Malaika: So where were you born?

Mr. Brophey: Minneapolis.

Malaika: Minneapolis? Were you born in the house that you live in now?

Mr. Brophey: Oh, no. I lived a number of places.

Malaika: Okay. What part of the city were you born in?

Mr. Brophey: Well, I grew up on the south side.

Malaika: And then when did you move to North Minneapolis?

Mr. Brophey: I moved to where I am now and in Homewood in '75 and probably five or 10 years before that I was Near North, a couple of places on Logan. One of which was in NRRC's area. I don't think the other one, the other one might've been too. I'm not sure where, the other one was in Willard-Homewood and I think they may have both been in the NRRC area.

Malaika: Why did you decide to move into that neighborhood?

Mr. Brophey: Near North? Try and be part of changes that needed to be made in Minneapolis.

Malaika: What did you do for work?

Mr. Brophey: Oh, various things. I worked at a church for a while. I'm a licensed electrician, so I've done that since and done other techie things.

Malaika: What was the neighborhood like when you first moved in?

Mr. Brophey: It was a bit tough when we first moved in. That was on 1000s Logan and then we were 1400s Logan. That was fairly tame. And Homewood is quite tame, I think.

Malaika: And has Homewood always been tame?

Mr. Brophey: I think fairly. It's probably more expensive houses. Its 60 foot lots, which is fairly unusual. So it probably attracts, I don't know, higher-income. Maybe not, because one of the attractions of Homewood and the area is it's diverse. A lot of different kinds of people.

Malaika: Who were the different types of people who lived in Homewood when you first moved there?

Mr. Brophey: I think the Jewish population was largely gone. So it's assorted whites and blacks.

Malaika: And were many of them in similar work to you? Some manual work, some other types of work as well?

Mr. Brophey: I don't know.

Malaika: Why did you pick the house that you lived in? Why'd you pick that one house?

Mr. Brophey: Well, it was an FHA repo, so we bought it from HUD relatively cheap. But then you have to fix it, minor problems.

Malaika: Were a lot of the houses needing repair when you first moved in?

Mr. Brophey: There were a lot in, I'm familiar mainly in Willard-Homewood, which is now pretty much the same as Willard-Hay. And there was some people including Van, Van White is the most famous one, who set up the Willard-Homewood organization. And they arrived at the right time and had their stuff together and wound up getting roughly $10 million for housing. So Willard-Homewood would have a lot more torn down houses. I was really active with Willard-Homewood.

Malaika: What sort of activities did you do with them?

Mr. Brophey: Are you talking to Vivian Nelsen?

Malaika: No, not yet.

Mr. Brophey: I would suggest her. They advised the city, the same as NRRC does now and particularly in the Housing Authority on spending the money. And there was a vacant housing task force which was particularly active and they did a lot of work. Working with the Housing Authority to decide whether buildings should be rehabbed or demoed. And the bias was strongly in favor of rehab. And it involved write-downs because the cost of purchasing and rehabbing was more than you could sell it to for. So a lot of houses that got saved that would have been torn down. There was about $10 million in federal funds that went through Willard-Homewood.

Malaika: You said the bias was for rehab. Was that mainly because of the residents or did the city also want to rehab?

Mr. Brophey: I don't know if the city wanted to because it costs a lot more, because of the write-downs. But the residents were strongly in favor of maintaining housing stocks to the extent that it's practical. And other stuff that was going on. There was a grant program which I think was $2000-3000, which may have been income... You may have had to qualify on income. There was a low interest loan

project, which was three percent, which at that point was low. Doesn't sound very now.

Malaika: How did the residents come together? Was it through like block campaigns or big events that they did together?

Mr. Brophey: I'm not sure how the publicity got out. Van, George Nelsen was another person who has died, but he was married to Vivian. There actually, if you want to read it, there's a pamphlet which I keep telling people I'm going to scan. And I could send that to you. Which a lot of information on Willard-Homewood. Should I send it to Martine?

Malaika: Yeah, that would be great. So you said you first moved in because you felt there were changes that needed to be made in...

Mr. Brophey: Well, yeah, there was...changes were in progress and some weren't in progress.

Malaika: What were those changes?

Mr. Brophey: Well, police was much more of an issue back then. They have been tamed down quite a bit from what they were back then. Oh, just all kinds of stuff. The church I was involved in was originally Calvary Methodist Episcopal. It's in Homewood on the corner of Oak Park and Penn. It's an early church. There are two churches. They were both constructed in the early days of Homewood and it had a day care program which always had a black identity, a positive black identity component. And there was also a drug program that ran out of the church which was run by street guys, who were rather tough. Their interest, actually it's some miracle they got it going. It was a methadone program and it worked. It got methadone from Pilot City, which is what this thing used to be. There was always battles with Pilot City and the county because they had different ways of doing things. One day they got cut off with methadone and the guys bought it on the street for a day, which is weird. And their intent was always, methadone is generally a maintenance program, and they were always interested in detoxing. They wanted people off of all drugs. So that's some of the issues that were around.

Malaika: And did you feel like many of your other neighbors were working on those sorts of issues?

Mr. Brophey: Some were, some weren't, I'm sure. Some were just here. Some were very involved in various stuff.

Malaika: Were there any big events that you can remember from, since you moved in the seventies and eighties? Big events that defined the neighborhood?

Mr. Brophey: The two biggest ones probably were the riots on Plymouth or insurrections. One of which was right about the time we moved on Logan to the area. And it

caused some changes. The first one did anyway. The Way got started, which it's now the police station. But they moved further east and I think they're gone now, I'm not entirely sure even. And what I heard was the second riot was largely people from, not from this area. I knew someone that worked at The Way who was kind of taken out of the area in the backseat under a blanket and was told that it looked like a lot of people not from this area.

Malaika: So the first riot was right around when you moved here. What was the perception of the Northside by other residents or people from where you used to live before you moved here?

Mr. Brophey: Well, from outside of the area it's negative. And the media was real good at conveying a negative image. Hopefully that's changed too, but there were endless complaints about the media. And police didn't help either. I forget where I heard it from, but somebody who was white, I think had a police call and got asked why is a nice person like you living here or something like that. I had a cop at block club who said something to effect of a house being a P.O.S. And this was, his mother lived there. He was not impressed. And Lou DeMars used to be the alderman. He had someone who came to his front door at home, said he had a gun. He called the police and I forget how long he waited, but it was significant time. Police didn't come so he left out the back door. So some of the political people had a definite idea that there were problems.

Malaika: Were there any other big events, like in the eighties or nineties, that seem important for this neighborhood?

Mr. Brophey: Can't think of any. There were events that galvanized reactions. I forget, there was a kid at Lincoln who's treatment galvanized reactions. I can't remember what any of that was about and there's got to have been a lot of stuff. My guess is that Homewood is maybe more active than some of the other areas, but I don't really know that.

Malaika: Did you have a children or young people who grew up in the neighborhood around you?

Mr. Brophey: Well, my kid did. He survived. He went to North.

Malaika: And what was it like to raise a child in Homewood?

Mr. Brophey: I didn't see major problems, but he was white.

Malaika: How have you seen the neighborhood change in the years since you moved?

Mr. Brophey: My guess is it's quite a bit more stable, partly because housing prices have gone up, which I'm sure is good and bad. Thirty years ago I thought we should have, not seriously, staged a race riot to keep suburban mindset people out. These days it wouldn't look nearly as good as it would have then. But I don't think we

attracted a lot of people who didn't, weren't interested in diversity. I'm not sure if that's true today, at least not to the extent that it was.

Malaika: Do you have any concerns about newer people who are moving into the neighborhood?

Mr. Brophey: None specific. I can think of a couple people I think are real positive. This guy sorta north of me that bought a repossessed house. I'm not sure he's interested in diversity. I really haven't talked to him, so I really shouldn't say.

Malaika: Do you feel like the same challenges that drew you to Homewood that you wanted to help with, the changes? Do you feel like those are still true today?

Mr. Brophey: Yeah, hopefully they're better. The police definitely have improved from back then. But that's still a problem. Low income housing is definitely a problem. I think a bunch of us who bought houses way back then question whether we could buy one now. And I don't know how you solve that.

Malaika: You talked about in the Willard-Homewood organization, how you partnered with the city. Do you see any of that sort of partnership happening now?

Mr. Brophey: I don't know what NRRC is doing. There was, the thing that was going on back then is there was a big pot of money. And we arrived, they arrived, Van and George and others - I wasn't involved at the start - were ready just at the right time they could get a bunch of it. And since then I think the City Council in years after that saw this big pot of money, which basically they didn't have any involvement with, and didn't like it. And I don't think it's around anymore. I think that was a long time ago.

Malaika: Are there other things that you think are important for young people to know about the history of Homewood?

Mr. Brophey: I'm not a historian. Things have gotten better. But still, work needs to be done. Volunteers can do a bunch.

Malaika: It seems like there's been a lot of volunteer work or neighbor-work to help make the community what it is. Do you feel like in the other neighborhoods across the city that's the same? Or is it the city helps out more than other places or...?

Mr. Brophey: I think some areas are very strongly neighborhood organization oriented. Seward comes to mind on the Southside. Yeah I'm not in touch much of all of what's going on in neighborhoods anymore. We used to talk occasionally to a guy who was an organizer further north and I don't remember the name of the community anymore even.

Malaika: You mentioned a couple people, Vivian Nelsen, who I should talk with. Are there other people I should talk to?

Mr. Brophey: Oh, well. Someone who might be interesting is, I'm awful at names, Randall Bradley. He lives in the block north of me. He's an architect. His vision is not so good anymore, which isn't good for an architect. But then he's getting older too, like me. But he was on city planning commission and he could talk to you for hours. I think he and Vivian probably talk a lot, well they do, talk to a lot more to other people in the neighborhood than I do.

Malaika: Is there anything else that you'd like to share?

Mr. Brophey: How do we get rid of Trump?

Malaika: That is a great question. Do you feel like there is, I mean there's definitely different political leadership now than in the past? Or is it a lot of the same?

Mr. Brophey: You talking about the city or the president?

Malaika: City or president? Either one.

Mr. Brophey: The City is probably a lot more progressive. I'm not sure I'm already in favor of what they have in mind these days. Like fourplexes everywhere and telling me what kind of bags I can use at a grocery store.

Malaika: What about at the state level? Like the governor?

Mr. Brophey: Well, I think Republicans have not improved. Whether Democrats have changed, I'm not sure. Someone else I should say actually that's really interesting is Nellie Stone Johnson. Have you come across her at all? You don't want to talk to her. You'd have to use a ouija board.

Malaika: Yeah, I've heard the name.

Mr. Brophey: There's a book which is basically a transcription of stuff she's said. It was five bucks at Half Price Books. I read two chapters so far. But she was on the Democratic National Committee for years. She was highly involved in labor and black caucuses. And for some reason some people in the community turned against her, maybe good or bad. I remember the last precinct caucus I think I went to Randy Stanton was representative. And these people really tried to keep her from getting elected as a delegate. Which resulted in three challenges.

Malaika: And Randy was running for what position?

Mr. Brophey: Minnesota house, he had been there. It was maybe his, at least his second, maybe his third run. And Vivian could probably tell you what's going on with Nellie Stone Johnson. But she's weird because she did sewing and yet she's on

the DNC. She was close to Humphrey, I believe and Mondale, educated them. And talking to her, she just seemed like a person. She was really neat. I liked her.

Malaika: And then how have you seen national or federal or the presidency change?

Mr. Brophey: Well, the presidency is far worse than I imagined it could have been. It's just, I can't imagine a worse person for whatever it is. Bolton, he's awful and he doesn't have to be confirmed, which is, I don't think he actually would've been. And of course Republicans control the House and the Senate at this point and they've been fairly awful. Some of their dreams have been put into effect. They haven't cut entitlements yet. Well, McConnell says it's not likely to come up in the Senate. But Ryan would like to see it. And of course that has an effect on my neighborhood too. .

Malaika: A lot of the programs that you mentioned earlier, you know that $10,000,000 pot of money, that just doesn't exist anymore.

Mr. Brophey: Yeah the pot that Willard-Homewood used went to some other communities. But my understanding, my recollection is the city took over the money. Like I said the council saw all was money that they weren't controlling and wanted to. Otherwise, back then, Willard-Homewood days, things were great with the city. Although we worked largely with the Housing Authority. They were very supportive.

Malaika: Do you think it was because of the leadership in the city or just a different attitude about connecting with neighborhoods?

Mr. Brophey: Well, I think partly it was the Council. I'm not sure I can remember the names anymore. Miller I think wanted to capture the money. I might have a paper on that stuff. I should look.

Malaika: Anything else?

New Speaker: Not that I can think of offhand. That's more than I thought I could say.

Malaika: This is a lot. It's a lot of, my notes are messy, but this is a lot of really interesting perspective. As I talk to lots of people, I hear different sides of the story, especially around this - how were the houses rehabbed, you know? And so this is helpful. It's another puzzle piece. So thank you.

Mr. Brophey: I should scan that thing and send it to you because it has a lot of the history.

Malaika: Yeah, that would be great. You can send it to Martine and I can also write my email on here too, if you like.

Mr. Brophey: Randall lives in one of the first houses built in Homewood. And Vivian, I think her house was built the second year. There is a, historic designation was a possibility. You've heard about that I assume. And there's a designation study which has history. If you want the whole history you might want to look at that. That's primarily back in the, well, it was Jewish originally.

Malaika: I've also heard rumors that someone bought their house for $1. Do you know who that was?

Mr. Brophey: There's an Urban Homestead program, that was Housing Authority. They were houses that needed to be rehabbed. First one was 911 Sheridan, which is half a block south of Homewood. I don't remember any one, any that were in Homewood but there may well have been because there were a number of them. And so I think they probably got the three percent loan to fix it. The idea was that you do a lot of the work yourself, sweat equity, and you get a cheap house relatively. So yeah, that was back in those days that was going on. I don't think that goes on anymore. I don't know why. Well, I was going to say there aren't low interest loans but there certainly are right now. Although you may not be able to get it on of house that needs a lot of work. I don't know how that works. But that was an interesting program. And back in those days, NRRC, I think was instrumental in getting it set up. So that was, Willard-Homewood org was in the seventies and this was midway in their funding stuff. Probably around '75 or so, with Urban Homestead, as I guess.

Malaika: Okay. Well, thank you.