

Jane Seeman
Interview date: July 11, 2013

Caroline Gardiner: Ok, just a short introduction. If you could state your name for us, please?

Jane: Sure, my name is Jane Seeman. I live in Vienna, Virginia, and I'm happy to be doing this interview for Historic Vienna (Inc).

CG: And the interviewers' names are Caroline Gardiner and Virginia Harness and it's June 11, 2013.

JS: (laughs) Yes, it is.

CG: So, we're just going to start out with a few questions about you.

JS: Ok.

CG: So, very first—where were you born?

JS: Born in Kansas—in Hayes, Kansas, which is kind of, uh, the middle two-thirds of the state, so it's about as far to Denver as Kansas City. We're sorta in the middle there.

CG: Can you tell us about your family? Any brothers, sisters?

J: I had two sisters and of course Mom and Dad and a lot of relatives. We all lived in that area of Kansas. Mostly they were teachers, no farmers really, but mostly teachers. There's a university in Hayes and so that was always a big part of our lives.

CG: What was your maiden name?

JS: Chittenden. C-H-I-T-T-E-N-D-E-N. (laughs) Get used to spelling that one. But it was a well-known name in town, it was one of the oldest names in Hayes. We had front row on the cemeteries. (laughs) That's where we are. So we were, yeah, it's an old name.

Virginia Harness: So, where your parents from there as well.

JS: Yeah. Yes.

CG: So did you attend your first school there—you said you grew up there?

JS: Well, through high school, then I went two years to a college in Denver and then came back and finished up at Fort Hayes University.

CG: What did you study?

JS: Economics and business. Never really used it, but you know. (laughs) It was what I was interested in and it was good. And that's where I met my husband, he was pre-Engineering. So we got married and moved to Lawrence where he went to Kansas University and graduated there.

CG: And your husband's name was?

JS: Rodger. With a 'D'. And I think that sort of started our eastern migration from central Kansas. From there he got a job in Kansas City and then from Kansas City he got a job in Washington so that was kind of how we moved. We thought, 'yeah, that would be kind of a fun place to live.'

CG: Yeah. So, a lot of people, they seem to have families working from Washington, DC and live in Vienna. What was his role in Washington?

JS: He worked for the Corp of Engineers as an engineer.

CG: And what were you doing at the time?

JS: Staying home with the children. (V: How many kids do you have?) Real mother and scout leader and all those kind of things that, you know, that you do. Three children. They all live in this area. One lives in Vienna, but they all live in the area.

CG: And what are their names?

JS: Tom, Bill, and Linda.

CG: I can't help it. We saw the Virginia Tech and UVA—split house?

JS: Well, my daughter was UVA and her husband was Tech so they're kind of the split there. My son was Tech and another son was Radford, and now my oldest grand-daughter is graduating next Monday and she's going to be James Madison University so I said, "you've got to bring me that one now!" Put that on the car.

CG: Did she go to high school here—did she go to Madison?

JS: No, she went to South County High School, which is Fairfax Station, I guess. So in Fairfax County. But everybody else went to Madison and now I have a grand-daughter—another grand-daughter—going to Madison. So we pretty much like Madison High School.

VH: So this is really a little later on our list, but I have to ask you. I actually grew up in Kansas as well (Jane: Oh really!) Yeah, and I know I experienced a lot of culture

shocks sometimes out here. So talking about your move from Kansas City to DC—did you experience much of that?

JS: I always knew, somehow when I lived in Hayes, I always had this dream of living in a city. Because I knew—now, of course the university offered a lot of culture, you know, but I just, somehow I loved the city. The business of the city and so on. So really the big shock was the price, the cost, sticker shock. Oh yeah. We had a pretty nice house in Kansas City and we came here and it was oh, depression. Big time. To think that for the same amount of money, this is what we get? But you know, you just, whatever, you live with it. Pretty soon it becomes your home and you don't care.

CG: Your first home...

JS: Is right here. (600 Blackstone Terrace, NW, Vienna) I'm not a mover. Once I got where I want to go, I'm going to stay.

CG: So how long have you lived in this house?

JS: Probably 67-68. Somewhere in there.

VH: Do you remember much of what the town was like when you first got here?

JS: Oh yes. We talk about that quite frequently when we all get together. Lawyer's Road was not paved, it was gravel at a certain point past here. And I remember when they finished it. It was dusty. The gravel made it really dusty. And there really wasn't much development beyond the town limits. Not many houses out that direction. The whole atmosphere of the town was different.

CG: We've heard it called a 'country resort'. Do you agree with that?

JS: Sort of. I could let the kids, the boys, get on their bikes in the mornings in the summer, and come home for lunch if you're hungry. That was it. They could ride all over. I remember my one son, he couldn't have been much more than first or second grade and I'd walk him across Lawyers Road and watch and he'd walk down and get a haircut and come back. And I'd watch for him. And would you ever—you can't do that now, but that was the way it was.

CG: Can you describe what Maple Avenue looked like when you first moved here?

JS: Well, certainly not as much traffic. The maple trees were gone—we never saw that. I think we missed that by maybe, I don't know, how many years. It was just kind of an ordinary town, I guess. We had a couple of five-and-dime stores that we don't have now. There were no—there was only one restaurant in town. One drive-in and one restaurant because Virginia did not have liquor. You couldn't buy a drink in a restaurant or something so nobody wanted to open a restaurant. You had to go

to Maryland. We were like, 'Really, this is really strange'. The other thing that was kind of a culture shock in reverse I guess, because in Kansas City we had a much more, well we liked Mexican food. We moved here and were like 'nobody's heard of a taco?' It was just like 'Really?' But it's certainly changed by now, but it was just kind of funny. It was very, it stayed, and everything was just so much slower here. You always hear about Southern people being slow, or they talk slow. When we moved here with that humidity, I said 'I know now why' because we didn't have air conditioning when we first moved here. We spent a lot of time in our air-conditioned car just driving around. I understood then why things moved a little slower in the South.

CG: Do you recall the name of that one restaurant—the one restaurant?

JS: Rolling Road was the only restaurant here. And the drive-in...I can't remember what it was called. Sonic? I can't remember what the name of the drive-in was.

CG: And those were on Maple Avenue?

JS: Yes.

V: So did Vienna feel pretty Southern?

JS: Well, it did. And that appealed to me, actually. Growing up in the Midwest where everything's kind of just—something's really different. I thought 'This is cool'. We're to live in Virginia, that sounded so Scarlett O'Hara type thing. So I was really looking forward to it. And I think the humidity was...and another thing that really surprised me was the greenery. If you've grown up in Kansas, where there's a tree, there's a creek. But they let trees grow right next to the road, and we were like 'Wow! Would you look at this! This is amazing!' And our backyard was just a jungle, you had to use a machete to practically get through it because things, well you know how much rain we've had now. It just grew, and that I think was just a bonus. We were just so excited to grow things we'd never been able to grow before.

VH: Something besides crabgrass.

JS: (laughs) Right.

VH: So when you came here, obviously before you got too involved in the government, were you involved in any of the clubs or organizations?

JS: Not really, I don't think. One thing I've always thought was important: when we came from Kansas, we were so naïve about anything. We didn't understand about segregation. This was all something you might see on television or read about. We were totally naïve. So we moved here, and talked to the neighbors. A lot of the neighbors sent their children to private school. We were like 'Oh my gosh, what have we done? We can't do that. We can't afford it, and we're not going to. That's not

what it's all about.' We just went right up to Louise Archer which had just recently been integrated and signed the kids up. It wasn't long before everybody else went there too. But this is the way life is. The kids loved it. They had a wonderful, wonderful principal up there and it was a good experience. It really was.

CG: Do you recall when the school was integrated or when they started going to the school?

JS: I'm sorry, I don't. I'm sure that's all part of history. When that happened.

CG: I meant when your children started going.

JS: Oh. The very next—that fall, two of them were old enough to go to elementary school so that would have been '67 or '68 or something like that. The town was very much divided. Just right across the street was the Black community. There was a little boy over there that was the same age as my two boys, or close. He'd come over and they'd play basketball. And I'd hear the other mothers saying, 'Come in the house! Come in the house!' I was thinking 'Hmm, I don't like this, I don't like this.' That was our first realization I guess of what it was really all about.

VH: Do you have a sense of when those attitudes started to change?

JS: I think it was gradual. Very gradual. Like I said, we were so naïve. We just didn't understand it. This was not anything we had ever experienced before. We very early made up our minds that it was not going to be part of our lives. We were going to raise our kids—you have to get along with everybody in the world was our attitude. But it was a gradual change.

CG: The housing was obviously separate between the White community and the African-American. Were there any places in town that they seemed to come together more often, or were recreations still kind of separate?

JS: I'll have to think about that. Certainly at the school, more and more children were coming from both sides. And the Scouts. We were very active in Boy Scouts, and that was certainly integrated. I'm not sure, I can't remember about the Community Center, but I don't think there was any segregation at any of the classes up there. Little League—we were very active in all the Youth Sports and everything, and they were all by that time pretty well integrated.

CG: About the Little League, we have a couple of other interviewees who are closely connected with that. What was your experience with that?

JS: Oh it was really a great opportunity to make more friends with people who had children your own age. We had a great time with it. My husband coached and both boys played. That got us into the whole athletic, or Youth Sports community. My

daughter played softball and soccer and everything, so it's really a great experience, we felt like, to just get out and meet everybody.

VH: So how did you then begin to get involved with the town government?

JS: Well, I didn't, actually it was my husband who was the one. I was more stay-at-home. He got involved with the PTA at the school and was an officer and met people and somebody said, 'Well, you need to sign up for a commission'—a transportation commission or something—so there was that. He just kind of climbed up, and I just went to the meetings and listened and stayed home with the kids. That was it. He was really the one who was more active in all of that, and more of a club-joiner, and all of that.

CG: I have to ask. What was that like, having him off on the council meetings? Did he come home and talk about it?

JS: Oh yes. Absolutely. We shared all of the information. I certainly gave my two cents worth of advice. It was interesting. I enjoyed—he really enjoyed being active.

CG: Were there any funny stories that you can remember? Him coming home and just going off?

JS: Probably not that we should tell. (laughs) It was just really interesting. I think also that gave us a clue on how Vienna was changing and growing. More people would come in and request stop-signs and that type of stuff. So we were going 'Oh, ok, things are really changing in Vienna.' So I think that gave us a big clue as to what was going on in Vienna.

VH: Do you remember there being a lot of resistance to the growth of the city?

JS: Not at that time. Not at that time. Because all of the houses...What I liked, what I still like, about Vienna is that it's a true town. It's not a development. So all the houses—I mean, there are little subdivisions, like the neighborhood I live in, the houses—but you can go across the street and the houses are totally different there. There's big houses, little houses, there's older people, there's younger people. It's a good mix. And I think that's what really, really makes a true town. It's not just homogenized.

VH: We wanted to ask if you know about this. Do you know how Viva Vienna got started?

JS: Yes. The Chamber of Commerce. Bob Dicks. I don't know if he was president of the Chamber of Commerce. He decided that we needed a festival. At that time, it was a one-day festival and hugely successful. It remained like that. I don't know when it went to two days. But then it got too much for the Chamber to do, to handle. It went to a committee of us. I was on the committee that ran Viva Vienna for a while. And

then the Rotary Club decided to take it over. I'm a member of the Rotary Club, so of course I'm still active in Viva Vienna. Oh let me think. I think one time we—I have written down someplace when it started. Maybe 35 years? I don't know. I shouldn't say. But I have it down some place.

VH: Do you remember the first one? What it was like?

JS: Oh I do. It was exciting because it was a carnival-type thing. And always before, the Little League had had a carnival to raise money. They always had it up in the Giant parking lot. That was before Outback or anything. That was the money-raiser for Little League. Then it moved down to where Viva Vienna still is now, and Little League still ran it. Eventually the Chamber took it over. I don't know whether there were vendors that first year. I'm sure there was food. It was mostly the carnival rides.

CG: So I'm guessing you and your children went down that first day and rode those rides?

JS: The kids were so excited, so excited. And you know, Vienna was such a safe place that you could just drop them off. They could either walk home or...and of course that was before cell phones, but you could say 'Ok, I'll meet you at such-and-such a place at such-and-such a time' and you'd pick them up and bring them home. I never worried about them. Never, ever worried about them.

CG: Do you recall how big that first Viva was?

JS: Well it seemed big. It was probably just the carnival. It was in the very same spot where it is now.

CG: All the town members went?

JS: Oh it was packed, of course.

CG: We have also heard that you have done a lot of volunteering at the Patrick Henry Library?

JS: I did.

CG: How did that get started?

JS: My husband was a member of Optimist (Club) and they met on Tuesday nights. I thought, 'Oh, good, this is one night that I don't fix dinner'. My youngest, my daughter, had just gone off to UVA. I thought 'This is a night that I've got, that I can do what I want to do'. I love books and I love libraries. I just went up there and said 'I'd like to volunteer on Tuesday nights. I've been doing that for many, many years.

CG: What's your favorite experience there?

JS: I love talking to people about books. You have to be careful. Sometimes the book they check out, you shouldn't really know what they're reading. But I love talking to people. You know. 'I love that book, it's really good, you're going to enjoy it.' I like sharing that. And the kids. I love when the kids come in and get that enthusiasm about reading.

CG: They've done a lot of children's events. (J: Oh yes) Have you been involved in any of those?

JS: No, not really, no.

VH: Were you involved in the centennial celebration in 1990 at all?

JS: Just on the edges. I just helped out. At that time I was just willing to be an Indian not a chief. I helped out on whatever they needed help with.

VH: Do you remember some of the activities that went on then?

JS: I remember there was the Ball. There was a lot of different commemorative things. They buried a time capsule. Kind of the normal things. I can't remember that much.

CG: Did you attend the Ball?

JS: I did.

CG: Do you recall where it was?

JS: I think it was at the country club.

CG: Westwood?

JS: Yes, Westwood. I can't recall. I would imagine that would be it.

VH: Did people get totally decked out?

JS: Oh yes. It was a nice, a very nice event.

CG: Quite the thing.

JS: Yes.

CG: Going along with that. Vienna has been around for quite a while, so how do you think it's changed from its simple farming beginnings to that (Jane: Right.) centennial celebration?

JS: Well I think part of it is our location, which is always what realtors say—'location, location'. For a while there was Washington over there and Vienna here and Falls Church in the middle. But everything, as everything expanded, it all became together in a way. And then of course Dulles Airport, we're right there; when 66, when 66 opened up—we're kind of sandwiched between the Beltway, 66, Route 7 and then Tysons. It just, we just happen to be, depending on your point of view, in *my* point of view, we're in the perfect place. Some people don't like the change. 'Oh, Vienna's not like it used to be.' Well, no. We don't *want* it to be like it used to be. (All laugh) It's always good to look back at the good old days, and think, 'well, were they really the 'good' old days?'

CG: So in those 'good old days', when your husband was working in DC, how did he get from here to DC?

JS: Oh golly, he had a million different carpools, sluglines, and then we have a bus that eventually stops right over there on the corner. He would just go out and get on the bus, which would take him to the metro. That was the perf—that bus still does that. Once the Orange Line opened, he started doing that.

VH: Was the train still running when you first came to town?

JS: No, no. But the tracks were there. They were just starting to take up the tracks. My boys would go down to the track and bring home nails, all sorts of things they would find along there. They had a metal detector and oh they had so much fun. Then there's a Civil War post at the American Legion. The American Legion sits up high and looks down on the train, on the path. They would go up there and find horseshoes and all kinds of things they would bring home. It was fun. And then they could ride their bikes, even before it was even paved, they could ride their bikes down to Reston. They'd call me up and say 'oh, could you come and get us? We can't ride back home. We're tired.'

CG: I have to ask. Did you keep any of that?

JS: I have one of the horseshoes, I think. Who knows what I've got. I could have some more railroad spikes or something.

VH: Along with the growth idea, do you remember what Tysons used to look like?

JS: You know, that's interesting because—and you can look this up—when we moved here, I said 'alright, where am I going to go shopping for clothes for the kids?' You know, pretty much, that was it, 'cause there weren't really any children's clothing in Vienna. I would go to Seven Corners, or I would go over to Montgomery

Mall, which is kind of a hike. When we moved here, we drove out up 123 and here was this complex. It was just bathed in that parking lot light, you know, and it was Tysons. They were just opening when we moved here. It was just the Tysons—the original Tysons was there. The stores gradually opened and then I could shop there. It was interesting.

CG: Do you recall what was there when you first moved here?

JS: The shopping center was just finishing their building, just getting ready to open. But there were a lot of old houses and so on around there. There's a great website—well, I shouldn't say that—*Facebook* site. It's 'Vienna Kids'. Oh my golly. We've had more fun on that thing. 'What used to be on the corner down there?' 'Oh yeah, that was that old Western wear place'. It's been a lot of fun to remember those things that used to be where they, you know...it's been a lot of fun.

CG: But in the beginning, Tysons was mostly clothing stores—department stores?

JS: There were some movie theaters, maybe a few restaurants. But mostly clothing, I think, probably, yeah. And I don't think any of those clothing stores are there now that used to be there. I mean, Macy's used to be, oh...anyway, they've all changed names now.

VH: Do you have a favorite place in Vienna?

JS: Oh gee. I think the Town Green might be my favorite place. I like to go up there and listen to concerts. I'll stop by Church Street Pizza and get a pizza, or stop at any of the shops, any of the take-outs, and just take my dinner over there and sit. It's so relaxing, it's so nice to sit there and listen to it. Kind of my reward at the end of the day. If I get all my housework done, or all my homework done, then I can go up there and enjoy the music.

VH: That's a fairly recent addition to the town?

JS: It is, yes. Perfect. We couldn't have planned a better place, a better green in the middle of Maple Avenue. It's perfect.

VH: Was there any place equivalent to that when you first came here that you would go and relax?

JS: No. Well, the parks. We had some good parks. We'd have picnics in the parks and so on.

VH: Are there any—well, I'm sure there are probably lots—but are there any businesses, restaurants, or other places that used to be here that you would go to that are now gone?

JS: There were several women's clothing stores that were here that were really good to go to. And gift shops. All of a sudden, we're missing gift shops that were here. I just hate to—I just hate to have to drive out of Vienna to go shopping. It seems that I've got to find it right here. Usually you can, but there's certain things that you can't. We used to have some shoe stores, mostly I guess clothing-type, retail. I think that's where online shopping comes in handy. (All: Yes.)

CG: When you first moved here, there were those shops. What was outside of the town?

JS: Oh golly.

CG: We've heard mostly farmsteads...

JS: Well, actually, we had cows in Vienna. There were a couple of farms in the town of Vienna. One off of Nutley—you remember those cows down at the corner of Nutley and Courthouse Road? And then up at the other end of town, there were some cows, kind of a farm up there. Which was always kind of fascinating. If you missed your cows in Kansas, you could always go look at them there. What else? 66 was just opening in segments, so that kind of opened up...once you got on 66, there really wasn't much of anything really. You could drive all the way up from the Blue Ridge and not see any towns or anything. It was pretty much open country.

VH: Well, that certainly changed.

JS: Oh yeah. Oh, I know it. You have to drive all the way to the Loudon Line and then even a little further before you start feeling that you're in the 'country'.

VH: I imagine you remember when the Metro first went in.

JS: Yes, yes.

VH: How did that change things around here?

JS: Well, you know people. 'Oh, it's going to bring crime to Vienna! All these people robbing us, and then jumping on the train and going back.' It just made commuting so much easier if you were working. Back then, Washington, DC, was like the hub, and then everybody that lived around went into DC to work. Things have changed now. You're going every which direction to go to work. It was definitely a big, big help. We always wondered: why did it stop in Vienna? Why did it even come to Vienna? It should have gone 7 out to Tysons, out that way, to the airport. We never could understand that. But, I thought it was a good thing.

VH: That reminds me. We were looking at some old Town newsletters from the '70s. It seemed that on just about every page, there was a lot of concern about vandalism in the town. Do you remember that being an issue?

JS: Oh yeah. Right. Everybody thought that was...but I think that happens every spring. I hate always blaming it on the kids, but you know, you get spring, and it's nice out, and you're out wandering around, and you spray-paint something and it's vandalism, or knock over a mailbox or something. It's just kind of those 'rites of spring', I guess.

CG: It seems that most people—as a Viennian myself, we think of ourselves as a small town but we're really not because of the population. What do you think contributes to that ideology?

JS: We really fight to be a small town. We're only 15,000 in the town limits, and we're very proud of that. That's one of our core—we had a strategic plan and that's one of the things we said. We are going to remain a small town. It's hard. You've got these pressures from outside, people moving in that might not recognize what we have here in Vienna. They want change. Change is not bad, we're wil—but we're not going to become a pass-through mall type place. We still have to st—we have to find our own niche and capitalize on that. I think we're doing a pretty good job at that.

CG: I'm guessing that connects to why we've never become a proper city?

JS: Right.

CG: Because we have the population for it.

JS: Well, to become a city, you have to support a school system and we do not have the commercial district to do that. It would be all on our residents. Fairfax County has an excellent school system. Why would we want to? Our citizens pay double taxes. They pay town taxes and county, but they get a lot for both, I think. But we would have to have our own library system, our own social services, or else pay the County to run it for us. We just don't have the revenue to do that.

CG: So I guess we can start talking about the mayor—the government? (V: Yeah) Vienna's governing is done by you and six other council members, correct?

JS: Right.

CG: Can you explain more about your role within the system?

JS: The mayor is definitely the figurehead, I guess you could say, or the representative. I represent Vienna on many, many boards and commissions, meetings and so forth. I have one vote just like everybody else. I run the meetings. I sign all the official papers. We hire a Town Manager, and he runs all the day-to-day operations. We give him directions, tell him what our policies are. He'll do the development and carries those things out. So it works very well.

VH: What year did you become mayor?

JS: In 2000, I was sworn in. It's easy to remember that.

VH: Who was the mayor before you?

JS: Charles Robinson.

VH: Now he was mayor for a very long time.

JS: Long time, yeah. 27 years, 26 years, something like that. But time goes pretty fast, now I'm thinking. (all laugh)

CG: Going on 14?

JS: Yeah.

VH: Was it kind of strange, following someone who'd been Mayor for such a long time?

JS: It was. I really had decided that I *couldn't* follow him exactly. (V: Sure.) This had to be me, my own shoes that I was filling, my own philosophy about being a mayor and so on. I had pretty much made up my mind. Not that I didn't respect him, or respect his ideas. Very moral man, very high ideals, but—and I could certainly do that, but I also had other ideals that I wanted to carry out.

CG: What inspired you to run for office in the first place?

JS: Well, he was very ill. I was on Council at the time and had no idea about this. Even being on Council was more than I would have thought. But he asked. He said 'would you think about it', and I thought, 'Gee, I don't know. I don't know why I would.' But I really looked around Vienna and I thought, 'Vienna has been so good to me and my family. It's been such a wonderful place to raise my family. It's been so good to live here that you know, if you—at some point, you have to step forward. It was a big step. I felt like I had swallowed a rock, I really did. I was so scared when I called people and told them what I was going to do. But sometimes you just have to put yourself out there. I don't where that came from within me, because that's usually not me. But that was it. That was my decision.

CG: In an interview with the Vienna Patch in 2012, you were talking about running for office. You said, "I need to step forward and do something, not just sit back and watch it get done," which I believe is what you are telling us at this moment. What was that 'something'? What were your goals going forward?

JS: Well, my goals, I definitely had goals. One of my goals, and I don't know if I'll ever accomplish this, was to make the word 'politician' a good word. Because most of the

time, when people would say, 'Oh, they're a politician'—it just has a bad connotation. I'm just thinking, 'No, it isn't.' We're public servants. I really wanted to bring a good name to Vienna and the word 'public servant' or 'politician'. The other part I wanted to do was to bring the public more into Town Hall, into what was going on in Town Hall, get them more involved.

CG: So how did you go about filling those goals?

JS: I talked to a lot of school groups, Scout groups. I tried to make them understand that I'm no different than their grandmother or their aunt or uncle. That I'm just a regular person. I buy my own groceries. I clean my own house. I drive—I don't have a chauffeur. That, you know, I'm a regular person. I try to bring it down to that level of that. I think they really appreciate that. I'm always available to answer questions from the kids. I'm always out there doing that kind of thing. I think that really, really helps.

VH: I know that the demographics of Vienna seem to have changed quite a bit. I imagine as Mayor—do you find that to be true? I know the Asian community has certainly grown a lot.

JS: Right, exactly. It's kind of neat, because a lot of the older people in Vienna have lived there all their lives. I shouldn't say I love going to funerals, but I like seeing all the old-timers there. It's like 'You were the people who really started Vienna the way it is. I really appreciate that. There's still a lot of people around that grew up in Vienna and have lived there all their lives. I always feel like 'We owe you so much. You guys really held it together until more people could come. We're seeing a lot of families, new families coming in, all these new homes that are being built. That's good, that's rejuvenation. That's the cycle of life. I love it.

CG: Going back in history a little bit, you've been here for quite a long time. I'm guessing you've seen how different world events have impacted Vienna—wars, big presidential elections. Do you remember any having a specific impact here?

JS: Not really. Some of the big events, like 9/11 or something like that. But as far as politics or presidential, we're non-partisan. We are really very, very proud of that and protect that. So whoever is the governor, whoever is the president, whoever's our senator, we work with that person. We just leave politics out. I think that makes a big difference too. When we had the 9/11, our police force—I was so proud of everybody in Town Hall. Everybody just kept working. The police were right there and in touch with all the other police departments around the metropolitan area making sure everything was okay. And at that time we realized that we weren't able to—that none of the police stations, police departments were able to communicate with each other. It really brought out a lot of deficiencies in that. There were a lot of Homeland Security grants that we got. It just brought us into more contact with other jurisdictions and what we could do to help each other.

VH: You moved here in 1968?

JS: Probably, yeah.

VH: I was just wondering. I know that was a pretty crazy year in American history.

JS: Yes, it was. Well, like I said, we were so naïve. We went down to DC and were like 'Gosh, this is nice. There's nobody here. Why isn't there anybody here?' We had no clue.

VH: So, did any of that spill out? I know when Martin Luther was assassinated, there was some trouble in DC.

JS: What year?

VH: '68.

JS: Okay. That happened a month or two months before we moved here. So things were still unrest. But, I don't know, we just went on with our lives. We were just kind of oblivious, I guess. We knew it was a big deal, obviously, and very serious. But we knew we just had to get on and live with the people that we lived with when we moved around.

CG: Do you remember there being any strong feeling here, especially it being a divided community at the time?

JS: Oh, absolutely it was. There were people who would not send their children to school with Black people. Yeah, quite a bit. But it changed. And the haircuts that they wore, you know. And I guess there were some sit-ins that we weren't too aware of. And then with my husband going into the district every day, he I think saw more of that.

VH: Was there much of the counter-culture movement in Vienna?

JS: In the schools, I think there was. There was a lot of the '80s, or the '70s. When my boys were in high school, there was a big drug—that was kind of the beginning of all the hippie drugs, you know. But you hope for the best, hope you raise them right, hope for the best. But there were conflicts in the schools quite a bit. Well, not quite a bit, I shouldn't say, but you know it's one of those things that's going to happen and it resolves itself. (V: Yeah.)

CG: So were there any big events that did impact your lives at home?

JS: Personally? We just have lived here. I know when my husband died, that was a big impact. He was on Council. I'd been going to all the Council meetings, so they said, 'Would you like to fill out his term?' And I thought, 'Well, what else am I going

to do? Maybe that would be a good thing to do.' But really no. Just kind of a nice, quiet life here.

VH: Do you have a favorite memory of Vienna?

JS: Oh golly. Maybe the Halloween parades or something. Taking the kids up when they were small and finding the perfect parking place and getting everybody all situated. I think the Halloween parade is extra special. It's something that not everybody does.

CG: Did your children ever march?

JS: They might have, I don't remember. But the grandchildren absolutely loved when I became mayor because they would ride with me on the float, on the Council float, and wave to everybody. They thought they were so special. And they probably—people would wave more at them because they would always be in costume. Politicians were always kind of more boring at that time.

VH: So do you still ride on the float?

JS: Oh yeah.

CG: Are there any other special things that you get to do because of your government status?

JS: I try not—I don't really take advantage. I guess the Halloween parade—it's interesting. My granddaughter's a sophomore at Madison, and one of her friends is one the yearbook staff. There's a whole page on the yearbook of a picture of her and I, her and me. Then there's this thing about 'Royalty in Vienna'. We're both looking at it like 'Really?!' What she gets to do because she's related to me. I guess riding in the Halloween parade...we're looking at each other like 'really? All those things...' I really don't try to take advantage of all of that.

CG: Do you remember your first day on the job?

JS: Yes, yes I do.

CG: What was that like?

JS: Well, it was more learning what was in all those files, what the issues were. It was just more learning. Just really delving into all the paperwork and meeting and so forth.

CG: What's the biggest problem that you have encountered in your job?

JS: Well, traffic is always a problem, but I don't know if there's anything much we can do about it except get a better bus service, which we're working on. And really just providing our citizens with the best service at the lowest tax rate we can. That's always a struggle.

CG: Do you have a project that you're quite proud of that you've worked on as mayor?

JS: I've worked a long time on this parking garage that we're going to build on Church Street. That's probably the one. And the Town Green, we've worked on, and I'm proud of that. But the parking garage, knowing that parking is a problem in Vienna with the traffic and everything. So I think that's a big event. If we ever get it done.

VH: Have you encountered any interesting characters in your time as mayor?

JS: Every day. Every day there's somebody. I think, you know, most of the time they just want somebody to listen. And that's okay. And they're always so surprised when I say 'Yes, this is the Mayor speaking.' 'Oh, okay!' That's what I'm here for, to talk to you and listen to you. Many times I can help them with the problem. Many times it's just a misunderstanding or whatever it is. We can work it out.

CG: Are there any stories that you would like to share with us about those little odd moments?

JS: Oh, let me think. There are some really neat things that have happened. This is kind of going back. You just never know. We got a phone call from a woman at the State Department one day. She had a group of Iraqi women for conflict resolution, a week of meetings and everything. She said, 'I'm looking for a woman mayor to show to them. Can they come and meet you?' I said, 'Oh, absolutely.' We had probably three other women on Council at that time. We got together with them. We had dinner in Vienna, they came to one of our meetings. It was just a wonderful—that happened twice. It was just wonderful because they were—I said to them, 'It's up to you guys, you women, to really make the difference in Iraq.' That was a really neat experience that would not happen if we did not live right here in Washington. So there's been some fun things like that. One time the Austrian Embassy called and invited me to dinner. They were having as a guest the mayor of Vienna, Austria. They thought 'oh that would be so cool to have...' Well, he could have cared less. He was like, 'Pssh.' But I had a wonderful time. It was just a gorgeous house. She was a woman, the ambassador. Beautiful house. It was just really a neat experience. But those kind of things happen once in a while. You take advantage of them, you really do.

VH: Does Vienna have a sister town?

JS: At one time we had someplace in France, but I don't think we've ever kept that up.

CG: Would you like to see some sort of program get instituted with our sister cities?

JS: Well, I always say if they would pay me to go over and visit I would. (laughs) But I can't convince anybody of that. We've pretty much got our hands full right here. We did have a sister city thing in Virginia at one time. But Virginia is again so diverse. We've got cities that are smaller than towns. They have airports, we don't. Somebody else had rivers, we don't. Dams...There's so many different...You know, rural versus urban. It's just so different that it's hard to find anybody that really matches what you're going through. We're pretty close to the town of Herndon, and the town of Leesburg, and the town of Percival out in Loudon County. We meet with them pretty regularly to discuss things that we can work together on.

VH: We wanted to ask you about being voted Citizen of the Year?

JS: I think that happened right before I decided to run for Mayor. I don't know how that happened. But I thought, 'Gee, I'd better take advantage of this.' With publicity like that, you don't just let that go away. I thought, 'Well, I'll just put that on my resume.' I have no idea how that happened, but it was pretty cool.

VH: What did that entail, exactly?

JS: You get to ride in the Halloween parade in a convertible. My granddaughter, who's graduating from high school now, rode with me and she was dressed up like Madeline. She was the hit of the parade. Nobody looked at me. 'Oh, look it's Madeline!' She kind of has that little look of Madeline. She was dressed so cute. Everybody was yelling, 'There's Madeline!' She was the star, which was fine with me.

CG: What is your granddaughter's name?

JS: Jaclyn. J-A-C-L-Y-N.

CG: Vienna holds other events as well—the Fourth of July fireworks, Viva obviously too...

JS: Right. Oktoberfest. We love festivals. Stroll on Church Street that we have in the winter. We love festivals. I love closing down streets so people have to get out of their car and enjoy. We actually closed part of Maple Avenue for the Madison Homecoming Parade on a Friday afternoon. I said, 'you know what, parades are great. These are kids. Just get out of your car, in twenty minutes it'll be over with.'

CG: I actually attended Madison, so we were very thankful for that.

JS: It's a neat thing, yeah.

VH: Do you have a favorite story from any of those festivals?

JS: Oh golly. Well, the last Oktoberfest I went to, I forgot—I didn't take any ID. They said I couldn't buy any beer without ID.

CG: Oh no!

JS: I'm like 'Please, please!'

VH: And the Mayor card didn't work?

JS: Just silly things like that. I mean, I know that they have rules to follow but I was like 'Oh, why did I forget that?' It's a real tradition for our family, our whole family, to get together for the Fourth of July. I usually have a picnic here, then we go up and watch the fireworks.

VH: Do your relatives from Kansas get out here much?

JS: No, not much at all. I only have a sister-in-law—well, a few in-laws that are still out there, and that's about it. But I go out to Hayes for high school reunions every once in a while. But it's hard to get to. (V: It is.) I tell people, you fly for three hours, then you rent a car and drive five hours. They don't understand that.

CG: I have a farm house in Michigan, it's the same thing. You fly into Detroit, rent a car, turn left at Canada, and keep driving for two hours then you're there.

JS: That's right, yeah.

VH: Do you remember anything big happening here for the National Bicentennial in '76?

J: I don't think we did anything extra in Vienna, but we did go down and watch the fireworks in DC. Absolutely fabulous, just fabulous. We sat across the river, on the Virginia side. It was just, oh. But I always feel disloyal if I don't stay in Vienna and watch the ones there.

C: So what do you do when you do have free time?

JS: Well, I am in my office in the morning. Answer emails, letters, sort of plan whatever is going on. The Town Manager and I meet and plan a meeting or whatever. Then I come home in the afternoon and garden or get caught up on housework. And then I'm usually out again in the evening. Everybody else is kind of coming home from work and I'm leaving so it's kind of the reverse. There's a lot of meetings in the evening that I have to go to.

VH: Are you part of any of the Garden Clubs in town?

JS: I am a member. I'm not really an active member. My idea of gardening is to get my fingernails dirty, to get right down in the dirt. I don't do flower arranging or anything like that. I just really like pulling weeds and puttering around in the garden.

CG: You mentioned you were a member of the Rotary Club?

JS: Yes.

CG: What do you all do?

JS: Oh golly. Well, we run Viva Vienna. That's the big thing. They start almost immediately. But all that money—I think they cleared \$200,000 this year. All that money goes to charity—goes right back into charities. It's really a great group of people, hard-working people. I'm just amazed at the talent and the hard work they put in for all of that. But it goes to many, many different charities all over the world, and in Fairfax County, and in Vienna. The Library gets a check. They give the Fire Department a check. They give the Police Department a check to pay for whatever they might need. Parks and Rec gets a check for summer camps. All the money goes back.

VH: That's amazing.

CG: How many of you are there?

JS: Maybe, showing up a meeting, maybe 40 or 50. (C: Wow.) It's a pretty good group. They're very lively, let me tell you. They're a very lively group.

CG: Do you have any favorite stories from those meetings?

JS: They're so clever. There's so many reparties going back and forth that it's just like 'Wow'. You get so energized by just going to the meetings. They're hard-working but they really have fun too.

VH: Speaking of having fun, the bike trail must have gone in while you were living here. Do you remember that?

JS: Yes. Yes, well, that was the train track. (V: Right.) It's been improved all the time. First they had to pull up the tracks, and then it was just cinder I think, gravel or something. Then they pave. It's been—that's another advantage Vienna has, that it goes right through town. A lot of people move here because of that. It's a huge—it really connects the neighborhoods. You can get on here and walk over, and you're at the Town Green, you're at the library, you're at the grocery store, you're at the Community Center. It really connects the town very, very well. We're very fortunate

that that just happened to be where we are. And then the Town Green is right there beside it, the Freeman Store is right there. It's really an amazing piece of property that we have just running right through town.

VH: Do you use it much yourself?

JS: I do, yes. I used to. I haven't really gotten back onto it. But it's easy to walk to wherever you want to go.

CG: That's one of the—the caboose on that trail is one of the older bits of Vienna. Do you know of any other markers?

JS: The caboose came to us during the Centennial. I don't know, somebody got this caboose. That was—you know, Vienna was—the railroad went right through so we got the caboose to commemorate that part. Then all the bus stations in town are built after the architecture of a train station. There's some neat things like that.

CG: Going back to the Halloween parade. That's mainly a children's event—getting the kids involved. How do you think the other age groups are involved in town?

JS: Just in other areas you mean? Well, probably the teens, the young people are left out more than—but they have, I don't know, they have their own lives, really. We have a teen center, but quite frankly, it's more the middle school, upper elementary school, the middle school kids who use it. The teen center, they wouldn't get caught dead going there. That's not a 'cool' place to go. It's hard, really. They're going to find their own place. You just try to make it a safe environment for the kids. Senior citizens—we've got a lot of programs, free programs, at the Community Center for them. I don't think they feel left out. There's a lot of good church groups, lot of good churches in Vienna. I think that's one of our advantages, a lot of good healthy churches. They have a lot of good senior groups. I think there's enough for everybody.

CG: Now do you attend church yourself?

JS: Yes I do. Vienna Presbyterian.

CG: That's where my family goes.

JS: Oh, okay.

CG: What has been your experience there? I know there's quite a diverse congregation there.

JS: It does. I go to 8 o'clock because it's a little smaller. Everybody knows everybody. I love the Youth Choir that sings. My granddaughter sings in the Youth Choir now. I love bringing the youth in. It always gives me a good feeling that all will be right

with the world because look at all the kids that are here. I think it's a friendly church. I'm getting active in the senior group to some extent. I go to Sunday School after that. I really enjoy it.

VH: You mentioned the Community Center. Was that already active when you moved here?

JS: Yes, it was. I can't really tell you how many years. It was fairly new. Certainly I signed the kids up for all kinds of lessons—tennis lessons and dance lessons and everything—through there. It's kind of been added onto through the years, but it was a big part of what we could do here.

VH: This is a slight change of subject, but going back. When you moved here. I know the '70s were kind of a tumultuous economic time. Was Vienna impacted by that or did it sort of continue to boom?

JS: You know, I think we're—because so many of the people—well, this was before the 'Beltway Bandits' came, I guess—but so many people in Vienna were employed by the government. The government was a pretty safe place. We've always been shielded from the highs and lows of recession or whatever. We've been pretty well shielded from all of that. And I think we still are. We seem to weather all of that pretty well.

VH: Was that even true in 2008?

JS: Yes, it was, actually. We saw, right after 9/11, we saw our Meals Tax go down a little bit, and then slowly it came back up. So that's kind of how we tell. Are people eating out less, more or less. That's one thing that you have control over. We kind of use that as a barometer. But generally speaking, we've been pretty well insulated from any of that.

VH: What's your favorite restaurant in town, then, speaking of food?

JS: Oh boy. I just—well, everyday I say, 'well, where do I want to eat tonight?' I don't cook. Cooking for myself is a problem. It's always carry-out or eating, you know...So it's just whatever. Plaka Grill, I went there the other night and got a Greek salad. I stopped by Panera today. I love Church Street pizza. If I'm in the mood for a really good meal, Maplewood Grill, Maple Av. I took one of my granddaughters there the other night before we went to Wolftrap. There's just any—I love Anitas...whatever you feel in the mood for, it's here. It's just a decision of what I'm hungry for.

CG: Speaking of Wolftrap, have you gone to many shows there?

JS: Oh, all the time. I just go. I love Wolftrap. It's so close. We're just like, 'We're so spoiled!' It's right here. Everybody else has to drive, but we're right here. We did go see the Maccado, and then we're going to go see, I'm going to go see, Straight No

Chaser. We're probably signed up for five or six shows this summer—at least! And Lyle Lovett, oh I love him. He's kind of the end-of-the-summer treat. And then I go out there and I'm like, 'Why didn't I get tickets for this one and this one and this one and this one. I'm a big fan.

CG: Do you have a favorite show that you've seen there?

JS: Bill Cosby is always great, always great. (V: Oh wow.) And then the musicals are always good, too. I don't know how many times I went to see Riverdance. It was just amazing. It's all good.

VH: Do you find a lot of people pour into Vienna when there are concerts going on in Wolftrap?

JS: Mh-mhm. And I'm always amazed. I always get my tickets the minute—'cause I'm a member, so I get my schedule like in the fall. So I sit down right now and I'm like 'this, this, and this', then as they come out, I get the preview to buy them a little early. Then people say, 'Well, why didn't we...' and I'm like, 'You gotta do it, you can't say 'we should have gotten' or 'we always say we're going to.' No, I'm the kind that once I make up my mind I'm going to do it, I do it. And then the tickets are bought and you're set. You get it on the calendar, and that's your summer treats.

VH: I noticed there's the Wolftrap Motel—hotel?—not to far. Do you remember when that went up?

JS: Oh, I think there was an old house or something there...so it's been quite a while. I think my daughter was still in high school when that went up. That would have been in eighty...'84 or something. So it's been at least that long. It's got quite a reputation.

VH: Does it?

JS: Yes.

CG: So, I've heard—you just said it, and many of my friends have said it—that people living in Vienna are spoiled.

JS: Yes.

CG: So, what do you think accounts for that? Just being close to everything?

JS: Well, we spoil them. Well, you know. It's the perfect place to live. How can it not be? We try to plan festivals and we try to take care of people that call up with a problem. Even if we have to go out of our way, or I'll ask the trash guys 'can you go back, please, and check why this wasn't done?' Or they've got a pothole and they've

got a wedding coming up at their house. We do extra things like that which personalize service, I think. So that, I think. And that's okay.

VH: You said at the beginning of the interview that you always had a dream of living in the city. Do you feel like Vienna has fulfilled that?

JS: Well, this is perfect because I go down, I go to DC quite frequently. I'm always looking at what's at the museums, I've got the SmartCard, I'm on the metro to, you know—mostly museums, I guess. But there's so much more to see down there, too. Even the monuments change now and then, there's new monuments. I go down frequently. I feel like I've got—and then there's the theaters down there, I go to those.

VH: Best of both worlds.

JS: Yeah. And then I can come home...

VH: Are there any other stories that you would like to share with us about living in Vienna?

JS: No, I can't, um...I mean, there's a lot of stories, of course. And they're all good. But you know, it's changed, but change happens. I get upset with people that—'oh, Vienna's not like it used to be.' I don't know. You have to be able to adapt with change. It's good. There's still good things in Vienna that are happening. So no, I can't really think of any stories that I might want to share.

CG: Where do you think Vienna's going from here?

JS: Well, we've got a Maple Avenue vision. We know we can't stay the same. We've heard from a lot of people who've lived in Vienna for a number of years, and their kids now have graduated or are out of house. They want to have a place to live, but maybe not with a lawn or so forth. We really don't have a lot of apartments or condos, not many apartments in Vienna. So we're looking at Maple Avenue, dressing it up with maybe some nice retail, office space, living above, more outdoor restaurants, trying to make it a little more pedestrian-friendly if possible, more trees. There's, we've hired a consulting team that's really very good. They're very realistic about what can be done. So they're not building you this Shangri-La; it's very realistic. 'This will never happen, so let's work with what will happen.' We're working with them, and I think it looks very good. I'm very excited about it. There's a lot of developers that look at Vienna very hungrily. They see the potential. We want to be ready to capitalize on that. We want to be the drivers of that.

CG: It seems like we're kind of mixing old and new here. Is there a plan to keep some of those historic items in Vienna?

JS: Well, the only historic item that I can think of is the Vienna Inn. And we've said, 'Well, you can't change the Vienna Inn.'

CG: But are you trying to keep the historic feel to it?

JS: Yes. I think the architecture, we're trying to keep. But we don't want it to look like a Disney town, either. So it's going to be a little different. But we have an Architectural Review Board that checks everything out and keeps it looking neat and tidy, not a lot of neon flashing lights, et cetera.

CG: Well, that was—we've covered everything we wanted to cover, but we just wanted to offer a final thank you for agreeing to do this.

JS: Sure, sure! Well, I love to talk about Vienna, as you can tell.

(continued on video footage)

JS: Well, I think too, people—we have these blocks, and if you've been around Vienna very much, they all used to be little houses on big lots. Now we're getting bigger houses. Well, the people in the little houses are like, 'What's happening to Vienna, it's changing!' But that's peoples' expectations of what they want in the house. We grew up, three kids, with one-and-a-half baths. No problem. But now, no way. Every kid has to have their own bathroom (Virginia: What!), their own private space, all this. The kids come and are like 'what is this room?' I say 'Well, it's my living room.' 'Well, where's your family room?' 'Well, this is it.' You know what I mean? They have dens, they have libraries. And that's fine. I totally agree with that. If that's what people want, and they can afford it, great. It's just that peoples' expectations are different now. You can't argue with that. I'm not going to. That's fine. So that's why we have these bigger houses going up. I guess the little houses people—I don't know whether they're jealous or what. But you know what, in two years, *their* house is going to be gone too and a bigger house'll be there. There were seventy---seventy-nine houses built last year in Vienna?

CG: Yeah. I live right off of Park Street, so there's been a lot of....We had quite a few going up.

JS: Oh yeah, sure. Everywhere you look. You can't drive down any street without going, 'Oh, what happened over there?' Something's happening. We must be doing something right to attract all these new people to Vienna. And builders. Well, good luck.