, when the kids were in school, that was definitely the other side of the tracks.

Valk: did you have, did you have particular friends in the neighborhood?

Lovacheff: well, there were probably two or three couples that we would either go out with or, for a while, we would go to each other's houses and maybe play cards. But that didn't last very long, I guess, because we always took our kids, too, you know. My husband and I we tried, my mother-in-law was very good about taking care of our kids. We would go out and eat like once a month or something, go out somewhere nice. But a lot, most of the time probably, we would take our kids with us. But, yeah, there were two or three families that we coupled with. But we were friendly with everybody. You know, I can't say that there was no one that we didn't like. We got along with most of them.

Valk: yes, I can imagine as, having a business that you probably knew so many people in the neighborhood.

Lovacheff: yes, right. And even if they weren't customers, they were still friends. Because, you know, they chose to go to another store, that was fine. So be it. But, yes, most of us got along.

Valk: was there a business, any kind of a business owners' association? I mean, you mentioned the Associated Grocers and being in that association with other grocery store owners in Granite. But in the neighborhood was there anything?

Lovacheff: not that I'm aware of. Now the guys did have the Lincoln Athletic Club, LAC. And it was like a social thing and they would, there was mostly the men would go and have a meeting. I really don't know. My husband belonged to it for a little while. And they would meet [pauses] somewhere down in here, I can't remember, there was a little [referring to the map]. I don't think it was the tavern, it might have been at Good Neighbor Tavern, but I don't think so. I think there was another little empty building that they would meet in. And, in fact, I think they're still kind of semi-active, because they just, they just had a, at the high school, they put up a sign, a new sign in memory of Andy Phillip who was the wiz kid from the basketball team. And they had a little program. And the LACs donated money towards this sign, so, I don't know if they actually still have meetings or maybe if they still just have a bank account and, you know, I'm not sure how that operates. But the men would get together and they would do a lot of things for the kids.

Valk: organize programs?

Lovacheff: organized programs, well, like maybe, gee, if they needed something I think, like for school, I think they would help them out. Like adopt a little boy or something. I'm not exactly sure how that worked, but they were good for the neighborhood and the men enjoyed it.

Valk: and I saw that you were in the Macedonian Hungarian Ladies Association for a while.

Lovacheff: the, not the Hungarian Macedonian Ladies Society?

Valk: I have this, this is their, it's a bad copy of their 50th anniversary⁹

Lovacheff: actually I didn't even attend the meetings. I paid my dues and [unclear]. But you know, when we worked it was hard to get away from the store.

Valk: yes, I imagine.

Lovacheff: but, yes. And I had my picture taken with them [laughs]

Valk: yes, you're in here [the 50th anniversary program]

⁹ A copy of the program is found with interview materials for Tomea Kirchoff.

Lovacheff: [laughs] oh boy. Gosh [looking at program]. This was what, in '75?

Valk: I think that's what it said.

Lovacheff: see, my mother-in-law was gone by then. This is my mother-in-law's sister and she's gone now, too. This is Tomea Kirchoff, and this is her daughter

Valk: Klysheff ?

Lovacheff: Klysheff¹⁰

Valk: Klysheff

Lovacheff: gee, so many of these people are gone.

Valk: did the, I think I saw that your business, the market donated money to sponsor the program or something. Yes.

Lovacheff: oh, I'm sure. [laughs]

Valk: did you end up doing a lot of that kind of stuff?

Lovacheff: pretty much so. We had a couple of baseball teams that we sponsored

Valk: like Little League teams?

Lovacheff: yes. And we had a bowling team for a while. And actually it was like, I played, I bowled, and a girl from Emmits' market bowled, and the group that we associated with, you know, the AG grocers, there were several of us that bowled together. That was fun. But yes, you'd, they'd call and say "we need a sponsor" or "could you donate money for uniforms?" Yes, so whenever we could, we did.

Valk: well, and it looks like a lot of people did that kind of stuff [looking at 50th anniversary program].

Lovacheff: well, this is mostly for the church, though, I guess. Yes, for the 50th anniversary.

Valk: so you weren't actually very active in that association?

Lovacheff: no, no, like I say, my mother-in-law belonged to it and then she thought that I should. And I went to a couple of meetings but mostly, it was just too hard to get away from the store. And at that time I didn't drive and I would always, if I went I would have to have somebody take me and so I paid my dues and would go to the social events. Which was nice.

¹⁰ According to the anniversary program, her name is Milka Klysheff.

Valk: so they actually met outside of the neighborhood.

Lovacheff: right, they usually met at the church on 13th and Grand.

Valk: okay. Well, I wanted have you tell me a little about your church.

[Tape 2, side B]

Valk: okay, so.

Lovacheff: I'm not really that active. I don't belong to the Sisterhood, I don't want to hold any office. I just want to go to church. So, I really can't tell you too much about it. It's a small church, we have a small congregation. And I don't know what to say.

Valk: have you been a member for a long time?

Lovacheff: well, yeah, actually I was baptized in the church, married in the church, the one on 13th and Grand. And then when the split came, I started going to this one over here [St. Cyril and Methody, on Maryville Rd.]. So yes, all my life I've belonged to the church, actually. And I, well I know the people at the other church, too. I would say the younger people, my age, belong here at St. Cyril. It's a nice group of people and, like I say, we don't have, on a normal Sunday, I would say 50, 60 people maybe. Have a fish fry once a month and we have this bake sale once a year. And then they have a church picnic. Nice group of people.

Valk: is the bake sale a fundraiser for the church?

Lovacheff: yes. We bake at the basement of the church and Venka Ambuehl is the main baker. She mixes all the doughs and we put them all together and she does all the baking.

Valk: oh, I see.

Lovacheff: and she always has something for us for lunch. She's a very good cook [laughs]. Yesterday she, we had, it was like a bean soup but she had, no it wasn't bean, it was a vegetable soup and some noodles and, I mean, she had a little bit of everything in there and she just throws it together and it's very, very good. She's one of these people that

Valk: it's a gift.

Lovacheff: that's a gift, right. I don't know what to tell you about the church. They've got a building fund going on right now, they want to enlarge it a little bit. Make a nicer kitchen and a couple of like Sunday school rooms upstairs, all of this is downstairs right now. I think they're doing pretty good with that.

Valk: how long have you been cooking for the bake sales?

Lovacheff: probably about, longer than they have, 5, 6, years. But they've been doing it probably since, or it was in the paper [gets newspaper article about the bake sale].¹¹ I may have been doing it a little bit longer than that, because I know that when they first started, the women used to bake at home. It says she's been baking with the group for about 10 years, so I'd say probably about 6 years I have been. And I know it says here that the group started baking about the same time the church was built in 1979. Originally the women baked in their homes but eventually moved to the church. [this is a quote from the newspaper article.]

Valk: and are most of the, I know Mrs. Ambuehl lives or used to live in Lincoln Place

Lovacheff: she still does

Valk: are other, are there other Lincoln Place people who

Lovacheff: that still live down there?

Valk: who belong to the church?

Lovacheff: oh yes, the Christichs, they're from Lincoln Place. Nora Todoroff is from Lincoln Place. Let's see, Venka's sister, Mrs. Ambuehl's sister lives in Belleville and she comes, she's a member of the church and her son is an altar boy, actually, and she comes and bakes with us just about every week. But that's about all of us that bake -- Venka, Nora, Helen, me, [inaudible] then Olga Simuroff [name unclear] who was a Frenesco [name unclear], they actually, they're Russian and they belong to the Russian church and several years ago they switched and started coming to our church, so she bakes with us. Mary Rohrbeck [name unclear] bakes with us and she belongs to our church but she was from Madison originally. She never lived in Lincoln Place. And that's about our group that baked together. I'm trying to think of, Eleanor Popovsky lived in Madison, was a school teacher and just retired, and she says she bakes when I can't make it. She's my substitute. That's her excuse. But she bakes with us sometimes. [laughs]

Valk: well, it sounds like it's a big commitment of your time.

Lovacheff: it is. But, you know what, we talk old times and we joke and it is a good time. It makes the time go fast. We, you know, just visit and it's, it's a good group of ladies. We work well together and we get it done. After we're through baking we all pitch in and have our lunch. Usually, we try to finish what we're going to do before lunch because once you sit down for lunch it's hard to get back to work.

Valk: [laughs] right.

¹¹ Scott Cousins, "Macedonian Bakerettes Keep Cookies Coming," *Granite City Press-Record*, 25 November 2001. A copy of the article is included with the interview materials.

Lovacheff: sometimes we have to because, you know, we're not quite finished and so we'll break for lunch and then we get back and start working again. But then we all pitch in and clean up, do the dishes, sweep the floor, rearrange the tables, or whatever. And then get it done and that way everybody can go home.

Valk: and rest.

Lovacheff: yes. Venka is always the last one to leave, she's either still got something baking in the oven or have to finish up a little something else. But it's a good group, we work well together.

Valk: and you mentioned there's also a sisterhood?

Lovacheff: there's a sisterhood in the church, yes, and most of the women do belong to that. I chose not to, just because I, I don't know, I guess I want a little more free time for myself. I think I'm a little bit selfish in that because when we worked the store, I never did anything, I never had time for anything. It was store and home and store and home and store and home. And now I like my free time.

Valk: you've certainly earned it.

Lovacheff: and so I like to go to church, I try to go every Sunday if I can and then I like my free time. And I don't mind going and helping them out like this. Usually after church there's a little social hour, either, sometimes they'll have a dinner, sometimes it's just coffee. But I don't even go to that, either my, I would be going to my kids or just come home and do nothing. But, like I say, maybe it's a little bit selfish on my part, but that's what I want to do. And they all understand it, there's no pressures there. [pause] That's it.

Valk: are there other, other things about Lincoln Place that I haven't asked about or about you that that you think are important?

Lovacheff: we covered Lincoln Place pretty good. [pause] I can't think of anything. I don't know. I have a sister-in-law that lives in California that, every time she comes home, she has to go through Lincoln Place and she thinks it's beautiful which [laughs] in some ways it is, but she doesn't see the deteriorating parts of it. You know, to her it's home. And then I have a, well, when my kids were little and we would have birthday parties for the kids, you know, my brother's kids and my brothers and sisters-in-law would come over and, with their kids, and I have these two nephews that belong to my brother that lives in California now, and the other lives here in Godfrey, the other lives in Colorado, and the one from Colorado was visiting a couple of years ago, and my brother was here from California, his father, and my brother hadn't been back here for a number of years. And one of his requests was he wanted to go by our old home that we grew up in in Madison and just see different parts of Granite City that, he said he hadn't been here for so long and, of course, it had changed so much. And so we got in the car with my nephew from Colorado and we drove around Madison in different parts and then we went down where the store used to be. And we had to stop there. And he jumped out of the car and looked

in the window of the store building and took pictures and when he came back to the car and I said "Jeff" and he said "oh," he says, "I, I don't see the deterioration of the building," he says, "I just remember the good times we had here, the birthday parties, the times we'd come to the store, and just playing in the neighborhood." And my oldest sister-in-law's kids, she and her husband, he worked for Beams Bag and they moved like every 3 or 4 years, and so when the kids, when they would come back to visit the kids loved coming to the store. They had 4 children. And to this day, those kids, they just think Louie's Market is it. I mean, to them, that was their childhood memories and they could only remember the good times. You know, they could come to the store and get an ice cream for nothing. [laughs]

Valk: right.

Lovacheff: and, so this makes you feel good to think that you had so much a part of their growing up that they loved and relate to and remember now. So things like that, when you look back, you think oh, maybe it wasn't all bad. You know, there was a lot of good that came out of it.

Valk: well I know just from reading the transcripts of interviews that other, that students in the class have done, that a lot of people mentioned Lovacheffs and Louie's Market, that it seems like it had a real impact on a lot of people in the neighborhood.

Lovacheff: I think it did, I think it did. They weren't just your customers, they were your friends. You know, if someone had a problem they'd come and talk to you about it. And I think we considered them more friends and family than just customers. You got to know a lot of people. I run into people now and, sometimes they have to tell me who they are. You know, it might be a long time. Oh, I went to this dedication that they had for Andy Phillip, a couple of weeks ago, and my friends and I were walking back to the car to leave and passed this one, well, she was an older woman and then there was a woman in her 40s with her. And she looked at me and she said "hi!" And I looked at her and I said "I'm sorry but I don't know who you are." And she had a name tag on and she said, "oh, don't look at that," she said, "you wouldn't recognize that." And she said, "I'm Andy's niece, I used to stay with Grandma all the time." Well then, right away, I knew who she was. And I says "well, how did you recognize me?" And she said, "you haven't changed." Well that made me really feel good because that was a lot of years ago, you know. But it's things like that that make you think like, wow, you know, you did have an impact on these people. And, you know, I'll run into people at the grocery stores a lot of the time and, like I say, a lot of them will say "do you have the shish kebob recipe?" and I'll say "no!" [laughs] But there were good memories down there, it was a good place to grow up. But when, after my husband passed away and I lived down there a couple more years and my kids just felt that getting out of the neighborhood was better for me. And it's worked out well here. It's, my neighbors are nice. I don't know them too much, too many of them personally, but enough to wave at them when I'm cutting the grass or whatever, you know. I know the immediate ones. And this is a nice neighborhood, but it's not Lincoln Place.

Valk: how do you think Lincoln Place was, how did Lincoln Place compare to the neighborhood where you grew up in Madison?

Lovacheff: probably the same way, because when we were kids growing up down there, it was the same thing. You knew the neighbors, you all played together, everybody looked after everybody else. I think most old neighborhoods were like that, back then. Like this neighborhood, now, this house was built in 1953 or something like that, but this was all land back then. But like, East Granite, I think, they too, I think all the little neighborhoods were kind of close-knit. And then, of course, as this town started getting bigger and spreading out, I don't think there's as much closeness. Where my daughter lives in Edwardsville, like once a year now they do have, they're one block, they live on a cul-de-sac and they have like a block party and so they kind of know everybody there. But if they went a block or two the other way, I don't think they would know. And in Lincoln Place, and even in Madison, you knew the whole area. I mean, you played mostly with the kids on your block or the next block, but you knew everybody. And every place you went, you walked. You weren't afraid to go anywhere. Like I say, at 9:00 the whistle blew, it was dark, but we weren't afraid to, we, we'd meet like on the corner and everybody had at least a block to go home and it was the same thing at Lincoln Place. If they weren't at the clubhouse they congregated on the corner and played games and things like that.

Valk: well, without, without the kind of small businesses that you had in Lincoln Place, like Louie's Market, people, you have to get in your car and drive more than when you could just walk up and get your groceries or

Lovacheff: in Madison, when we lived in Madison, my grandfather's brother owned the corner grocery store, it was just a half a block away from where we lived. So, that's where we went for our groceries. The drug store, like I said, you paid a nickel to go get an ice cream, was like a block and a half away and we'd walk there. And the funny thing, and it was true of Lincoln Place and Madison, every corner had a tavern, but it was, they were family taverns, no one bothered you, you know, you could walk by them and go to the drug store or to the cleaners, and you weren't, you didn't worry about it, you weren't afraid to go. And gosh, Lincoln Place, if there wasn't a grocery store on the corner, it was a tavern. Well, they couldn't have a tavern close to the center, that was one of the provisions. So that's why this tavern [looking at the map] wasn't here, it was here. There was Good Neighbor, there was this one, this one, this one, this was another tavern. It was Yonch's tavern, it was a hotel upstairs but it was Yonch's tavern.¹² So, I mean, there was all these taverns and it was just, that was their business. They were mostly family taverns. In the '60s, they started, more and more people started coming to the taverns, they weren't as much family. You know, what I mean by family is people would go there with their kids, buy their kids a soda and mom and pop would sit there and drink a couple of beers, and the kids would have chips and soda or something and play and then they'd get up and leave. But that was the entertainment, I guess. Then if we wanted to go to a movie, from here they'd have to go all the way to Granite. We'd have to walk from Madison. But that was the entertainment, that's what we did. My girlfriend and I, when we were growing up she lived like a half a block away from me, and we walked everywhere together. We

¹² Yonch's Tavern at 849 Niedringhaus.

would go to football game or something. We would walk until we were able to catch a street car or if there was, I don't even think there was a bus. See, I can't remember. But it was 9, 10:00 and we'd go home and not worry about it. Whereas as much as I hate to say it, even when my kids were started to grow up, you, you took them and you brought them home. You didn't let them walk.

Valk: even by the '60s?

Lovacheff: yes. If they were doing something at the school. Within the neighborhood you felt safe, but if they were going to do something at school, you arranged for a ride there or a ride home. It was starting to get where you were just a little bit afraid to let them be. And now, I don't want my kids on the street.

Valk: do you think it's that things are more violent now or what's the difference?

Lovacheff: definitely. Yes. Just the other day when this man was following this little girl at Wal-Mart. Where was it, in Texas, I believe.

Valk: I didn't hear about that.

Lovacheff: they've been showing pictures where she was with her family and kind of wandered off a little bit and the cameras picked up this man kind of followed her. And then I don't know whether he had talked to her or what, but eventually he left the store and the little girl followed her [him] out and they found her like the next day, her little nude body, not too far. You know, you try to clutch your kids and hang on to them, but they're kids, they might stray a little bit. So, yes, I, a lot of nuts out there right now, I'm sorry to say it.

Valk: well, and the way other people have described the Lincoln Place neighborhood, it sounds like there were a lot of adults around so that adults were supervising other people's children, also.

Lovacheff: that's right. We all looked after each other's children. I mean, we knew where the kids were or that there was somebody there, and at the clubhouse it felt perfectly safe. That's why the clubhouse was really a big part in the kids' growing up, from when my husband and his sisters were little 'til my kids growing up. And it's still, I think, going pretty strong right now. But when we were raising our kids, we'd send them to the clubhouse and never worried about them. You know, they might have to come and check in periodically or whatever, and if they were going to leave the clubhouse and go somewhere else they would come and let us know. I mean, you always knew where your kids were, but you never really worried about them.

Valk: do you have any pictures of the store or of the neighborhood?

Lovacheff: I have pictures of the store, but [laughs] I wish I'd have thought to dig them out for you. I don't have them right handy.

Valk: okay.

Lovacheff: I could look them up and if you want to come by another day and look at them or whatever.

Valk: well, it might be nice, should I go ahead and turn this off?

Lovacheff: yes, I think that's it.