

INTERVIEW WITH HELEN MANOGUE
“Vanishing Hoboken” oral history project

It's April 24th, 2007. This is an interview conducted with Helen Manogue, conducted by Ruth Charnes and Caroline Carlson. It's designed to accompany an interview done by the Hoboken Historical Museum concerning Helen's participation in Hoboken life in the 1970s.

CHARNES: Helen, let's start with your very earliest days before you even came to Hoboken.

MANOGUE: Okay, good, happy to do that. Actually I was – I'm a transplant from Manhattan into Hoboken. I came over in 1961 with my husband and my oldest son, Mark. He was born in 1960 and he was just about, oh, maybe about 11 months old when we came to Hoboken. My husband had gotten a job with Stevens Institute of Technology to teach in the mathematics department. And as part of the faculty there we were eligible for campus housing. So we ended up at 602, what was then called River Terrace. It's right in the midst of the Stevens campus, just north of the park, and we were on the third floor, a third floor walkup, a three-bedroom apartment. For us it was really spacious because we had come over from Manhattan where we had two bedrooms, but the third bedroom was really wonderful to have and we had a living room and we had a dining room so it was quite nice. And we paid very little for it because that was one of the perks that you received as a faculty member. You didn't receive much in the way of a salary, but you had perks.

So I loved Hoboken from the very first minute that I was in it. It reminded me so much of my paternal grandparents' home which was York, Pennsylvania. And York, even to this day, is a very industrial, very, very old city. It was founded by Germans, and its architecture in the main part of town is very similar to what we have in Hoboken with the buildings built right up to the property line and the sidewalk right out in front. So as soon as I got here I had a sense of really belonging. And as my children came along – I had ultimately three boys – two years apart, and we used to go out walking every single solitary day. And we literally covered every part of Hoboken. And people on the faculty at Stevens used to say, oh, my God, you mean you go west of Washington Street? You go over there? Oh, you're going to get killed. Your boys shouldn't be going over there.

What I found, however, when I went there, was really devastating. The southwestern part of town especially was a disgrace. It was as though the city had totally turned its back on everybody who lived over there. And what it did is it made me angry. I just felt here is a town that is so similar to York, Pennsylvania, which really does take care of its community, and it looks very nice. Hoboken

looked terrible. And it was really one of the things that got me going as a one person brass band up at Stevens for Hoboken. The other thing at Stevens that was prevalent at the time is that they never wanted to get involved with anything political in the city of Hoboken. They were just built up there on that hill and they wanted to stay up there and they didn't want to have anything to do with the rest of the city because there were basically afraid of it. They didn't know how to interact with it.

So one of the things that happened early on was there was a group at Stevens of faculty wives and the wives of graduate students. You have to remember at that time Stevens undergrads, there were only males there, they didn't have any females. And so this group had the ungainly name of the Stevens Dames. And the Dames were always holding tea parties and they used to have a professor come in and give a demonstration on how to cook Chinese food or something and that was about the most exciting stuff that ever happened.

So when I got there I started a newsletter first, and then after that I thought up the idea of having what I called the *Young Artists Series* in which we brought in people from Hoboken, who lived in Hoboken, who were artists, so we would give them art shows, pianists or violinists or singers, and we would have an evening with them. I got the student council up at Stevens to monetarily support a lot of these things. The Stevens administration was very, very willing to go along with this stuff. And then as sort of doffing my hat to the fact we live in Hoboken and this is a very old, beautiful city, I put together what we called *Hoboken Paradise of Gotham*. And the idea there was that we were going to get old photographs of buildings in Hoboken, determine where their location was exactly in the city and then photograph what was on that exact site today.

And that's how I met Caroline Carlson. I knew she was a photographer, I had met her up at Stevens, and so I had asked her if she would go around and actually focus the camera at the same angle that she would see in the old pictures. So we put that on and I did a lot of research on Hoboken at that time, and I myself was surprised at how really historic it was and how many, many wonderful things happened here. So we put up the show and it received a really great reception up at Stevens, and then we decided, well, maybe we ought to open this up. And that's where there was a little resistance.

I had to actually convince Stevens that we should open it up to the general public in Hoboken because it was their city and they should be proud of it. But what I had to settle for was sending out notices to the schools and asking the schools to send classes up to see the show. And in fact they did. We just had an overwhelming response, too, this time from the schools, and practically every day for like three, four weeks we were just loaded with kids coming in with their teachers. And it

was interesting for them because we had a lot of mementos in the show. We had a huge old paper cutout of Frank Sinatra in there. The theme that was going on was old music. We had found all kinds of old records. So these records were being played over and over again, and we had things from the First World War, and we had Sinatra singing and we had all kinds of wonderful things. “Tiny Bubbles”, if you remember that song, was a really big thing in Hoboken for awhile. So it was really a marvelous show. And the Community Development Agency at that time under Michael Coleman, he sent Bob Armstrong up to see me one day, and Bob looked at the show and he said this is too good to take down at the end of the semester. Where is it going to go? And I said most of the pictures will go back to the libraries – I actually borrowed them from libraries.

The show, by the way, was heavily insured, and Stevens picked up the insurance cost for us on that. So he said, what a shame. Can you get the insurance expanded? And I said yes, if CDA will pick it up. I don’t think it’s fair for Stevens to have to pay for it. So they got an extension on the insurance and so the show was put up in City Hall and there it was for the entire summer that year. So to my mind it was one of the first times that Stevens ever attempted to do anything in the city and to really reach out.

CHARNES: I’d like to backtrack a little bit because I’m very interested in your life before you came to Hoboken because clearly you already had the seeds of activism sprouting. Could you talk a little bit about your very early years? You mentioned York, Pennsylvania. Is that where you grew up, etc., etc?

MANOGUE: Well, York was where I spent most of my summers. You have to remember I was a child of the depression era so there wasn’t much money. In fact as I recall my father was a traveling salesman for a religious book company and he worked during the worst part of the depression for no salary. It was just an effort to keep the business going and to reach out, so he did get travel expenses and things like that. Food when he was out on the road and shelter when he was on the road. But we spent a lot of time – we lived in Philadelphia at the time – and we spent a great deal of time in York with my grandparents because my grandparents, my great grandmother was alive then, too – my great grandmother actually owned an 160 acre farm 25 miles south of Gettysburg. And we used to go up there quite frequently and visit with the farm family there. They had 11 children so there was always somebody in our age range around that we could be friendly with.

But that old farm, I was really sorry that we lost it out of the family because it had been in there since about 1810 and my great grandmother told a story, it’s actually about the Battle of Gettysburg. She remembered the stragglers coming through after the battle was over, and the people in that part of Pennsylvania really loved the Confederates and I could never figure out why they had this love affair with

them. And the story always went that when the Yankees came through, they would tear down the wooden fence and they'd march through the fields, they'd pick the corn, they'd destroy the crops. They'd take all the cattle and everything that was around. But when the Confederates came around, if they went through a field they'd put the fence back up afterwards. They were very, very charming. When they'd come to the door it was all ma'am and all that kind of good stuff, even though, as my grandmother told me, when they knew the battle was just about to commence and these two armies were in the area, my great great grandfather actually took all of the silver and the china and the crystal and went down to the meadow and buried it all in the meadow. And actually when the troops started to come through he would send his wife and the two girls, one of which, of course, was my great grandmother, down into the meadow to hide just to get them away. But that is digressing from where I come from.

Actually I was born in North Bergen, New Jersey. Only lived there until I was about three and then we moved to Philadelphia. And from Philadelphia we moved to Washington, DC, where my father was editor of the *Catholic University Press*. And that was an experience in itself because he was, I think, really reaching out for the first time in his life in a very social way. He became very involved with a lot of the professors and graduate students there, and our house at 1039 Lawrence Street in the Brookland section of Washington became the hangout. Every evening we had students and professors and priests, I mean all over the place. And I used to go upstairs, do my homework, and then I was allowed to come down and sit on a hassock in the living room and listen to the banter that was going on. I mean they were telling jokes in three different languages.

We would have people who played instruments who came over and my father and mother both played piano beautifully. In fact my mother probably should have been a concert pianist; she was extremely accomplished. They would play four-hand duets on the piano, and then there were a couple of guys who played the viola. One played the violin. There was somebody who played the flute. And we had one who played the cello. And they would go into the one room where the piano was and we would have sonatas and all kinds of things going on. And, of course, we had records, too, in those days, so the operas were played. Many evenings people would come over and say, oh, we're going to do Don Giovanni tonight. So everybody would sit down and listen to Don Giovanni. I mean it was just a fabulous experience.

And then we had one guy, Tom Robinson, he was a munitions expert, and he used to come over to the house and he would bring things to display to everybody who was there. And I recall going down into the basement one time, he brought a new revolver over. And he was going to show us all the new revolver and how great it was and it was really going to be wonderful. This was at the beginning of the war

and we're down in the basement and he's shooting the revolver, and one of the bullets ricocheted off of a metal pipe and almost hit someone who was standing there watching this performance, which sort of brought the whole thing to an end. But after that, not having had enough of that, he had what he called an aerodynamic top that he brought over one evening, and he said oh, you have to see how this thing goes. Then he got the bottom of an ashtray that had a rim on it and he got this thing going on the ashtray. It was a rectangular ashtray and it would hit the points and it would jump all over the place. And at one point he said, well, you know, if this thing flew off it would go right through the wall.

CHARNES: I'm sure your folks loved that.

MANOGUE: Yeah. These were the type of nuts that came over. I mean they were great people, funny and hilarious. I mean this was every night of the week until the war came. And at that point a number of them went off and some were killed and it was really sort of a sad time.

But the thing with my father, this was a very good time in his life during that time right before the war. But after that things got pretty solemn. And as I got into high school, it was interesting, my father really never talked to me too much until I was taking Latin. And every night we used to sit at the dinner table, and he was a great raconteur in a way. He'd come home and he'd talk about what he did during the day and whom he had seen, and then he'd come up with some philosophical question or topic of the day and he'd expound on that. And we'd all dutifully sit around, my sister and my brother and my mother, and we'd all sit there and listen to this. And it was finally when I went to high school and I started to take Latin, then he would – because he could speak Latin, read Latin. He could do the same with French and German. Unfortunately I never inherited his gift for languages. But he used to ask me questions in Latin just to see am I up to speed on this, do you really know what you're doing?

And then the next year I started on French which then started a mixture of Latin and French questions, and can you answer it and answer it properly and all that kind of stuff. So it was quite a challenge.

My father also, as I said, he would get really concerned about an issue, whether it was political or something having to do with philosophy or theology and he would then really, really respond on those things, and he'd always have an opinion. And in some cases there were things that he could have done. There was action that he could have taken. And unfortunately my father wasn't an activist. I used to sit listening to him and I'd get as excited as he was, and then I'd wait and see, well, Dad, what are you going to do? We called him Pop; Pop, what are you going to do? Well, we just talked about it, you know? For him the talking was the doing.

And it used to annoy me because it just seemed that if you got excited about something, for heaven's sakes go out and do something about it.

So when I was in high school I was shy but even so I was in every single solitary activity there was. I did not miss anything. And I was president of my class for three years. And as I say, I was not socially adept. I think I was only invited over for a sleep-over maybe twice in my entire high school career. Socially I was not with it. But somehow or another I always seemed to get proposed for these things. I was also in the drama society. Of course, I was tall for my age and I always played the part of men in these plays because I was in an all girls school and so they always needed somebody to put on a mustache or something. And I ended up looking like Abraham Lincoln when this happened.

But I also was in the French club and so I got into a number of French dramas also. And I was in the oratorical club, I was in the debating club. I played basketball. I got to be a Washington DC all-star player in basketball. I just wanted to do everything. And at the same time I headed my class scholastically. So I just never had a dull moment. Things just kept happening all the time.

So when I got out of high school, by then my father had taken a job in New York City with Benziger Brothers. They were Catholic book publishers. Any Catholic will recognize the name Benziger because that was your Catechism. They did the Catechism and the Bible, all that kind of stuff.

So we moved up to Flushing. Then I wanted to go to college, of course, and I had been accepted at Trinity, but we were going through a rather strained time as far as finances were concerned at the time so I then went to work at Bonwit Teller which was at 56th and Fifth right next door to Tiffany's. And I started as a desk clerk. Also then I just moved right up the line. I became – finally I ended up becoming head of stock, and then an assistant buyer, and then an associate buyer in designer dresses which was like the crème de la crème department in the whole store, except that I worked for a real bitch as a buyer. She was hell on wheels. If you saw *The Devil Wears Prada*, the way that woman acted, well that was pretty much the buyer that I worked for. She could not keep any associate buyer with her. Everybody just couldn't take her or she didn't like them and she'd get rid of them. And I came in and all of a sudden she loved me. I mean this was absolutely miraculous to me and everybody else in the store.

So at various times she would give me wonderful things to do and one of them was we had imported at the time a new style from Europe, and it was called the bubble and the chemise and the band down around your knees and the rest of the dress was like a balloon above you and all that kind of stuff. So we had these imports that we were pushing, and Bonwit Teller had six stores at that time. So our

merchandise manager wanted to have these shows done in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and Manhasset, as well as the New York Store. So it so happened, just at the time this whole trek was supposed to be made and the merchandise manager (my buyer was supposed to go because the buyer was supposed to do the narratives) that were going on with this stuff, the two of them got some sort of pneumonia. I don't know what it was but they had like a 104 fever and they were throwing up, and all kinds of stuff.

So in the legend of "the show must go on", I was the one who was chosen to go and do the trek all over and to do these shows. And it was really great, a great experience, but I could call on what I had done in high school with the oratorical and the debating and things of that sort, so I took off, I arranged the shows, I hired the models in the various cities, really organized the whole number. And I remember when I came back, we didn't fly around too much in those days, we took the train, and my buyer met me down at the train when I came in and took me to the Four Seasons for dinner that evening. And I don't think she paid for it, I think one of the designers paid for it. But it was really interesting and of course surrounded by magnificent clothes all day long and meeting some of the biggest names in design.

I remember we were in Norman Norell's showroom and usually Bonwit Teller got the first showing. The beginning of the season we were always invited in first, the buyer and myself went in. And my buyer got up to go to the bathroom so she left the showroom and I was sitting there alone. There wasn't anybody else in there with me. And all of a sudden this man came out from the back in a sweater looking pretty grungy, and he comes out and he said what did you think of the clothes. So I said interesting. But he had adopted this whole idea of the band on the bottom of the skirt, so I said, you know, I only have one question, and I said it came to me right away when I saw it, I said if you have to go to the bathroom when you have this on – wouldn't – how do you – you can't pull it up so you'd have to actually undress in order to be able to go to the bathroom. And he started to howl with laughter, and right at that moment my buyer came back in, and went "Oh, Norman, oh, Norman, darling, how are you?" And she's all fluttery, and she said "What are you laughing at, Norman?" And he said, "This young lady is perfect." I'll never forget it. And my buyer said, "Really? Oh, my." And so Norman goes, "This is priceless, absolutely priceless", and he turns around and walks out. As soon as he gets out of the room she comes out with, "What did you say to him?! What did you say to him?!" I mean it was priceless, really incredible.

But anyway there are some of the good times. We had the likes of – oh, the German actress who was so wonderful. Can't think of her name, isn't that awful? But, you know, the Kennedy sisters came in –

CHARNES: Marlene Dietrich.

MANOGUE: Yes, Marlene Dietrich came in one day and I was out on the floor acting as a greeter. That was part of the job was to do that too whenever things got a little hectic. So she comes sailing in and she had a private person who waited on her who had her own set of rooms so that she could be waited on hand and foot, so this special shopper could run around the store and get whatever she wanted from any department. And so the special shopper comes out after she installed Marlene Dietrich along with two men in her private rooms, so she comes out to me and she says, oh, Miss Smith – my maiden name was Smith – Miss Smith would you mind picking out some really glorious things for Miss Dietrich from your collection. So I said, well certainly. So I got down maybe four or five things. I went over to her and said here they are and she said oh no, no, no, you take them right into the room where Miss Dietrich is, and she showed me where the room was. And I walked in – now, you have to remember, I'm 23 years old at this point, 24, and I walk in and Marlene Dietrich is standing there stark naked. And these two men are sitting in the room with her. My face went like purple. And I ran over, put the five dresses on a hook, and fled out of the room. And I could hear them laughing, howling, hooting in the room. It was really hysterical. But these are the things that happen to you.

I ultimately ended up becoming a buyer and I left the witch of Bonwit Teller finally. She didn't want to let me go but she said it's such a good opportunity for you, you have to become a buyer, so I did that for a while. Bonwit Teller bought Gunther Jaeckel right at that time. Gunther Jaeckel was a furrier on 57th Street. We were on 56th. So they came around through the back of 56th Street Bonwit Teller, and actually came through into Gunther Jaeckel which was on 57th. And so they created for me on the 2nd floor of Gunther Jaeckel a bridal salon. And really very magnificent, very lushly done, and I had my own workroom in the back. So if someone wanted a dress custom made we had a designer who would do that.

That was an interesting job. It was very hectic sometimes because you'd have snowstorms and somebody was having a gala wedding over at one of the main hotels and she didn't have her dress yet and didn't know where it was, and there'd be panic all over, and you'd have to get a stock boy into a cab and get him over there with the dress and it can't have a wrinkle in it, that kind of thing. So it was an interesting time, very interesting.

But anyway, by the time I got to Hoboken all of that was behind me because I was then a stay-at-home mother.

CHARNES: Somehow that doesn't sound like the ideal training to be an activist but clearly it was. So shall we pick up with your time after getting involved with the photo exhibit in Hoboken? What got you active politically in Hoboken?

MANOGUE: That really starts with my kids. When my oldest son got old enough to go to nursery school, the only nursery school in the city in those days was Stevens Cooperative Nursery School. And I ended up being on the board of that nursery school for nine years. I served as president, vice president, treasurer, secretary over that period of time. But it was there that I really started to get into how do you deal with a group in a very democratic setting. And what I found is that I absolutely loved it. I mean it was a challenge, it's just wonderful, I mean you start learning the dynamics of a group: when to speak, when not to speak, how long do you let people go on with their opinions, how long do you let people fight over something before you try to move in and just let's reach a conclusion here and get it done. That's really where I sort of cut my teeth on that.

When my oldest son went to kindergarten there were no private kindergartens in Hoboken in those days either. We're talking now in the '60s. So you had to send your child to a public school to kindergarten. And so I sent mine down to the Rue School. And I was just absolutely appalled at what I saw happening. The classes were very, very large, 25, 30 children, one teacher. And I can understand having trouble with discipline, especially with little kindergarteners. But the thing that really bothered me was the way in which the parents were treated. And you have to remember in the '60s we were getting to have quite a large Hispanic population, so a lot of Hispanic mothers were there. But all mothers were told you could not stand on the same side, the same block, to pick up your children when you went to fetch them. You had to stand across the street. You were not allowed to reach your child on the block of the school, which I thought was absolutely asinine.

So myself and a couple of other women, and actually several men, too, decided that this is no way to be treating parents. And so we started to go to PTA meetings, and we literally created – oh, God, we created havoc at those meetings. I mean we would protest things and say, you know, this can't be, why don't you do it this way. And the answer usually came back this is the way we've always done it. It works, this is for us, that sort of thing. But we finally – and I hate to tell you – I made some enemies that are still alive in Hoboken and when I see them on the street to this day they cut me dead.

CHARNES: Because you were making waves?

MANOGUE: Because we were making waves. We were challenging the way they were doing things, and they felt this was their right to do it that way. I was an outsider, and they called me a carpetbagger. I mean there was just no doubt about

it. And who was I to come in and try to change the way they've always done things. But we did succeed in getting them to do a series of evening workshops for parents. And several of them were humiliating to go to. One, the principal of the school was asked to come in and talk about what parents should be doing for their children. And I'll never forget it. This woman is up there and she's saying, you know – well, she didn't even say it yet. Her whole talk had to do with housekeeping. How you keep a neat and clean house. And the thing that sticks in my memory was how you do your dishes after dinner. You always do dishes after dinner. You wash them – and she went through literally: use a dishpan, you put the soap in, you rinse with this, and then you put them on the drain board. Now, if you don't want to dry the dishes that you don't have time to do, you must put a towel over these dishes that are on the drain board. And here she's sitting talking mostly to people who – Hispanic people who are holding two jobs, who have six children, who live in substandard housing, probably with one or two other families with six children, and she's telling them literally how a middle-class person lives. I thought it was despicable.

We also had a so-called sociologist come in and talk one evening, and she was so haughty and like she was talking down to this riffraff. It was disgraceful. So everything we tried to do to involve the parents boomeranged on us because they set it up in such a way that they could continue their own view of what education was all about. And it was right around this time that the Thorough and Efficient Education stuff came into play. And I was asked, oddly enough, to be on one of these advisory Committees for Thorough and Efficient Education. And I remember Alice Galmann was on this with me. That's the only other person I can remember being in that group. But the first meeting we went to, the superintendent of schools got up and said the problem with our educational system in Hoboken is we have so many foreign speaking children here. This is a really downer thing. They come from backgrounds where they don't have parental overview, they're not taught the right things, they don't know how to act, that sort of thing. And so it became clear in about five minutes that what he is saying is we have to educate on the down level. We're not educating to bring people up. We're going down because we have to teach them how to live, how to act, how to speak, and how to learn. And so therefore if you think we're not teaching up to grade or above grade, well, tough, we can't do it. And that was sort of the end of it.

As a result, of course, I think we had two meetings, and I think Alice and I said something, I think several other people said something too, that this is a disgrace, and suppose you really do have a bright kid there, you know, whether he speaks Spanish or not, what happens to that child? He's just in with mediocrity and that's where they're going to keep him. So that sort of made me feel there's no hope for the school system.

I used to go to board of education meetings, and I won't mention his name, but this guy was chairman of the board of education for umpteen million years, and if you got up and tried to ask a question, he would tell you to sit down and shut up. Get out of here, you don't have a right to ask a question. I mean it was truly a disgrace. So, as I say, I sort of gave up on that because what I had already learned is that if you want to do anything in Hoboken you have to get outside of Hoboken, you have to go up to the county or the state, or the federal government in order to get anything done. That's what happened to us with the PTA. Local PTA wouldn't help us out at all. They fought us every inch of the way.

I went to the state PTA. And they sent observers and stuff like that to Hoboken, and that was finally how we got even those disastrous little sessions for parents, because the state PTA was saying what, you don't do this already? You should be doing it. And the state PTA also invited me to go on the state board, but by that time I figured enough is enough. I mean nothing is going to happen here. And it was right around that time that the whole thing with the Environment Committee and we started the Environment Committee in 1970. And at that point I figured I can probably do more through the Environment Committee than I ever could in trying to pierce through that educational system.

CHARNES: What was it that got you to start the Environment Committee?

MANOGUE: Well, I think there it really was, as I mentioned in that talk I gave, the – *Silent Spring* had been published, I think it was in 1962 or 1963, and it just created a furor across the United States, and so everybody was talking about Environment and ecology and that sort of stuff. I think it was actually Audrey Zapp from Jersey City. She was made Woman of Achievement. *Jersey Journal* used to have the Woman of Achievement awards every year. And she was given an award, I think it was in 1969, and in that same, as they called them, class, in that same class was Ophelia Goldstein from Hoboken. And Ophelia had actually worked for the Community Development Agency. It wasn't called that then, it was called Model Cities. And they were actually evacuating people, replacing people who lived on the blocks of Hudson between First and Fourth Streets, because they wanted to put up Marine View Plaza there, and Ophelia was one of the people who worked on that project. And the head of the project thought she had done such a great job he had nominated her and she won the *Jersey Journal* Woman of Achievement. Well, she got to know Audrey Zapp and Audrey was saying to her you ought to take – because you won this award, you should really now take a leading role in Hoboken. You ought to really be doing something there. So she said why don't you start an Environment Committee there. So I knew Ophelia from the Rue School days. She was one of the mothers that I had worked with. In fact we had called ourselves the rueful mothers. But she was one of the standouts in that group. So when she was asked to do this she came to me and she said, gee,

I don't think I know enough people in the city to really get this thing going so would you help me with it? And I said certainly, you know I'll be happy to do it. And that's how we got the first meeting going.

CHARNES: What were your first issues?

MANOGUE: Oh, gosh, the first one was Maxwell House. We went after that first. And I think I mentioned this on the other tape, all the stuff we did, and we had a lot of professors from Stevens who were very, very interested in this issue. And in fact the head librarian at Stevens who was a very good friend of our family, he was great. We always had a meeting place, you didn't have to go around and knock on doors and beg on bended knee to have a meeting someplace. And that was our first issue, and then right after that in 1971, beginning of 1971, the news came out about the oil refinery coming here and that started us off on, you know... And that was really a huge community outreach project that we succeeded in doing at that time.

But anyway, most of the '70s now is on the previous tape.

CHARNES: The museum's tape.

MANOGUE: Museum's tape.

CHARNES: Is the stuff about super marine on that?

MANOGUE: Yes, everything is on there.

CHARNES: Helen, could we go back, and would you talk a little bit more about the Environment Committee's work against Maxwell House. What was going on?

MANOGUE: Well, actually that was one of our first projects that we came up with. In fact it was the very first. The night we all met for the first time and decided to start the Committee we decided that something had to be done about Maxwell House because we all knew that the gritty brown stuff that appeared on the window sills during the summer that made your white marquisette curtains turn brown had to be coming from Maxwell House. The cars were covered with this soot outside in the mornings. And we also had a bilious odor in the city. It would start about eight o'clock in the morning with just a nice smell of perked coffee. Well, by nine o'clock it smelled like, well, the pots been on the fire too long, and by ten o'clock it was that terrible, acrid smell of severely scalded and burned coffee.

So we did have a number of scientists on the board, on the Committee, and in fact at that first meeting. One of them was the chairman of the chemistry department at the time, and he and several of the other professors, people who were not at the meeting, joined together and they took a trip up to Maxwell House. We had decided at the meeting that this was the thing to do, to make an appointment, go there, and talk to them. And so these professors and several people from the Committee went and they were given a tour and everything was very pleasant and very nice, and when the professors asked, well, what are you going to do about this pollution that's spewing out the answer was nothing. We don't have to do anything. This is it.

Now, the professors also knew that right at that time the new Department of Environmental Protection had just been started out in Trenton, and one of the first things the DEP did was to do statewide studies concerning particulates in the air. And one of the studies was done in Hoboken and it turned out Hoboken had the highest particulate count of any municipality in the entire state.

So from there we decided as long as they're saying no, they're not going to do anything about this, we really have to go, as I said before I learned early on, you have to learn when to leave Hoboken and go over their heads and try to get something done. We didn't even bother going to the city. We went directly to the Department of Environmental Protection and they told us, if you can see black smoke coming out to the smokestacks that's when you're getting this particulate. So we started a campaign and Barbara Woods who lived on Tenth Street, she lived in one of those little houses with the French flavor grilling on the front of it – the house, by the way, where the play “Hair” written – the play “Hair” was written in there – but she took it upon herself as one of her main objectives in life to get this stuff cleaned up with Maxwell House.

And she and a couple of other neighbors, they'd go out every single day. When that black smoke came out they would keep a log of when it was, how long it lasted, that sort of stuff. So we presented all of that to the DEP in Trenton and they said, well, you know, that's pretty horrendous, and that's awful and nasty, but one of our people has to see it. So they set up a hotline that could be called and when anybody saw this spewing smoke they could pick up the phone and say look, it's going on now, and then DEP would try to rush some guy over from Trenton to observe it because it had to be somebody from DEP. Legally that's what they were told they had to do.

So this process of rushing people back and forth to look at this took about a year, but DEP finally had their own chart of what these violations were. And so they did in fact set up a meeting with Maxwell House. They had several with them. And the bottom line was that Maxwell House put in three million dollars worth of

scrubbers on the plant which, of course, cleaned up a good portion of the particulate count, but we also had Chase and Sanborn here at the same time. And Chase and Sanborn was up in the old tea building then, the Lipton Tea building, which, of course, is the Tea Building now, the expensive condos. They were up there and they also were doing freeze dried coffee, the processing up there. So they also were contributing to this particulate count. So they were also approached by DEP and they too put in scrubbers. Chase and Sanborn didn't last too much longer. They were only there for about another five years and then they left. But I know when we succeeded in Maxwell House to put in this three million dollar improvement, the mayor at the time, Louis De Pascal was irate, and came out and said, you know, this was terrible, and that we were going to force Maxwell House to leave, and it's one of the biggest employers – and it was the biggest employer in Hoboken, one of the biggest in Hudson County, and shame on you, and all that kind of stuff, and, of course, it didn't happen right away. I don't think Maxwell House left until 1993 so this was 1971 so –'70 and '71, so it didn't leave for a long time.

But after that we did the whole thing with Church Square Park. The mayor wanted to put a big building in Church Square Park. It would have taken up one-third of the park. And luckily Don and Maureen Singleton had just come to town and they found out about this and they became incensed. And they had heard about the Environment Committee from friends and neighbors and had seen just little squibs in the paper about us. And so they came to one of our meetings and laid out what the problem was, and so we said, sure, great, this is a Hoboken Environment Committee project. So we joined them. We had people sign petitions. And then this was taken down to city hall, and Louis DePascal, I think, as most politicians, was just absolutely astounded. I mean here are people actually putting their names down on a petition to stop something? This was unheard of in Hoboken. I mean you never, ever put your name on anything because of the repercussions you were going to get.

Now part of the thing here was most of these signatures came from people who lived around Church Square Park, and that was a different level of people, and a lot of those folks did not have relatives who worked for the city. So there wasn't that same sense of fear that if you put your name on anything your son, or your uncle, or your cousin is going to lose a city job because most of the people, a great majority, and I think you can see it in the census figures, a great number of people worked in Hoboken itself in those days. You didn't go to New York then. A lot of people were fearful of going over to Manhattan for a job. So you worked in Hudson County or you tried to have a walk-to-work type of situation in Hoboken.

So here DePascal is confronted with all these citizens saying no, we don't want this thing there. And it was shocking but I have to hand it to him, he said okay, it

won't go there. So if you go down to Second and Grand, just south of Leo's Grandezvous restaurant, you will see the building that was supposed to go into Church Square Park. So it was one of the first attempts to stop intrusions taking away open space from people in the city.

And, of course, our next project then, almost immediately, was the Maxudian Supermarine, which he very nicely started to talk about that this was going to be an oil desulphurization plant, so people could be fooled into not thinking it was a refinery. So that's a whole other big saga there because we found out about this from a newspaper article in January of 1971, and immediately said, good God, this is terrible, we can't allow this to happen. This refinery would have taken up all the land from the north of Maxwell House, which would have been 12th and Hudson Street, straight – it would have gone right straight through the old shipyard buildings, right straight through the Weehawken Cove which would have been filled in, right up into the southern part of the waterfront in Weehawken. The majority of the facility would have been in Hoboken but Weehawken would have been involved as well.

So the thing was we decided we have to do something about this. So the professors who were on our board said what you have to do is we have to see the plans. You really have to see plans before you can make any kind of an intelligent decision about what you're going to do. So I called Yervant Maxudian who was living in Texas at the time. He actually came from Venezuela. No it wasn't. I'm sorry, it wasn't Venezuela. The oil that he was going to import came from Venezuela. He was a Serb, I believe, a Croat, or something of that sort. I don't recall exactly what it was at this point. And he was very, very good friends with people down in Washington. He had acted as a fuel oil advisor to the White House, and he was also very friendly with our U.S. Senator at that time, Clifford Case, who got him what they called oil tickets. These were tickets you had to have in order to be able to bring crude oil into the United States for refining.

And so I called Mr. Maxudian and we had a lovely conversation on the phone. Very nice. I told him who I was, what I was representing, the Committee and everything. And I think he sort of had the feeling he was talking to the garden club. So during the conversation I said, well, you know, could we have a chance to look at the plans for this? And he said absolutely. So we get the plans. The professors were absolutely astounded that he sent the plans, so they were circulated around up at Stevens, and one professor, a guy by the name of Lubomyr Kurylko, who I Googled just the other day to see if he's still alive and he's the president of some organization now and has had all kinds of awards over the years and everything else, which he really deserved, believe me. I talked to Kurylko and he said, well, I'm going to give the plans to one of my classes and I'm going to see that the classes work up a 3D model of what this thing is going to look like, and

then we're going to sit down and we're going to figure all the pollutants that are going to be coming from it. So we waited until that class had had the opportunity to do it and I believe it was in March of 1971 that we asked Kurylko and his technicians and his designers and his scientists to come over. He was so pleased and delighted to do it, and it was going to be at Stevens in the library, and it was really going to be great. What he didn't know is we packed the room.

CHARNES: What do you mean, you asked Maxudian to come with his advisors?

MANOGUE: Yes, Maxudian. Who did I say?

CHARNES: Kurylko.

MANOGUE: Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, it was Maxudian and he said fine, of course, he'll be there and he did. He brought his people all with him, his construction people and everyone, and they gave a glowing thing, "This is going to be so wonderful, it's going to be so great, Hoboken is going to love it, this is going to be just the thing you need." And, of course, the mayor was very much in favor of this because what they were projecting was a million dollars in ratables a year. And for a city that was as hard up as Hoboken – I mean we were really a down-and-out city – so people say to me, well, how could DePascal go for that? And I said you have to understand, he was in a real fix here. The city was literally falling apart under him and he needed the money. And he was willing to sell the city. He was willing to give it up in order to be able to get this one million dollars so that he could go out maybe and fix a sewer or two or do whatever.

So anyway, after Maxudian and his people did their sleight of hand thing, questions started to come from the professors. We had asked professors from chemistry and from engineering, every science physicist, everybody was sitting in the audience there. Also what he did not realize, we also had gotten to know the people out at the Department of Environmental Protection very well on this issue, and so we had invited representatives from DEP to be there. We also had gotten to know people at the Environmental Protection Agency over in Manhattan, who ended up, by the way, becoming very good friends, and they were in the audience and we also had people from the Corps of Engineers sitting there.

So all the questions were being asked and finally I recognized Kurylko and I said Professor, would you like to come forward? And so he came forward and he brought his students. They had the model and they had all of the information about the pollutants. And they could tell you how many trucks are going to go in and out and how much is coming in and how much is going out and what the dangers of oil spills were. I mean they just covered everything. It was devastating.

CHARNES: What was it a day?

MANOGUE: That was for the oil tank farm. There were something like 200 and some a day. But anyway, it was devastating, absolutely devastating. And so Maxudian goes out, I guess vowing never again to speak with me, and we figured done, finished. Not so. The mayor continued to support it. This is something we have to have. We've got to get that million dollars. And it just so happened that 1981 there was a ward council election, and there are six seats on the council that represent wards. So, of course, all of DePascal's people on the council, which was a majority, were very much for this oil refinery.

Now we at that time, I think, made a very important decision in the Environment Committee and that was that we were never, ever going to support any political candidate. We were going to be neutral. We would come out with our own opinion on situations in Hoboken but we would never support anybody and we would never overtly come out against anyone.

So what we did is we put out fact sheets, our famous five, ten points, bulleted, and why this is bad and it's not a good thing for Hoboken. We hit every bar in Hoboken with these. They were in English and in Spanish. And we stood on street corners and handed the stuff out. And when the election came up in May, the thing that happened is DePascal's majority lost. And new people came in including Steve Capiello came in at that point as a – I think he was third ward – yeah, third ward councilman. And it was against, obviously, the oil refinery. Obviously. I mean once the DEP got involved and the EPA started to review this thing it was amply clear that it just wasn't going to go. But it was immediately after this election that DePascal came out and said no thanks, Mr. Maxudian, you can leave. And Maxudian went down to Sewaren (NJ) and attempted to set this whole up in Sewaren and the people down there, simply because this got into a lot of the papers that DePascal has said get out of here, and they called me up and said can you help us out down here. So we sent all of the information we had about what this facility was going to be like to Sewaren so Sewaren didn't accept him either. I don't know where he ever went, if anywhere. I think we probably ruined the dream of his lifetime.

[End Audio Tape 1 Side A]

CHARNES: ... of the tape, and we're going to resume by picking up kind of at the end of the '70s because on the Museum's tape you talked about the fires. So could we pick up with that?

MANOGUE: Now, the fires actually started in 1978 and, of course, people were jumping to their deaths at that time. And it only progressed and became worse

until we got to 1982 when it was really a very, very divisive topic in town. Everybody was pointing fingers. Everybody wanted to find out who was doing this, and they were looking for fall guys. Part of the problem here was that Mayor Capiello at the time did not seem to really do anything aggressively to try to find out why these fires were happening and what was going on. To my knowledge, I do not think anyone was ever brought to task on this. The things we were hearing all the time was, oh, a couple of kids were playing with matches in the hallway and that started the conflagration going. Or some jealous lover was jilted, and it was always a Hispanic jealous lover, was going back to set fire to the house where his ex-girlfriend lived. All very obviously poking in the eye of the huge Hispanic population we had in those days. But nobody ever seemed to go to court, to be charged with anything, be put in prison. It just was sort of a nebulous thing.

So in the absence of action taken between '78 and '82, it became clear that somebody had to try to do something to bring the city together, and to stop pointing fingers every which way. Now, one of the fingers, and a very dynamic finger, had been pointed at the Environment Committee. We were being charged because of the house tour that we had started in the mid-seventies and which was highly successful, that we, in fact, were responsible for all of these fires that were going on, that we made Hoboken so desirable as a place to live.

So we sort of felt it was incumbent on us to do something. We had, in fact, made a good deal of money on the house tours, and that was sitting in the bank and I recall in 1981 bringing up at a board meeting that we should do this. Now we had several people on our board who were realtors, and one of them was absolutely dead set against this because I was proposing a housing forum, and dead set that she just didn't want to have this happen. So she actually left. She resigned from the Committee on that basis. But we talked about it and the other realtor who was on the board said fine, I may not be 100 percent in favor of it but let's go ahead with it anyway.

So we did plan it out and we actually hired someone to sort of bring this thing together, the logistics and everything else. The churches in town were 150 percent supportive of this. They came out publically. They endorsed the housing forum that we were going to do. And we went out and actually paid people to come in and make speeches about Hoboken. One of them was Marty Bierbaum who had just completed doing his PhD thesis on Hoboken. Now, he had been introduced in terms of Hoboken by Joe Barry who had been a professor of his at one time over at Rutgers. And so Barry sort of pointed Marty in the direction of the people that he should be interviewing for his thesis. So you will find – if you read the thesis – you will not find anything about citizen activism, the Environment Committee, or anything in there. We just weren't mentioned.

Now, the reason we probably weren't is because one of the main things that Bierbaum was interested in was housing, where's housing going. But the Environment Committee also at that point was starting to get involved in how do we get affordable housing and what do we do for all these people who are living here who can't afford to stay here or who are living in despicable conditions. So we hired Marty to come in and do an overview of Hoboken and sort of set the record straight. Just come in and say this is what the census says, this is what's there. And coming from an academic, somebody from out of town it seemed very – this was the thing to do.

We also had a realtor speak about what was going on in the real estate market. We had another guy come in who actually was an expert on reevaluations because Hoboken was right on the brink of a reevaluation at that point and there was a lot of contention and this was adding to the problem of the fires and what was going on. So the whole real estate picture was in a furor at that point.

Michael Coleman was involved with helping us put this thing together. Most of the pastors in town helped us out. Saints Peter and Paul gave us their auditorium for two days to have these events.

Now, the first event was on a Friday, this was in March, and we had over 300 people who attended the first session. The second day was a Saturday, and we handpicked 19 people from around Hoboken who really were heading groups that were pointing fingers at everybody else. And we wanted to have all of these people in a room. They were hating each other, they were calling each other names, and it was just so totally destructive, and nobody was really getting to the core of the matter: what do we do, how do we get this thing settled?

So these 19 people, oddly enough, we invited them, they all were kicking and screaming. They didn't want to come. When I called them they said, oh, this is never going to amount to anything. Why do you want me in the same room with so-and-so? I mean this is just going to be a battle royal and we'll never get anything accomplished. And I'd say, well, look, I just want you to come, just be there. So what I did is at the time through business – I was working for City Federal Savings and Loan – it was a savings and loan then, and I was their community reinvestment officer which meant that I went around to all of the 50-some branches that City Federal had and talked to other banks in the area about what they were doing, and then I was responsible for getting City Federal to make investments in the way of mortgages or home improvement loans, that type of thing, in these various municipalities. And through this I also got involved with the Neighborhood Housing Services of America, and I ended up being the president of the first multi-community NHS in the United States which incorporated Roselle, Linden, and Rahway. So through that NHS contact I was

able to find a group dynamics leader who was considered to be the best in the United States at the time.

CHARNES: Do you remember his name?

MANOGUE: Yes, in fact I made a note of it before. Where did I put it? Hal Thomas. I think he's still doing this work actually. He lived in Massachusetts, as I recall. Just a great, great guy, wonderful personality, you know, the whole thing. He came in ten o'clock in the morning, we started this thing. It was a closed session; the public could not come in. And it was just the 19 people in this room with Hal Thomas. And I sat there as an observer. I figured it wasn't appropriate for me to take part in this. And the young man who had been – Gerry Costa, by the way – Gerry Costa was the young man who had helped us put this whole thing together. We had hired him to do that. And he and I sat on the sidelines and just watched this thing happen. And it was between 10 a.m. and 1 o'clock in the afternoon a miracle happened. And Hal just got up there and charmed the life out of these people, and he also charmed out their sincerity. I still get teary when I think about this. It was the most incredible thing I've ever seen.

He started out by asking each person what do you think of Hoboken. What is your idea of Hoboken? And his next question was then what do you want Hoboken to be in ten, 20 years? How do you see the future of this city? And each person got up and spoke about this. And he made notes that he put up on the wall so everybody could see them. And the amazing thing was as people were talking he was able to put down, well, this is what so-and-so said, and then he'd draw an arrow over to what the other person said, and he's say, "Doesn't that look the same? Yeah, hmm, what do you think, do you think that looks the same?" And then he'd do the next person. And all of a sudden there were arrows shooting all over the pages, all over the walls. And it became so clear everybody was having the same vision, wanting the same things. It was incredible.

And after he got to that point then it really got serious and he was able to say, now, what do we do about this, how do we get this to be better? And by then people were starting to talk to one another. People that hadn't talked in weeks, months even, they were now saying, well, you know, so-and-so just said that, and that had been their arch enemy, the person they were denigrating in the papers all the time. And all of a sudden they were saying, well, you said this before, I agree with that, I think that's right. And by one o'clock it was a love fest. Everybody was going out, shaking hands with everybody else, saying, oh, this was wonderful. Let's do it again. And I thought, yeah, let's do this again!

There were some people there who said, well, I'm guardedly optimistic about this working. But one of the things that Hal was able to say at the end was, what I'm

hearing you all say is that this backbiting, this finger pointing, this name calling, is part of the problem we're having here and that it has to stop. And he got every single one of those people to agree that they would stop. So when they went out, I mean some people were just so elated it was really a miraculous situation.

So after that we did decide, well, you know, everybody said they wanted to get back together again. So we did attempt, I think about three weeks later – Stevens, by the way, did the report on this. They paid for it. They actually had somebody at both sessions and they put out a report. So we waited until the report was finished, and then we gave it to all of these people. We did try to do a followup meeting, and out of the 19 I think five came. But by that time we had also set up a small, little subcommittee. It was Ron Hine, Nick Borg, and myself and we started to meet with the fire chief, with the police chief, and, of course, with the mayor. And our impression basically of Cappiello was that he was stalling. There just wasn't anything that was going to happen here. And so we had information that the fire chief down in Baltimore had had a very similar problem of people being burned out of the homes and that sort of thing going on. So we convinced the mayor to invite that fire chief up. He came and he addressed the top people in the fire department and the police department.

After that happened I started to get phone calls. Now, I could never figure out whether these were honest phone calls or just people, you know, sort of just – I hate to use the word – bullshitting. But they wouldn't say who they were. They were always men. And they'd call up and they'd say, you're getting close, you know, just keep asking the questions, just keep talking to so-and-so, and you're getting pretty close to the answer, you know, that sort of thing was going on. But what happened was that the whole thing just sort of petered out. It just stopped all of a sudden one day. The fires stopped. Not developers coming in and trying to take things over.

In fact, I lived in a situation like that myself at 1108 Park Avenue. I was in a rental facility there. It was the only place I could get after I separated from my husband. I had the three kids with me, and we were in a three bedroom – well, it was really a two-bedroom apartment. We made it into a three bedroom apartment up there. The situation in the building I was in was really pretty rank. We had a guy just at the floor above me who was selling drugs out of the house all the time, and at the time it was a little dangerous for my kids because they were all teenagers then, and this guy who was selling the drugs upstairs had brothers living up there with him who were really tough. I mean they walked around with baseball bats all the time. And the building I was in was a disgrace itself. I mean there were broken windows in the basement and the front door never locked so anybody could come in and out at any time. We had the old linoleum on the floors and cracks and neon lights in the ceiling. It was really pretty gross. And when I first moved in there in 1980, simply

because I was separated from my husband and I couldn't live in the Stevens property anymore. Stevens helped me out a good bit on that, though. They really did.

But the thing was that I was concerned for the kids and everything and the landlady we had in the building, she just wouldn't take care of things. Sometimes the lights would be out in the hallway, that kind of stuff, because she didn't pay the bill. So I put together a group in the building to stop paying rent. So what we did is we put the rents – now, you have to remember at this point, I'm doing a job for my bank dealing with housing issues in places like Linden and Rahway and Roselle, and I'm going to places like Camden and Newark, where we had branches, and working with community groups there trying to help them and have my bank come in and offer them mortgages and stuff like that. So I had some pretty good contacts at that point out in Trenton at the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, where I had worked, by the way, prior to going with City Federal.

So we escrowed the rent until this woman would do what we wanted to have done and then we'd pay it out when she did what we said. So right at this time, there were five sister buildings there. It's 1106 to 1114. And we all had different landlords. But one of these mega-developers came in by the name of Murray Connell. He was actually an Australian and he was an airline pilot actually. He evidently had amassed a lot of money over the years, and he came in and negotiated to buy all five buildings. And so once he had his hands on the buildings we got eviction notices. We had to get out in ten, 15 days.

So now we already in 1108 had our little group going. And so what we did is we just said, look, we've all got to band together here. Every one of these buildings, the tenants in all the buildings have to get together. And so we started meetings up with all the tenants because everybody was just out of their minds, they were so upset. And so we said hold tight, we're going to take care of this. My contacts with the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance agency really became a very, very element at this point, and I went out to Trenton – oh, no, I guess at that point we somehow or another stumbled across Ira Karasick who was a lawyer and we brought him in and we said, look, you know, this thing is really going the wrong way. We were harassing the devil out of the developer, though. I mean every little thing he did we complained. He was up to his earlobes I think with us by that time. Sheilah Scully especially, she was really the main torturer of Murray Connell.

But anyway, we got Ira involved, and we told Ira, you know, go to Connell and just try to work something out here. I mean here you've got five buildings with 11 units in each one of the buildings. You're talking about a lot of folks here. And there were a lot of senior citizens. I mean we had people who had lived in there for

30, 40 years. They were in their eighties. Some were in their nineties. And you're going to disrupt these people and throw them out on the street?

So Ira went and negotiated with Murray Connell and got Connell to agree that he would keep the two outer buildings, he would keep 1106 and 1114, and the three inner buildings there would be the places that he would take the people from the end buildings when they had to leave, he would take care of moving them into empty units in the other three buildings. And then he would allow our new organization that we had started up, he would allow that organization to purchase the buildings, the three center buildings, for something like – I forget what it was – two million dollars or something like that, which was a lot of money in those days. And he would take back a mortgage on it.

So Ira gets this agreement, and we start moving people in from the end buildings and stuff. I was treasurer of the group at that time – we never paid a penny on the mortgage. It just – we didn't have any money, that was the thing. So that's when -- Connell had wanted to make condominiums out of this. So when we took on this mortgage supposedly, he also gave us all the papers for putting the buildings into condos. So we went around to the 33 units we had and knocked on each doors and tried to convince people to buy their units. Out of the 33 we ended up – I think we got 11 to buy. But we had so many senior citizens in the buildings that under state law they did not have to – they can't be forced into accepting a condominium. So they would stay as renters.

Now, the thing that happened right about this time was that Murray Connell went bankrupt. And so the mortgage he had on all these buildings came due. Now, he had a consortium of heavy hitters who had backed him. He had ten people who were financing him. And each one of them was on the mortgage. So they got hit right in the pocketbook on having to pay for this mortgage that was being defaulted on. So one of those people, whose name at this point I cannot remember, he was a contractor, and he came in and said look, I will buy all of the units that don't become condos because I want to save something out of this whole deal. And so he bought – from 33 take 11 and that's how many he bought. Which, of course, saved us tremendously. That's when we were really able to start doing things in the buildings.

Then I went out to Trenton with Ira and Meryl – her name was Stechshulte at the time. But anyway, she was the president of our condo group, and I was treasurer, and we went out to New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance agency, and we convinced them to give us a \$300,000 loan for one percent interest for rehabilitation of the three buildings. And then started a whole bunch of other problems because the people who had been in there for many, many, many years, had gas on gas units. My building I was in did not. We had central heating. But the

other two buildings did not. And we all had water tanks in the kitchen for heating. Some of the folks in the other two buildings, they even had stoves that were wood stoves. You actually had to use wood or corncobs or something to fire up these stoves. And they didn't want to give this up. I mean they just felt this is the way I've always lived, this is the way I'm going to live, you know, I don't want any of this newfangled stuff.

I cannot tell you how many evenings I sat at meetings trying to cajole these people into, look, this is going to be so much better, you're going to love it, it's going to be great. And finally we just went ahead. We got most of them to agree. But I'll never forget it, the cracked linoleum in the hallways, we said we were going to put carpeting in the hallways, and these old women were just beside themselves. Oh, I'll fall. I'll fall if there's carpeting on the steps. I'll fall down. I said look, at least it will be cushioned. If you fall on the cracked linoleum you're going to crack your head.

And then the whole renovation process just became a nightmare because every day there were complaints all over the place. The units that people were working in, the residents were all upset, and there's dust, and there's this and that. So it was a challenge. For about six months this went on. But we finally did it and everybody has central heating now and new piping was put for water and gas was put in the middle of these units so that people could go in if they wanted and have their kitchen in the middle rather than in the back, so the back could become a bedroom. And the wonderful thing about it is people did very unusual things with their units so I don't think there are two units really that are the same in that area, and, of course, it went on to just become a wonderful condo area. The old people were dying off, and as they died the owner would sell the units, so he was making money. He was very pleased with the way – I was president of the association by that time, and he was very pleased with the way things were going and very happy, and we just progressed. Again, another wonderful experience, very time consuming.

Now, at the same time this was going on, I was approached by a number of people, Jim Vance, and a guy by the name of John Trombley -- do you remember John Trombley? – to run for office. And this was in 1985. There was going to be a council at-large election. And frankly, to tell you the truth, in all the stuff I'd done and the times I'd been at city hall and gone to all these meetings and dealing with politicians and everything, I never even thought of running for office. It was just – I was in the moment. I was doing the thing I wanted to do. I was trying to get something done and my goal was getting it done. It really wasn't running for office. So I was a little taken aback and at first I thought nah, I'm not so sure. Then a lot of people started to ask me to do it, and so I finally thought, well, maybe there will be enough money, because that's what you always worry about,

you know, who is going to pay for this. So I have to hand it to Jim Vance. I think he went out and raised – he and Trombley – went out and raised something like \$33,000 which in those days was a heck of a lot of money.

We got a place down on – I can't even remember where it was now. It was on Third and something, downtown, and we got office space down there. And we really did, I think, a wonderful campaign. Because one of the things I insisted on is we're going to send out white papers on various issues. We're going to talk about housing, we're going to talk about the waterfront, which, of course, was a major, major concern of mine simply because of having gotten – well, in fact, right in the '80s, in the middle of the '80s, I was on an advisory Committee to DEP because they were starting to work out the legal ways to get the walkway a mandatory thing when developers came in and developed on the waterfront. And also we worked with a group, Wallace and Todd, from Philadelphia that DEP had brought in to talk about what kind of furniture should be out there, should you have bollards, what kind of fencing should you have, what kind of paving ought to be on this walkway. So I was involved all during the '80s with that. So the waterfront was one of my pet projects.

We had things about the budget, about housing, affordable housing, so we were shooting out white papers. Almost every week there was a white paper going out to people. And we did, you know, obviously, a lot door to door and stuff like that.

So when the election came, there were 19 of us running for three seats. And there were a couple of forums and stuff like that that I went to. I was always pleased that after the forums were over people who I know were voting for somebody else would come up to me and say that was a really, really good presentation you made there. So that sort of encouraged me that things might be pretty good. So the election came and I was the first independent, because I ran as an independent, in 32 years to get into a runoff. The event happened and I came in fourth. I missed by just, I think, 100 votes, and there like 34,000 votes cast and I just missed it. Bob Ranieri who was an incumbent on the council, he was the only incumbent to stay on the council and I almost beat him. I was almost on top of him.

So an odd thing happened right after this election. I was approached by two people from the Democratic Party in Hoboken and who were part of sort of the insiders, and they're both still alive today and one is a very, very famous person as far as New Jersey is concerned. I won't say who they were but they invited me to come and have drinks with them. And so I went and the thing they said, how would you like to run for Second Ward Council. I said, well, I can't do that; I live in the fifth ward. No way I can run in the second. Not to worry, say they. We will find you a place in the second ward. We'd like you to come with us and be our second ward council person. And knowing the strength of the machine at that time I could have

been the second ward council person – I know that – had agreed to this. And I realized it at the time because you can't beat – in those days and up until recently – you couldn't beat the machine. They just had too many people that were dependent on them for jobs and for everything else, and, you know, as the city changed too there was a cadre of the old folks who always felt they just had to keep Hoboken the way it was. They were afraid of change and so you always voted for these guys who had been in office forever and ever more.

But anyway, I told these two guys absolutely no, and they were shocked, they were absolutely shocked. I said no because I would not be an independent at that point. I said I'd have to do exactly what you tell me to do. And I said you would have me. You would buy me, you're buying me, that's what you're trying to do. And I said look, I've seen too much of this over the years. We get people who come out and say they're anti-administration. They get on the council and you go in and you give them a plush job at the county or a plush job in Hoboken, and all of a sudden they're voting with you right along the line. And I said no, I'm not going to do it, and it's never been my idea for what a council-person ought to be doing and so thanks but no thanks, I'm not going to do it.

So, of course, the next thing that came up was the ward council election and I ran in the fifth ward against Norman Wilson. I don't know whether I should tell this or not, but I met – one day I was down at city hall on a council meeting or something which I was always going to in those days, and Steve Cappiello came up and he's shaking his head, and he said, Helen, Helen, how can you do this? And I said, what, Steve? He said, run against a man in a wheelchair. He said you'll never win. So I said, well, Steve, you know, I've got to try it. Now, there were three of us running. Lenny [Luizzi] was running also at that time, so it was Norman, Lenny, and myself, running in the fifth. And when Election Day came Lenny dropped out but Norman didn't win his 50 percent plus one. So I was right on his heels on this one.

And I have to give credit where credit is due on this, it wasn't just me, because I'd like to say that some of this might have been my reputation in town by that time, but I'm convinced that the really, really big factor that put me as far into the fifth ward as I got was Marty Brennan. He was a neighbor of mine on Park Avenue, he lived a couple of doors away. And he had been the president of the city council for many, many years. And, in fact, he was the one that when the oil tank situation, got up at that very icy snowy meeting we had up in Weehawken back in 1984 – had gotten up and said, "I've seen the light. I've seen the light. We can't have this oil tank farm." But Marty turned out to be a very, very good friend and he campaigned with me every single night. I'd come home from work and just hit the steps, as they used to say, because you do all the five-story walkups and all the rest of it.

It was extremely interesting. I think I got into every single – not into every apartment but I got into every building in the fifth ward. And it was an eye opener to see how bad some of the places were. I mean here, the fifth ward was always considered to be a pretty good ward, better housing and all that kind of stuff. It was a little disturbing to see some of this. But many people invited you into their kitchen, and sit down and have a glass of grappa and all that kind of stuff. And you could get into a really good conversation with them, so it was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed doing it. It was very wearing but a lot of fun.

And, of course, when the runoff came that's when I lost by one vote. So we challenged it and I was very fortunate. At that time also I had been appointed to the board of Liberty State Park, it was called the Liberty State Park Development Corporation Board. And Governor Kean put this board together. And it was to assist the DEP in developing Liberty State Park according to a plan. And so on that board were some very, very well connected people in the state of New Jersey. And one of them was Alan Lowenstein of Lowenstein Sandler. And Alan, he and I just clicked. We just loved each other and loved one another. So when I ran for office, he was after all the other guys on this development board, oh, we got to do something for Helen, got to raise money, all this. So when I lost by one vote Alan was just furious.

Now, Alan's son was a lawyer in Hoboken at that time. He had his own law firm. And he very quietly came forward – I mean it was really amazing. People just popped up from all over the time wanting to volunteer, can't I help, can't I do this? And they were mostly lawyers. So Alan's son – what the hell was his first name? I can't think of his first name. He actually, at this point, writes wonderful, wonderful articles for the *New York Times Magazine* section. You see his name in there frequently. But he had a law firm in town, so he very quietly did all the work and there was another guy in town, a lawyer, who was just – I think he was just out of law school – and he had volunteered to help out. So Alan said, well, we'll do all the preparatory work and this guy will be the front man for this. So they put together the challenge because one of the polling places had opened late, 20 minutes late, on the day of the election. It was the one at the Elks. There were – I forget what the other – there were several other things we went to court on as well. People who just came forward and said, look, I went to my polling place and I couldn't find out where my real polling place was and they were nasty and mean to me, and you know, the usual stuff you hear after a Hoboken election.

So anyway we finally got the recount and when they looked at the absentees Norman got, I think out of I think six absentees, I think he only got two and I got two, and there were two outstanding. We had a choice to make at that point. We didn't know who the other two were. We didn't know how they voted. So it was

like playing blind man's bluff or, you know, which door are you going to rap on. So we didn't know who they were going to be for, and if they were going to be for Norman he definitely would have a win. If they were for me I would have had a win.

But we were pretty sure that one of those votes had been solicited. They were write-ins, they were absentee ballots. And we were pretty sure we knew who one of those people was and she was an elderly lady. The young man who went in and asked her for her vote and got it worked at city hall, and he was just so scared, so frightened he was going to lose his job. So he came to me, and he said I'm really afraid if it comes out who this woman is and that I was the person who went there and everything I'm going to lose my job. I'm finished in Hoboken. I'll have to leave. So he begged me, he said, please, please, don't go for those two votes. So I decided okay, we're not. Let's save this kid. He was nice enough to do the work and all that kind of stuff. So we didn't go to open the other two votes. And oddly enough Wilson didn't either. So I had a feeling Wilson knew who these two votes were and they probably were going to be for me and so he didn't go for it.

So at that point now we're still in a stalemate, or he still has one extra vote and I'm down one vote. So at that point Alan Lowenstein, God bless him, comes to the fore again, and he says, Helen, we're going to take this to court, and Alan Lowenstein – the Lowenstein Sandler firm is going to pay for this. We're going to do it. And I'm going to pick one of my lawyers, I've sent a note around asking people where they live and do they live in Hoboken, and he said we found three lawyers who live in Hoboken and they're on our staff, and he said one of them will, in fact, take this case on, and we're going to take it to the Superior Court. We're going to go there with this. And it turned out that one of the lawyers was Gerry Krovatin, Anna Quindlen's husband. I knew Gerry very well because Gerry had been on the Hoboken Environment Committee board for a number of years. He wasn't then but he had been.

So Gerry was picked to take this into Superior Court. So in we go with this and I could tell right from the start we were going to lose in front of this judge. It was a woman judge. And I could see how she favored Wilson and everything that was said. So we lost there. And then at that point I sort of figured, well, I hate to keep imposing on Alan Lowenstein. He's been so wonderful, I just don't know that I want to do this anymore. So Gerry said, no, no, absolutely not. We're going to take this as high as we can go with it. So we'll go to Appellate. And by darn we did and Gerry did a great job in front of the appellate court and we got a unanimous three-judge opinion that there had to be a new election.

So that happened in 1988, March of 1988, and unfortunately after all this magnificent work that was done by all these people and the volunteers and

everything else we couldn't beat the amount of money that flowed into the fifth ward. And people like Dave Roberts in the sixth ward, he used his war chest against me in the fifth. We had Pasculli and the Young Dems came out in force. They were working every single unit. They even imported people from Hudson County, the Hudson County Democratic Organization came in to hand out things and to pass flyers around. There was just no way we could beat him. We were overwhelmed and we were outclassed. We just couldn't do it. So anyway, we lost that. I think Mark Singleton had been my campaign manager on that. There were some pretty sad – that was a pretty sad time.

Now, one of the people, oddly enough, who came forward to support me was Tommy Vezzetti, who was mayor at the time, and Tommy spent a lot of time at our campaign headquarters, and went out and campaigned. The night that I lost we had been down at campaign headquarters until about nine or ten o'clock and everybody was sort of, you know, trying to feel better and feeling badly anyway. And so Tommy walked me home. And then he was going home himself. And, in fact, he did go home, walked up the stairs and dropped dead that same night. It was a terrible time for Hoboken. Just tremendous upheaval.

I thought that was going to be the end of my legal or my political careers, but one of the things I found out afterwards, the reason the Young Dems everybody came out so forcefully against me, because they were convinced that if I could win in the fifth that I could also take the mayoralty a couple of years later, and that's why they fought so hard that I didn't win. I didn't realize it at the time but my name was being mentioned as a mayoralty candidate.

So anyway, I figured I was finished, and then in 1993 Ira Karasick was running for office and he put together a slate and he asked me to be on it. And I at first said absolutely no. I just can't do it. By that time I wasn't working for the bank anymore because City Federal went belly up with the – if you remember when the savings banks all fell to pieces in 1989 and 1990? Well, one of them happened to be City Federal Savings Bank, for which I worked. And when I was looking for a job after they went down, so I went with the Resolution Trust Corporation which was cleaning up the mess of the failed savings and loans. And I was actually working out in Pennsylvania at that point. So when Ira comes to me and says will you be on the ticket, I said, my God, I have an hour and a half commute out to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, every morning, and an hour and a half back at night. How am I going to run for office? I mean this is crazy.

So I did. I mean eventually I ran for office. I'd get home at like 6:30, seven o'clock at night, and do it until 11 o'clock at night, go home, I had to get up at 5:30 the next morning. I'd be out on the road by 6:30, and I did that during that whole campaign period that was going on. Thank God I didn't win because frankly I

don't how I could have done it. I really – it just would have killed me I think. Either I would have had to give up the job which I couldn't afford to do, or I just would have been an absentee person. It would have just been impossible because with the RTC there was also a lot of traveling, so there would be times I'd be down in Washington for two, three days, or I'd be up in Massachusetts or in Vermont or God knows where, because I had six states that I had to oversee with the RTC. I did affordable housing, by the way, with RTC.

So anyway, we did finally get -- our whole slate actually went into a runoff and then we lost to Russo. So that was sort of the end of that political career, and never again to happen.

CARLSON: Was that a time when you were involved with the Hudson River Conservancy?

MANOGUE: Yes. Well, 1988 was the time that the Hudson River Conservancy – I actually was a founding member of the Hudson River Waterfront Conservancy. But what happened to me was that because the RTC saw everything I was doing, the Environment Committee, all of the – I was on the board of the Regional Plan Association New Jersey Committee, I was on the board of the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, I was on the Lung Association board. Everything that I was doing RTC saw as a conflict. So I had a choice then, you know, do you want the job at RTC or do you want to give all this stuff up? So I literally had to step out of everything in 1991. And in a way it's too bad because that ten-year period when I was out and I couldn't because when I went with the Federal Reserve after the RTC, they took the same stands. But the odd thing about the RTC was that you could run for office in a nonpartisan election. And that was the only reason I was able to run in 1993. Even though I was with the RTC and they made me give everything else up you could run for office, which just somehow or another didn't make any sense.

Anyway, that's sort of the story there, and then we get into – my hands were pretty tied during the first five, six years of the '90s because I really couldn't get involved in anything. And so that the big effort on the waterfront here in Hoboken, I couldn't be involved in that. And the Environment Committee I couldn't be involved in either. Doris China actually got on that Committee that was set up by – I think it was Russo who set that up, the Committee on the Waterfront, which finally was able to really do something, make some plans for the waterfront.

So it wasn't until 1996 that I finally could get involved again. And I came back to Hoboken at that point because RTC was over. They had dissolved. They had sunset. And I was starting with the Federal Reserve then. I didn't tell the Federal Reserve what I was doing right upfront. I said I was active but I didn't tell them

exactly what I was doing. So I got involved with the group that was trying to prevent New Jersey Transit from putting the light rail down along the waterfront, and that's when we did the Go West campaign. We convinced New Jersey Transit to go over there with the light rail.

Now, I had a long history with New Jersey Transit because in the '80s New Jersey Transit wanted to put buses as the main form of transportation along the Hudson River waterfront, and I was on a 34-person advisory Committee. And about five of us on that Committee got together. We called ourselves COATS, Committee on Alternative Transportation Systems. And we got some experts in light rail to come to us. We actually made a videotape which I did the voiceover on, and we went around to all of the mayors in Hudson County and presented with this video and then talked to them about the advantages of light rail rather than buses; this is the way to go. And our point was we already have existing right of way out there, abandoned railroad tracks all over the place. And we worked out a whole system for them as to where they were supposed to go, and we ultimately ended up winning that. We convinced New Jersey Transit and they were so gung-ho on these buses. I can tell you it was a big fight. But we finally got a majority vote out of this 34-member Committee, and it was overwhelming for the light rail. So that's the reason we have light rail today rather than all these buses streaming up and down the waterfront.

And the reason you have the light rail on the western side of Hoboken is when New Jersey Transit came to Hoboken. It was like they were going to poke a finger in my eye, you know? They wanted that down on the waterfront and we had a real, real confrontation with them. They weren't going to move. And Russo, who was mayor at that time, he was 100 percent for it on the waterfront also. And I remember one day I went down to – made an appointment to go to see Russo and Paul Neshamkin went with me, and I'll never forget it, Russo came in and he came up so close to my face I thought he was going to touch my nose. Hostile, and you know, sort of like, well, what do you want? And so I said I'm here to make you a hero. And he sort of backed off and I explained to him why this light rail on the waterfront was not a good idea. And we had all the documentation, all the stuff there we could throw at him. And he never sat down. He stood maybe five inches away from me the whole time I was talking to him. I said, you know, if you do this you're going to ruin Hoboken, downtown Hoboken, everything is going to be a mess. And I said if you will support us in putting that system on the back part of town, I said, we will make you a hero. And he just turned around, walked out, and as he's going out the door he said, "Somebody will be back to you tomorrow."

And Bob Drasheff who was working for him at that time called me up the following day and he said, Helen, would you compose a letter to New Jersey

Transit saying that the mayor is against this on the waterfront. And so I said sure, I'd be happy to do that. So that's how we got past that one.

And we did, in fact – oh, I was castigated in this Go West campaign thing for offering to make him a hero because we did end up giving him a plaque and the whole thing. And we had him come to a big event and everybody was applauding him and stuff, and folks were furious at me for doing this. 'How can you do that?' And my point to them is, what do you want? Do you want to play politics or do you want to win for the benefit of the city? And if you have a goal, then go for the goal and forget the politics. And if it means you've got to – I hate to use the expression – kiss ass, then you do it. And my point always was with politicians you always leave them wiggle room. Let them get out of a corner and give them some way that you can get your goal accomplished.

[End Tape 1 Side 2]

MANOGUE: I think one of the next things that happened, and by now there is a Quality of Life Coalition, this coalition was really put together after the huge success in convincing New Jersey Transit to go west, and a number of groups are involved in the coalition and that was the whole idea is to bring various groups into play. Some of them that we worked with, and the coalition works with a number of the other groups, that's sort of our objective, so we have worked with the group that was headed by Kim Fox at one point when they were trying to stop the development up at 1600 Park early on. So we were very involved in that.

And then more recently we have been involved with POG, People For Open Government, supporting their ordinances that they succeed in getting – I shouldn't they, that we succeeded in getting passed concerning anti-pay-to-play, prohibiting no bid professional contracts. In other words, they have to have an open process of assigning professional contracts now. There have been a whole slew of legislative things that have happened that the Quality of Life Coalition has been involved in.

One of things we did early on, after the coalition was started, was there was a proposal to put the Devils hockey arena in the air rights over the Erie Lackawanna terminal tracks. And there we actually did our usual thing. We went right directly to the owner of the Devils and suggested we would like to sit down and talk with him. He came to Hoboken and took us to lunch. There were three of us who went that day, Ron Hine, a representative from the Environment Committee because the Environment Committee was one of our groups in the coalition, as was, I guess it was called – what was Ron's group originally called? It was Coalition for a Better Waterfront – was in the Quality of Life Coalition. And we went and spoke with – and this man's name is escaping me at this point. And also his manager, the

manager of the team was there. The manager of the team is still the manager today, so that will tell you who he was if you know who the hockey's manager is.

And we had a meeting with this man, and he was an elderly guy, I think he had to be in his eighties. His father had had an architectural firm, an engineering firm in Hoboken many, many, many years ago. So this guy's perception of Hoboken was like the old Hoboken of the 1970s, down and out, and gritty, and dirty, and, you know, people don't know what they're doing, and, you know, that kind of stuff. It was very clear in a few minutes that he was speaking about old Hoboken, and we were trying to convince him, look, times have changed, you haven't been here in a long time, we're not the same place. And secondly, or maybe even firstly, this is just the wrong thing for Hoboken. It's just going to bring in not only the hockey team when it plays but there was going to be a whole panoply of extra events. They were going to bring in singing groups and all kinds of stuff. It was just a horrendous thing to have happen.

And we fought it for, I guess about – it was almost a year. And we ended up, finally when we realized things, because Russo was pushing this very, very hard. I mean he really wanted this. And we ended up sending out I think almost 10,000 signatures to Christie Whitman, who was governor at the time. And I remember hand delivering these things out to the capital building. And we had a letter writing campaign to her. We had people writing all the time. And we got some of the folks from Jersey City and some of the people from Weehawken to join us on this. Because the old days of that Waterfront Coalition of Hudson and Bergen that I had put together back in the '70s, this sort of existed through the '80s and we had about 12 community groups, all the way from Bayonne up to the George Washington Bridge, so anything that happened along the waterfront, whether it was in Jersey City or Weehawken or North Bergen, we could all band together and use the force of numbers in order to defeat these things. And that was one of the reasons why the whole concept of the walkway came about in 1977 was because that Waterfront Coalition of Hudson and Bergen decided we've got to have a walkway along the waterfront.

But as far as the Devils were concerned, the owner was putting out these glowing things about how wonderful it was going to be, and the hockey players would live in Hoboken and all that kind of stuff. But anyway, the letters to the governor as well as these tremendous number of petitions hit her desk and she came to dedicate something – I can't even remember what it was. It was down on the Waterfront – oh, it had to be Sinatra Park. It had to be the dedication of Sinatra Park. She was invited, and, of course, she was a big buddy of Russo at that point because Russo supported her in the election for governor because he went against the Democrats on that and so he could really almost ask her anything at that point and she delivered for him. So he was down there, really elated, here's the

governor, and she's here. And she made her statement about the park and how wonderful this was and what a good job Russo was doing, and blah blah blah. And then she said, well, you know, there's another situation going on here and that's concerning air rights over the Erie Lackawanna terminal tracks. And she said, I, as governor, have decided we're not going to grant those air rights. Well, we went nuts. I mean it was great! Frankly, I didn't look at Russo. I should have. I wanted to see what his expression was, but I imagine she had told him ahead of time what she was going to do, so he probably put on a brave face with that. But we finally succeeded, after all those days of standing out in the bitter cold collecting signatures, we finally succeeded in getting rid of the hockey arena.

One of the things that – just to backtrack to the '70s, and I'm not certain this is on the previous – not these tapes here but the one that was done earlier – about the Erie Lackawanna terminal and how that actually got on the register. What all these stories tell you is how many times local government is not in sync with its population, with its people. And people do have to take on themselves when that happens the responsibility of standing up, questioning, saying things, trying to get things to be better.

We just recently, when we were working at the beginning of Mayor Roberts administration, we thought we had very clear understandings with him about the creating of open space, and also the master plan requirements for open space. And we attempted to work with a group that the mayor had put together. He claimed that it was a few citizens that came to him and said they wanted to help him get open space. So he created an open space committee with them. None of us oldsters were invited to be on it, and I remembered – I was talking freely with the Mayor at that time. Subsequently it stopped, but we used to talk on the average of two or three times a week, and he would bounce ideas off of me, and what do you think of this, Helen, what do you think of that. And in this particular instance when he created this open space Committee I called him up and I said, you know, what is this? There's no one on there – they're all new people in Hoboken. So he said, oh, well, they came to me and they wanted to do it so he said it's their Committee and you would have to ask them. So I went to them and I said, look, could you expand your Committee by one or two people? No, absolutely not. You're too political. And I said, what do you mean political? Oh, you make everything – you go against the Mayor on everything and you're too negative and all that.

So I said to her, look, I'd like you to come to a meeting. I said I'll put it together, all these different people who are working for open space. I said it's not just the Quality of Life Coalition, it's a whole aggregation of other groups as well, representatives, and I'd like you to come, I'd like you to meet them and see who they are. So this poor soul, she came to the meeting, and we literally sat her down and said do you understand what's been going on in Hoboken? Do you understand

where we're coming from and what the problems are here in dealing with, not just this administration but any administration, that is blindfolded, that doesn't really understand what's going on in the city? And I guess, unfortunately, the poor lady was pregnant, and we went at her, I guess, for about an hour, an hour and a half, telling her all this stuff. And she got to the point where she literally had nothing to say. She was just overwhelmed by what we were saying. And I understand there was another person with her, who came with her, from the Hoboken Family Alliance, and that person went out with her when she left because she finally got up and said I can't take this anymore, I have to leave. Well, she went out into the parking lot, I understand, and threw up, she was so upset. And the following day she resigned as the chairman of this open space Committee.

But I think the thing that we really learned there is a lot of these new people coming into town, they think of local government like it was out in the suburbs. And it's not that way here in Hoboken. It never has been. And I think a lot of these new things, they think everything we do is "political" because we're trying to challenge, and they feel challenging is political, that you just sort of be nice and sweet and go along, and that doesn't work in an urban area. And it's like this proliferation – and I know a number of you are big dog enthusiasts – but the proliferation of dogs we have in the city at this point, and people who do not know how to walk a dog. And, you know, we've got animal droppings all over the place. And this again is sort of reminiscent of the suburbs. You can go out, you can take your dog, there are plenty of lawns, nobody cares, walk your dog anywhere you want. So there's a perception, I think, of us being just another suburb, which we are not, and if the parking problems don't tell you that I don't know what will but they don't seem to wake up to the fact that they're in a different atmosphere and a different milieu here.

It's sort of an apathy I see on parts of a lot of the new people in town who just feel, eh, I don't want to get involved. If it's controversial don't bother me, I can't be involved in it. And they've got to get past that. And I think one of the encouraging things that happened was the Board of Education election that just occurred where the newcomer slate finally broke through. And I think it portends well for the ward council election that's coming up on May 8th of this year. One of the things the Quality of Life Coalition is doing right now, we are working with People for Open Government to put together two events for a candidates forum, and we're separating it so that the northeastern part of the city can go to one forum and the people in the south and western part can go to another. But we are hoping that enough of the new people start becoming interested, because if they don't they are going to be outvoted at every single, solitary election that comes up. They've got to find their political voice.

And I think they're going to have to live here – I think the flooding that occurred just recently, the terrible flooding, is finally starting to get people to understand we're in overdevelopment here. We have no permeable land left to absorb the water. When these developers are coming in and they've had a free reign for too much, and I know this is going to sound "political" but we have a city administration that I think still believes we are the down and out city of 1970 and 1980, and that we essentially have to give the city away in order to be able to progress. All you have to do is go today up to Jefferson in between 10th and 11th and look at the monstrous building that is being put there. It is six stories high and it is built right out to the property line. There is no space for grass, a bush, and maybe not even a tree. Now this is a city administration that has allowed that to happen. We still have a zoning board that to my mind still lives in the old days. All they want to do is "clean up Hoboken." This precious Hoboken that everybody is always talking about, they're allowing it to be destroyed. And if we haven't learned anything from this flooding that just happened, that we have to have more open space here, that we have to start being very strict about what these developers build. There are ways in which there are tanks that can be put under these buildings that can actually funnel the rainwater into tanks under the buildings but they've got to be built under there. Why we're not doing this I don't know.

There are a whole bunch of other things that we should be doing, and in fact I was talking with an architect yesterday over in New York, and he's talking about a whole plethora of things that can be done to stop flooding. And I'm going to try in the near future to get him to come over to Hoboken and to address this and give us some of these ideas of what can be done.

One of the other things that we've had a lot of trouble with over the years is saving historic buildings. One of the ones that we did save was the Erie Lackawanna terminal building and we did that back in 1974 and 1975. And it's always amazing to me when dedications come, whether it be the light rail, when that was dedicated, not one citizen who was invited to come to that – a number of us went – I will say I wrote a letter to – he's our U.S. Senator now – Menendez – I wrote a letter to Menendez ahead of time saying, I hope when you make your speech at this dedication for light rail that you will remember that it was a citizen activist organization that actually got light rail involved here. And he was very kind in his comments. He did in fact mention a number of names of all the people in that COATS group, the Committee on Alternative Transportation Systems. But it's just absolutely amazing when there's like a dedication as there was with the 100th anniversary of the Erie Lackawanna terminal building that not one citizen was invited to come to it or speak or talk or anything else.

I was just recently talking to one of the Mayor's aides and she said oh, that letter you wrote to the editor afterwards, that really hurt me, that really hurt. And I said, well, you know, I'm sorry. It wasn't meant to hurt but I think there comes a time that people in Hudson County have to understand how many of the good things that have happened here came about because the citizens insisted on it. They had to rise up, they had to spend their money, and they had to spend their time, they had to hit the street with petitions in order to get stuff done. And in three-quarters of these instances we had to go out of Hoboken to win. You couldn't get the politicians here to see the vision that we were seeing. But it took a lot of time and effort and frankly I'm very proud of having been so integrally involved in so many of the things.

One of the things that I'm sorry about is that even though I was personally responsible for getting the Hoboken Historic Preservation Commission started back in 1978 and chaired that organization for about 11 years until I was taken out of everything by the RTC, one of the things that I don't think we've handled well at all in Hoboken is the preservation of our historic buildings. And one of them immediately comes to mind, it was one of the things the Quality of Life Coalition worked on, we attempted to try to save as much as we could of the Clam Broth House when it went. I think all you have to do, and I know this may lead to a lawsuit or something, all you have to do is go down there and look at what used to be the site of the Clam Broth House and see the monstrosity that has been built there in its place to understand the complete lack of perception of what Hoboken was, and how what was should be saved.

The zoning board did this to us, and frankly, I think most of the people on the zoning board ought to be replaced like tomorrow morning because they're giving out zoning variances. Part of the problem there, again, you can't totally blame them or the people on the planning board who do these supposedly crazy things, that they don't understand what's going on in Hoboken. I think they'd like to but I think there are restrictions as far as the laws are concerned. And that's one of the things that I'm trying to work on right now with a lawyer elsewhere in the state who is also concerned about the state legislation concerning how the zoning boards and planning boards, what their ability to operate is. Because if those laws are not changed, those enabling laws aren't changed, then I think the entire state of New Jersey is in for a lot of trouble. Because the restrictions that are on these boards that you cannot do certain things, otherwise you're going to be sued, and all you have to say is sued in city hall in Hoboken and everybody caves in.

So we lost the old Clam Broth House. There were ways that it could have been done. We tried to get the developer to understand it. We tried to get the zoning board to understand it. Nobody went with us including the Historic Preservation Commission, which I thought was a disgrace.

We're currently working on the Holy Innocence Proposal, which is to tear down the Center Building and put up a nine story building in its place. There are a lot of problems with that. Here is one of the most unique, historic sites in our entire city, and we're concerned, and granted all three of those buildings should be saved. We understand, however, what the problems are that All Saints Parish has which actually has ownership of the Holy Innocence site. And we understand the travail they have been going through over the last three years trying to figure out how they can get the money to preserve those three buildings. It's a huge, huge undertaking, and it's a big headache.

We understand it. The Quality of Life Coalition along with a new group in town called the Hoboken Heritage, we've been doing a lot of research on this issue, and frankly we have been doing everything thinking about even trying to purchase the site. Now granted that's millions of dollars. And we'd have to find investors who would be willing to go in and put some money in or just very wealthy people who would be willing to put millions of dollars into a foundation. We're thinking about starting a foundation. If we could purchase the buildings, that's just a first step. Then after that you're caught with the same problem that Holy Innocence and All Saints has – then where do you get the money to preserve the buildings, what do you do with them, how do you keep them? So it's a real quandary, it's a real problem, and it's something that we've been grappling with for about the last six months, and we don't know what the answer is yet but we're working on it and we're hoping that we're going to be able to find some equitable solution here.

So there are many other things happening in town. We joined with Hobokenparks.org in taking to court the proposal for a huge project over at 900 Monroe. And as far as I know it was thrown back at the city again by the courts. We're not quite sure where that stands right now, but one of the things we're trying to do wherever we can is to preserve the open space that was mentioned and noted in the master plan. And again, I have to say on behalf of the Mayor, I know he wants open space. I've talked to him about it many, many times. He's just in a situation, he doesn't know how to get it. And unfortunately my perception of city hall over the last five years has been – and this is during Roberts' administration – is he's got the wrong people in key places down there. They're giving him the wrong information. They're giving him the wrong guidance.

One of those people, the Mayor just recently fired, and I was happy to see that guy go because he was not leading the Mayor in the right direction. There are still a couple of other people there who I think are also undermining, while they are part of the administration they undermine this whole process of trying to preserve open space. So there are difficulties out there. These are things that the Quality of Life Coalition is working on. One of the other things we're going to do very soon is

we're going to get back to the environment and we're going to try to find ways to green Hoboken, to truly green it, and we're going to do a series of meetings, probably starting in the fall, where we're going to bring in experts who can talk about what can an urban area do. Everything from trying to get the municipal fleet of vehicles on different kinds of fuel, trying to see that green processes are incorporated in every single solitary new building that is built in this city, not just when the developer says yes, in my heart I realize I have to do this for the Environment Committee. We don't want to just have it that way. This should be demanded. This should be something that we stand forward and say, look, we appreciate this, we appreciate our environment. Now we've got to try to protect ourselves as best we can.

We've got to also, it seems to me, stop this insane quest for ratables which is the driving force behind the overdevelopment that have, and we have to have better people sitting on – I'm not saying all the people – but most of the people on the planning board and the zoning board really have to be changed. And we've got to get people who are more concerned about the health and welfare and safety of the people of this city, and that's other things that the Quality of Life Coalition is going to be working on.

So on those rather testy notes, but that's way you fight a fight, I am going to say thank you for this opportunity to be heard hopefully by people other than just the people who are here right now. But anyway it's been my pleasure and as you can see Hoboken is my love, has been for a long time, but I'm probably not going to be able to live here much longer because the taxes are out of sight.

One of the other things, just dealing with taxes, is this whole thing of transferring St. Mary Hospital to the ownership of the city. Huge mistake. Never should have been done. It's going to be a disaster for the city. We, along with Beth Mason and her husband Rick, did a lot of work on looking at this, figuring out, looking at the budget, and the plan for the hospital, and we see nothing but disaster down the line. And it's going to be either Hoboken citizens picking up the tab for this hospital again, and again, and again, or the hospital property will be sold to a developer and you're going to see mid-rise buildings in its place. So this is just a warning for the future, this was not a good decision for this city to make and it's not a good thing for our citizens.

But anyway, love to Hoboken.

CHARNES: I'd like to conclude by thanking Helen, not only for sharing her experiences with us and the tape today, but for all she has done for Hoboken over the years. It's unimaginable what this city would be like without all that you have done for it. And so thank you even more for all of that.

MANOGUE: Thank you.

[End of Interview]