



WINDSOR
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Kathy Carroll:
Share Your Windsor Story

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L.P Wilson Community Center, Windsor, CT

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Interviewee: Kathy Carroll

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Michelle Tom

All right, can you start by you just saying your name and how long you've lived in Windsor?

Kathy Carroll

Kathy Carroll. I moved here when I was five. About December, and it was halfway through my kindergarten, so I always remembered that. It was kind of disruptive. But I went to John Fitch for kindergarten. First grade was Roger Ludlow, and then it became St. Gabriel's School and then I went there from second to eight [grade]. But while I was going to school at St. Gabriel's, we were living on Sunnyside Circle, and that's what I wanted to talk about. It was a short street opposite where JFK school is now, filled with kids, so it was very, very fun. We had a farm behind us, a farm down the street, a horse farm. I can't remember what the street is now, but we were all about the same age and we just all played all the time. But between sports in the street, but what we also did was we [00:01:00] put on a show quite a few summers.

Kathy Carroll

So the kids, we'd all kind of perform in our front yard and either they were singers and we had a piano in our house. It was in our front yard, my sister played the piano, someone played the recorder, and it was just all – and we had made fudge and brownies. And we sold them and the neighbors, the parents in the neighborhood, came. It was very fun. They were very kind. So almost everyone participated, and it was just a great place to grow up. So, JFK School wasn't there but we used to head up there because the back of it was phenomenal for sliding in the winter. Yes, Pine Hill Golf Course, which is now in development, that was for sliding. We had a pond behind the Markowski farm that's now a horse farm on Park Ave, and that was for – so we used to just roam around. And our parents really just – we ate breakfast, we ate meals. [00:02:00] Otherwise we were off just on our bikes, just roaming around and went back home for supper or something. I don't know.

Colette Yeich

So Kathy, tell us about your family. How many brothers and sisters?

Kathy Carroll

So I'm the second of six. So while we lived on Sunnyside Circle, there were only five of us. We were in a small cape – a 3-bedroom cape. And then when my mother was pregnant for her sixth, we moved to Remington Road in the center. And then I was going to high school, which was an easy walk right up the street

Colette Yeich

And what did your mother do?

Kathy Carroll

My mother was predominantly a stay at home mom, but then she also worked at the Capitol part time for some of the committees and she would transcribe. She would record what the committee activities were, then go home and type. So quite frequently, she'd call one of us in into the bedroom where she was typing. "Can you understand what somebody is saying?" We tried to help her out with the mumbles or all the [inaudible]. [00:03:00]

Colette Yeich

And then she became, she was on either the Board of Ed or –

Kathy Carroll

She was. Well, when I was in high school, I used to have to go door to door. She was first on the Board of Ed and then on the town council.

Michelle Tom

And what was her name?

Kathy Carroll

Rita Melley. Yes, she loved – and she was on the transit committee. She was always on some kind of committee. I always felt bad because she didn't graduate from college. She went for a year. She finished high school when she was 16. Brilliant. And she loved just being involved so.

Colette Yeich

And what about your dad? Your dad died?

Kathy Carroll

My dad started off as a mailman in Hartford and then he became Director of like Publications. So, when the whole concept of ZIP codes started, he used to go around to the corporations with two ladies, which was very interesting. One very tall white woman, one very tall black woman. They were the ZIP code girls, and I think they had sashes. Now we're talking a long time ago. They'd go to Travelers and others to promote [00:04:00] the use of ZIP codes. Oh yeah. [laughs] I know.

Colette Yeich

But you were young when your father died, right? You were young?

Kathy Carroll

Oh no, [when] he died, he was 61. I had just had my first child. Yeah, he died of lung cancer, and then my mother remarried Phil Coyne, who she knew. He was very active in town. He had been a town council person. His wife had died of cancer and my brother [and] one of his kids had

dated in high school. The two of them reconnected, which was wonderful, and they married. They were married for 17 years, which was very nice.

Michelle Tom

And what was your father's name?

Kathy Carroll

My father, he worked in the post office.

Michelle Tom

No, no. What was his name?

Kathy Carroll

Oh, Bill Melley. William Melley.

Michelle Tom

How do you spell Melley?

Kathy Carroll

M-E-L-L-E-Y. Yeah.

Colette Yeich

And then, Kathy, you also married a Windsor person.

Kathy Carroll

I married a person, a Windsor person, Bob Carroll. Our parents were friends and [00:05:00] when we had our First Communion, they made us stand for a picture, which we had of me and my white little [dress] and he in a sports jacket. So I did not know him until after high school. I always heard stories about him. We were in different circles and my father used to always say, "Oh, poor Marguerite." She had five boys and they were very active. We didn't connect until after college. We both got active in the Young Dems So, it was us and Vinny Oswecki and Randy Graff and Cathy Walton and they were just a small group, and we got on the top Democratic Town Committee back then. We were like the first young people that were let in and, you know, Vinny stayed on for years. Town attorney. And Randy has been active. So, Robert and I didn't connect until we got involved with the Young Dems. [laughs] [00:06:00]

Mike Cook

I happen to know Randy. Windsor Lion's Club

Kathy Carroll

Oh, yes! Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Colette Yeich

Kathy, what kept you in Windsor? What kept you and your husband in Windsor? And I know your children went to school in Windsor.

Kathy Carroll

But, you know, I love the small town and I tell people what I absolutely love is going into Geissler's [and] always seeing someone you know. That's just my comfort level. I can go to any store, you know, I go to any activity, you see people you know and that's what I like. I like having people that I know. Big thing is that I can talk to. [laughs] Since I like to talk.

Colette Yeich

So, you've seen a lot of changes in Windsor, you know, from when you grew up to the present day. So can you talk about some of the changes?

Kathy Carroll

Well, I remember when I was in school, [it] was predominantly a white school. And we had the class above me, Rudy Arnold, which I tried to search out him. [00:07:00] He was one of the few black students in the school and he went on to be a Hartford lawyer and very, very – and I tried to connect with him because I thought, “Wow, what a story he has.” His mother was active in the Democratic Party. Bertha Arnold. They lived on Rood Avenue, and he was just very successful. So there were very few minorities in town back then. I graduated from Windsor High in '67. That's the way it was. So over time, you know, I've watched my kids. So, one of my kids went to St. [Michael's] College up in Vermont, which was very tiny, and all students had to take a course on – it wasn't diversity. I can't remember what they called it back there. He said he was the only kid in his class, in that class in college, who had gone to school within any minorities. So, the rest of them were taking this class and [didn't] have any relationships, any experience, and he was like the only one. [00:08:00] So he would share his own high school experiences. Yeah, very interesting. What?

Colette Yeich

So, do you volunteer in town at all? [laughs] Can you tell us about your volunteer work in town?

Kathy Carroll

Not as much as Florence Barlow. [laughs] Not as much as Colette. Right now, because I'm no longer on the Democratic Town Committee. I did that for many, many years. But I think just watching my mother, I felt like I always had to volunteer for something. So League of Woman Voters, reluctant president, and Board of the Historical Society. Also kind of reluctant because I find meetings torturous, but I love volunteering for projects or events. I think that's about it.

Mike Cook

Well, speaking of events, community events, any fond memories like Shad Derby, Memorial Day, [00:09:00] anything?

Kathy Carroll

Well, you know, what was interesting. So, from the age of 5 to 13, I lived out on Sunnyfield Drive. So even though we rode our bikes all the time to like the town pool and we never – and we went to the theater, you know, the Plaza Theater all the time. Otherwise, we didn't hang out at the center until I hit high school. So growing up, you know –

Colette Yeich

What about Bart's? Did you ever have any connection with Bart's? I mean, that was kind of our teenage hangout.

Kathy Carroll

Yeah, but you lived down in the center.

Colette Yeich

Yeah, you did too.

Kathy Carroll

After.

Colette Yeich

And not far from us as a matter of fact.

Kathy Carroll

While I was in high school. So, one of my first jobs, I was a lifeguard at the wading pool at Washington Park.

Colette Yeich

Oh, me too!

Kathy Carroll

You were too! [laughter] They did away with the wading pool.

Colette Yeich

The water was an inch deep.

Kathy Carroll

Yeah, the water wasn't deep. But they had to have someone. It was great. [00:10:00] I just read all summer long, and then I had a part-time job at AC Peterson's, and I did that high school, college. I did that for years because they'd let you, you know, be very flexible.

Colette Yeich

Yeah, how were your tips?

Kathy Carroll

Hey, they had real whipped cream at AC Peterson's. They would be in the back, and it was just phenomenal.

Michelle Tom

Anything else? Anywhere – where did you hang out when you lived in Sunnyside Drive? Were you just like in the neighborhood?

Kathy Carroll

Yeah, it was just the neighborhood. It was loaded with kids, and we'd go to the farms. You know, the horse farm, the cow farm. We'd just roam around. But I can remember when they were building Cigna in Bloomfield. That was about 7 miles. A bunch of us, we took sandwiches, and we went for a picnic on the grounds.

Colette Yeich

Did you ride your bikes?

Kathy Carroll

We rode our bikes there. But you know when they were also building Sunnyfield Drive, [00:11:00] while they were building them, after the workers left, we'd go and we walked through the houses that were like half-built, which was [laughs] and when they did [inaudible] yeah, we used to just – nobody stopped us. We just went everywhere. Yeah, it was very fun. I think I'm done. Thank God.

Michelle Tom

All right, thank you.

Colette Yeich

You did very good.