# Nancy McDonald

## A life of community activism

**Chapter 1 – 0:56**
**Introduction**

**Announcer:** Community volunteer Nancy McDonald's service has touched the soul of Tulsa and the state of Oklahoma. While her children were growing up in Tulsa, her interests turned to education. She became a leader in the voluntary integration of Tulsa Public Schools starting with Burrows Elementary, which led to the integration program at Carver Middle School and Booker T. Washington High School. Nancy was on the board of the Magic Empire Girl Scout Council when in 1977 three young scouts were murdered at Camp Scott. She talks about the lingering effects that remain to this day. In this interview, Nancy will tell you why she founded the Tulsa Chapter of PFLAG and then went on to serve on its national board. Our interview cites just a few of the many areas of our community Nancy has served, and for which she has received numerous honors. Nancy McDonald's interview is underwritten by our generous Founding Sponsors and heard on VoicesofOklahoma.com.

**Chapter 2 – 6:09**
**Early Education**

**John Erling:** Today's date is July 13th, 2010. State your full name please.
**Nancy McDonald:** Nancy McDonald.
**JE:** Your date of birth and your present age.
**NM:** I was born June 3rd, 1936 and I'm 74 years old.
**JE:** I might state that we are recording this interview at my home in south Tulsa, near 81st and Yale. Where were you born?
**NM:** I was born in Beemer, Nebraska.
**JE:** Let's talk about your mother, her name and her maiden name and where she grew up.

**NM:** My mom's maiden name is Shors. Her full name was Marguerite Shors. She was born in Beemer, Nebraska. She was a registered nurse. Then in later life, she went back to school and became a librarian. Her father's parents were immigrants from Czechoslovakia. They came to this country through Chicago and ultimately ended up in Iowa and then my grandfather moved to Beemer, Nebraska to run the furniture store and he was a mortician.

**JE:** Your father's name?

**NM:** My father's name is Floyd Miller. My dad graduated from high school. Interestingly enough, he was offered a scholarship to play football for the University of Nebraska, but his father had died when he was 13 and so he had to take over the family farm and he had to make a living to put his two younger sisters and his younger brother through school. He farmed all of his life. His father and mother were both German. His father's parents came from Australia through Canada to settle in Nebraska. My grandmother's parents came from Germany, through Canada and homesteaded in Nebraska when homestead was available in the 1860s.

**JE:** So they came in 18...

**NM:** In the 1860s to Nebraska.

**JE:** Brothers and sisters?

**NM:** I have one brother who is three years younger than I am and one sister who is six years younger than I am. My brother is an engineer. He has had an interesting career. He has worked on communications satellites and part of his design is on the communication satellites that track the ships around the world and his design of that satellite is in the Smithsonian (Museum).

**JE:** Wow. And what is his name?

**NM:** Howard J. Miller. He graduated from the University of Nebraska and then he graduated from Pepperdine in California. He was in the Navy and he now lives in Florida.

**JE:** Tell us about your education and the first school you attended. Did you go to elementary school there in Beemer?

**NM:** No, I attended a one-room country schoolhouse in District 19, north of Beemer. At the most we had 14 students. I had one other girl in my class all the way through until the 8th grade. In those days in Nebraska if you attended a country school you had to take an exam to make sure you were prepared to attend high school. I attended Beemer High School and graduated from there in 1953.

**JE:** Do you have any memories of that one-room schoolhouse? Was that a good experience and you felt you received a decent education from it?

**NM:** Well, when I look back at it...I started school when I was four because my mother said I needed to be in school because I was reading. My dad was president of the school

board and so he approved it. It was a great experience because you had individual attention. I can remember hurrying to get my lessons done so I could listen to the older children, as they had to go up in front of the classroom to share their lessons with the classroom teacher. So that was always fun, but I remember things like during recess we would always play. We had a coal stove in the schoolhouse and we had to pump water from an outside pump for water for the school. We had outdoor bathrooms and some of the kids rode their horses to school and they were put in a horse barn on the school grounds. Probably one of the things I enjoyed most was walking home with all of the neighborhood kids. We walked to school and home again every day.

**JE:** How many miles?

**NM:** It was a mile for me and it didn't make any difference whether it was raining or snowing or whatever–we walked to school.

**JE:** That was the precursor to open design school.

**NM:** You are exactly right because our school was all individualized. We learned from the other children. If we finished our lessons we had special projects we could do. I remember one of the most fun things to do was play in the sandbox. If we were studying the Indian villages we would build Indian villages and if we were studying Africa we would build African villages and all of the scenery and costumes. It was a great preparation I think for learning.

**JE:** It was an advantage to you, too, I think as a four or five year old to hear the older students.

**NM:** Yes.

**JE:** They were educating you while you were sitting there listening to them.

**NM:** Lots of reinforcement–always reinforcement.

**JE:** So then do you have good memories of high school in Beemer?

**NM:** Yes, I had 20 people in my high school class. I had a great time. It was three miles to school. I had a school permit when I was 13 to drive to school. That was very exciting. I could drive to and from school. That was the rule. I could not go downtown because school was between the house and downtown and I always wanted to go downtown and get a cherry Coke. But I knew if I did that, and my father found out, that would not be good. So I bought a 1935 Ford from my great-aunt for $135 to drive to school.

**JE:** And this would have been in the 1940s?

**NM:** 1948. I used the money I had earned from selling my 4H calf to get my car.

## Chapter 3 – 5:45
## World War II

**John Erling:** You were young, but do you have any memories of WWII breaking out in 1941 and through 1945, you would have been 8 or 9 years old?

**Nancy McDonald:** Oh, absolutely. My mother's younger brother...I remember he was valedictorian of his class and he gave a speech and the next morning we went down to the depot and he left for Omaha because he had volunteered to join the army. He was a tank driver with George Patton in the Battle of the Bulge. I remember such wonderful things about my mother and my grandmother knitting socks and scarves for him and my mother always baking for him and sending him cookies and chocolate. Getting letters from him was a really big occasion. My mother was really great. She had a map that she put up in the kitchen. So we would follow him as he crossed Europe. It's kind of interesting that you would ask this now, because he just died about six months ago. He always said that he became a physician because he was the first tank into Austria with George Patton's army. He upset his tank and his best buddy was killed. He became a physician because he said, "I didn't know what to do and I never wanted to be in that circumstance again." I was very close to Clayton. He would never talk about the war. My mother died about five years ago. As I was cleaning up the house, I found all of his letters which he had written to her which were pretty incredible and included what this young man who was 18 years old was really experiencing. Interestingly enough, I located one of his friends who had gone through training with him in California in the tanks. He went with him but he was in a different squadron. I located him in Texas. I just talked to him. He is in his late 80s and he wrote a book that I just finished reading. He talks about Clayton and he talks about how Clayton shared the stockings and scarves that my mother had knitted with him in the tanks because they were so cold. They slept in their tanks. They did everything in their tanks. It was sort of interesting how this all sort of fell into place. So I really do remember all of that. My dad's younger brother went to the war and he also volunteered and he was in the infantry and he went in on Omaha Beach. He went in through France and the liberation of France. He and Clayton ran into each other in France, which was really exciting for the family because they got to see each other and share chocolate bars. Then I had another uncle that was a prisoner of war. He was a bombardier and he was in one of the first planes to go down over Germany and he was a prisoner of war with the Germans for three years. I remember him coming home and how he looked. He is still alive and he is living in Atlanta, Georgia with his daughter. Then I had another uncle who was also in the war. My mother was just so good about

always sending all four of them cookies and knitting for them. My grandmother would roll bandages for the American Red Cross, so I really remember the war. I remember saving the tin foil from every package of gum. We would scrape off the tin foil until we would get a big ball of tin foil that we would take down to the railroad station to the depot where they were collecting them and they would send them in to Omaha. I don't know whatever happened to them. We now have a neighbor, Hans Hosterman who grew up on the border of Germany and Holland. He tells me that he can remember the American planes going over and dropping the tin foil that would interfere with the radar. Now, was that my tin foil that I collected as a little girl? I have no idea, but I like to think that maybe that it was. I remember the rationing. My Dad was always concerned about the tires on the tractor. Finally he took the tires off the tractor and went to the lugs because we didn't have any more ration stamps to buy tires for the tractors.

**JE:** And the lugs would have been metal wheels?

**NM:** Yes, metal wheels. We rationed shoes and we rationed sugar. My mother always worried about whether or not she was going to have enough sugar for canning in the summertime because that's what we did, we canned in the summer for the winter fruit and vegetables. So I remember saving stamps to purchase war bonds. We had a man who owned a grocery store in Beemer. If I got straight As in school, he would give me stamps for my savings bonds. I remember them coming home. I remember my family glued to the radio in the evening to pick up news about the war and where they were. My mother had yarn for each of the boys and where they were as they traveled across Europe so we could keep track of it. She was really great. It was very real to me.

## Chapter 4 – 6:19
## End of War

**John Erling:** Do you remember the President? Do you remember speeches on the radio?

**Nancy McDonald:** I don't remember. I remember my mom and dad thought Franklin Delano Roosevelt just hung the moon. They were just such big supporters of Roosevelt, so I remember his fireside chats. I remember listening to this radio that peaked.

**JE:** The cathedral radio?

**NM:** Right, and WOW from Omaha and KFAB were the two stations that we listened to on the radio. Sometimes there was a station from Norfolk but we couldn't get it sometimes. But I do remember actually sitting and listening to the radio. It wasn't something that was on in the background, you actually sat around the radio and listened to it.

**JE:** And looked at that cloth that was covering radio speaker?

**NM:** That's right. That's exactly right.

**JE:** Because it was always kind of a colorful design.

**NM:** Yes, brown and gold.

**JE:** And you would just sit and stare at that.

**NM:** Yes.

**JE:** When the war was over in 1945, do you remember that?

**NM:** Absolutely.

**JE:** Tell me about that.

**NM:** I remember, well, it was really an interesting day because I had finally gotten a bicycle. My mother had told me that I needed to take lunch to the men in the field and that I could ride my bicycle. They had just put gravel on the road. I was coming down a hill and I lost control and had an accident and I cut my leg. I remember getting up and I had all of this gravel in my leg and I thought, well, I'm not going to get home but I will walk to the neighbor's house and then the neighbor would call my mother to come and get me, which she did, and we went to Pender, Nebraska to the nearest physician because my mother said it needed stitches. Anyway, we had just returned home and my father said that we needed to listen to the news because there was an announcement that they had declared peace in Europe. I remember that I had this bandage on my knee where I had this big cut and mother thought that I should probably stay home, because she was a nurse and she wanted me to keep my foot elevated. I really wanted to go to town because the band was going to play and there was going to be a celebration in town. My dad said, "She can go." My dad said, "She's going to be okay. I'll carry her and we will go." So we went to town and we had a celebration and we had ice cream.

**JE:** I'm sure there were lots of flags and marching and all of that?

**NM:** Well, it was just a celebration in the early evening. It was like 6 o'clock and they pulled together the band for a concert in the town square. It was just families that were there, celebrating that it was over, and finally they (troops) were going to get to come home. It was a big concern at that time that the boys that were fighting in Europe were going to be sent to Japan and that they were not going to be able to come home. That was an underlying issue at that point in time.

**JE:** But in your case that did not happen?

**NM:** No, that was not the case. They came home.

**JE:** After high school, you went on to college?

**NM:** I went to the University of Omaha. I was interested in science and I have a bachelor's degree in science.

**JE:** What happens to you after that?

**NM:** I had an interesting career. I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do. Clayton, my uncle had just graduated from medical school. I was very interested in nursing. But I went to Clayton's graduation and I remember there were six medical technologists that graduated and it appeared to me that that was really a good career. I wasn't sure. So I was a freshman and I was living with my grandmother in Omaha at that point in time. She had sold the hardware store in Beemer and she had gone to Omaha to make a home for Clayton who was at Creighton doing his undergraduate work and then later went to the University of Nebraska Medical School. She ended up managing Phillips Department Store in south Omaha for Sam and Henry Greenberg. It was just cheaper for me to live with my grandmother. I was very close to my grandmother. I decided I was really interested in that, but I wasn't sure, so I thought I would try to get a job in a laboratory and see if I really like that, because I was just 16. There was an opening for a dishwasher in the laboratory in Lutheran Hospital on 24th Street. I applied and I got the job and I was a freshman and there was a wonderful medical technologist there by the name of Al Epstein there and four pathologists, Dr. McQuarter, Dr. McFadden, Dr. Coolidge and Dr. Simon. They were very excited about my work and they taught me a lot about the laboratory. I continued my studies at the University of Omaha and then I went on to take a year's training in medical technology from the University of Nebraska at the medical school campus. It was a 12-month program and you are certified as a registered medical technologist after you pass your exams. And then those four physicians hired me to run their new physician's laboratory in Omaha, which was developing satellite laboratories all across Nebraska. I went out and standardized these laboratories in the hospitals and they would send specimens into the physician's laboratory in Omaha. That was a great job and then I met Joe McDonald.

**JE:** What year was that?

**NM:** I met Joe when he was a freshman in medical school.

**JE:** Where?

**NM:** University of Nebraska. He grew up in Grand Island, Nebraska. He went to the University of Nebraska in Lincoln and then of course to the University of Nebraska Medical School. He was a freshman in medical school when I met him. We dated for four years. I always laugh. I was really smart. I was not about to put him through medical school, I didn't marry him until he was a senior and about to graduate.

**JE:** You're married in what year?

**NM:** We were married in 1957. Joe was in a program with the United States Air Force that would pay for his last two years of medical school and he would have to pay them back. He took his internship at San Bernardino Charity Hospital in San Bernardino, California. Which, interestingly enough was my first experience outside the state of Nebraska, which was some experience, believe me.

## Chapter 5 – 6:25
## Turkey

**Nancy McDonald:** I went out there and had a job teaching. I taught in the school of medical technology, which was affiliated with UCLA.

**John Erling:** Then, how do we track you through there as you were brought to Oklahoma?

**NM:** Well, at that point he had to pay back two years for his payment, plus the two years that all physicians had to serve. So we had four years ahead of us in the United States Air Force. Joe was a general medical officer and we were sent to a base in Turkey. I thought, my God I am going to the end of the world. Both of us looked at a map and we could not even find it on the map. But we decided this would be a great experience and we would just suck it up and we would go. Joe had to learn how to be a member of the Unites States Air Force so he had to go to Gunter Air Force Base to learn how to handle a gun and how to march. I went back to Nebraska. But during this time we also learned exactly what we needed to take to Turkey because there was no base housing and we were going to live on the economy. We needed to take things like a Kerosene stove and we took our own furniture. We had to take everything that we needed. We had a child by that time. She was six months old, so we needed to take everything we needed for her. We were going to take our car over. Joe left from the base in South Carolina and I returned to Nebraska for six weeks to wait for my papers. Joellen and I left for Turkey the first of November and it was an eye-opening experience for me. I remember Joe picked us up at the Istanbul airport and he said, "I have made arrangements and we are going to stay at the Istanbul Hilton Hotel for one night." Which was wonderful, but he said, "In the morning Nancy, we are going to have a real awakening to where we're going to live, but it's a nice house" he kept telling me. So we went down to Galata Bridge which if you have ever been in Galata Bridge, in Istanbul, it's absolutely incredible. It's jam-packed with people and ferries and fish. People would come up and touch us. Joellen was very blond and they would touch her blond hair. Of course, I didn't speak very much Turkish. I was just learning it. We took the ferry over to Yalova, which is about 30 miles from that base, which is where we were going to live, in Yalova. It was the rainy season. The Commanding Officer's wife met me at the ferry and she said, "Here you will need these." They were knee-high boots. (Laughter) And I thought oh my God where am I going? The house that we were going to live in was completely surrounded by water. It was a house built for the American physician. It was cold and damp and we had no furniture. Joe had two Army cots and we had an Aladdin stove. Joe had built a playpen for Joellen out of the packing boxes that had her crib in it. We lived that way

for about two months until our furniture arrived. The electricity was unbelievable. It was 220 watts but there was never enough electricity, so usually we had about 40 watts of electricity. Joe learned how to adjust it so that we could get about 110 watts. We had days without water. I learned to speak Turkish because you had to bargain for everything and I was paying too much money for eggs. So I learned to go to the market and the bazaar and bargain for eggs and cauliflower and broccoli. But for two kids in their 20s from rural Nebraska this was an incredible experience. We learned the language and we traveled a lot over Turkey and around Turkey. We went to Europe. Joe decided when he was a general medical officer he was going to go into anesthesia. We traveled all over Europe. We had rest and relaxation, which they gave to officers in Turkey. So we went to Greece and we bought a Mercedes and drove it back from Stuttgart to Turkey. We went to Tripoli. It was a great learning experience for both of us and we really came back I think much more aware of cultural differences and with an appreciation for that. It was wonderful. Then Joe came back to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio for his residency in anesthesia. From there, we were sent to MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida, which is where the F-4 pilots were that were going to Vietnam. That was really a difficult experience because those were the first pilots that went over. Many of their planes went down and their families were in Tampa with us. Many of them were on our block. Many of them were prisoners of war. That was really a difficult assignment.

**JE:** This is in the mid 1960s?

**NM:** Yes, 1963 and 1964. Joe, you see, then he had to pay back for his residency so we had the three years at MacDill Air Force Base. Then we had almost a little over 10 years in his career so he thought I might as well stick it out, but Vietnam was facing him. And we decided, he decided, I think I will see if I can resign my commission, not expecting it to go through and in 30 days we were out. We were very fortunate, because two of the men who were ahead of Joe in his residency at Lackland Air Force Base had also been able to resign their commissions and had come to Tulsa to practice at St. John and they asked Joe to come to Tulsa to practice with them.

**JE:** What were their names?

**NM:** Danny Christman and Harold Stratton, we followed them here and then ultimately Bruce Winger followed us. He followed Joe in his residency and then Bruce came and they had the Anesthesia Associates at St. John Hospital.

**JE:** So that would have been what year?

**NM:** 1965 is when we made the decision to come to Tulsa.

## Chapter 6 – 4:33
## Active in Tulsa

**John Erling:** So what do you do then when you come to Tulsa?

**Nancy McDonald:** By that time we had three children and I had not worked. I had done some work in some laboratories standardizing equipment and some teaching, but I was not working full-time. I just sort of dabbled in it. And then when I came to Tulsa we didn't know very many people. I didn't know anyone. I knew the two wives, Judy Stratton and Bonnie Christman. You know the Air Force I think is really a wonderful experience because it really is a family. There's a tremendous support system for the families particularly if you're overseas. There was a lot of camaraderie and a lot of sharing and a lot of traveling together. It was really a wonderful support system. So when I came to Tulsa, I was very lonely. I didn't really know what to do. I had three children. I was certainly a full-time mom, but I always felt that there was really more to being and participating in life. Not that I didn't love my kids and take great care of them. So I remember calling the Girl Scout Council in July because Joellen was going to go in to third grade at Patrick Henry and I wanted to be her Girl Scout Leader. I had done that in Florida with her. I remember the Girl Scout office just sort of laughing at me and saying, "Why are you calling in July? We don't recruit members until September." Well, okay to that. Then I was always sort of amused because then when I took my children to Patrick Henry there was a sign on the door that said "No Parents Allowed" And I thought, well this is really interesting, what's the deal here? No parents allowed? I was sort of really getting the message that this was a difficult community to engage in particularly if you were an outsider from Tulsa. What could I do? Not much. So that first year I just participated in PTA, which at that point in time in my opinion just raised money for the schools. There was no direct involvement or anything in the decision-making on how that money would be spent. That raised a lot of questions for me and I was not exactly thrilled with what was happening at Patrick Henry.

**JE:** What was it that did not thrill you?

**NM:** Well, of course, every parent thinks his or her child is a genius. Our second son–

**JE:** Why don't we name all of your children?

**NM:** I have four children. Joellen is our oldest. Paul, Jason, Morva and then we have a quasi-adopted son, which is another interesting story. But our second son was reading in first grade. If he finished a book the teacher would have him put his head down on the desk. He was a discipline problem. He ended up in the principal's office more than he was in the classroom. I was just astounded that they could not give this child another book to read, or

allow him to do some other kind of work. That he had to put his head down on the desk? I really struggled with that and Bruce Howell was just new in town with Gordon Cawelti. Bruce was from Iowa, and he was piloting this project called Open Space at Columbus Elementary School. I went out there and visited that school and met this dynamic principal and learned a little it about how you tested children for what they knew and for what they needed to be taught and reinforcement activities. I thought Jason would just blossom in that program, but the school system would not let me transfer to that school.

**JE:** Who could go to that school?

**NM:** It was just for those that lived in that neighborhood. There wasn't this whole thing of transferring between the neighborhood schools, so I could not get to that school unless we moved into that district. That really was no an option. We had just purchased our home in Patrick Henry district, so financially that was not an option for us. We were just sort of stuck.

**JE:** This would be in 1966?

**NM:** 1967 or 1968.

## Chapter 7 – 5:55
## School Integration

**Nancy McDonald:** At that same time, this is sort of crazy John, but if you follow me it was the same time that Tulsa Public Schools was facing integration– particularly, the desegregation of the four schools that were built for segregation.

**John Erling:** They were built for–

**NM:** They were built to segregate. They were built for segregation.

**JE:** Elementary schools?

**NM:** Right, elementary schools. The 10th Circuit Court had said you have to desegregate those schools. You have to desegregate all of your schools that were built for segregation. And the Tulsa Public Schools' response was that they would start with the elementary schools. There are the de facto schools and there are the de jure schools.

**JE:** What's the difference?

**NM:** The de jure schools are those that were built for segregation. Those four schools are Dunbar, Johnson, Woods and I'm drawing a blank on the fourth one.

**JE:** That's all right. It might come to you.

**NM:** The other schools were Emerson, Burroughs, Frost, Hawthorne and Whitman. Those schools were segregated because the Board of Education had a policy that enabled the

white student that as soon as they were in a minority, they could transfer out. So those children in those five schools who were white could transfer out immediately when it tipped black. The Board of Education was held responsible for segregating those five schools. So at that point in time there was incredible hate in this city. I mean–I went to the school board meeting just because I was an interested patron in what was happening and what were the dynamics. This was a completely new experience for me. I was amazed at how people would yell at each other and say such derogatory things to each other. Petitions were flying around about how you are not going to bus our children. That was just an amazing experience for me. I was sort of a bystander on that whole thing.

**JE:** That was the clash between blacks and whites, the yelling at each other.

**NM:** Yes, right, right. So then the School Board decided that they would pair the schools so Johnson was paired with Lowell. Springdale and Celia Clinton were paired with Woods. That worked great for anybody else who lived outside of that district and in those school districts then you experienced this incredible white flight that went out east. It worked for those people who could not move out. The whites that were in those attendance zones were caught and they couldn't afford to move out. But, there was a small group of people that was really beginning to really look at Bruce Howell's Open Design and there were some conversations...Judy Winger who was a good friend of mine. Her children were at Patrick Henry and she was really disgruntled with Patrick Henry also. She said, "Well let's go to this meeting Nancy and let's see what they are talking about. Let's see if maybe we can be a part of that and have access to that Open Space school." It was at that point that there was some conversation about maybe this very small group of white people could desegregate a school voluntarily, but we wanted some bargaining chips. We wanted that Open Space curriculum. I wanted parent involvement and for parents to have the opportunity to go into their children's classroom and to learn about what was happening in that classroom and maybe to help the teacher. I thought it was a shame that schools were not accessing what I saw as some wonderful opportunities with Gilcrease Museum and Philbrook and the Tulsa Zoo, things that I never had access to growing up. Everything that I read, it appeared to me would really enhance children's learning. Then another bargaining chip was we wanted input into the faculty selection. We approached the School Board and we were just sort of laughed out of the room except for Eugene Harris, who was the African-American on the Board of Education and was very supportive of this. Judy and I had worked with Elmer Jenkins who was the assistant principal at Patrick Henry. He was African-American and he was part of the faculty desegregation of Tulsa Public Schools where they sent the blacks south and whites north, the faculty. Elmer had just been named principal at Burroughs. Judy and I went up to talk to him about this idea. Elmer said, "I think it's a great idea. If you think

you can get the Board of Education to do that we will do it here at Burroughs." So we talked to Eugene Harris and Bruce Howell. Bruce believed in us and he said, "I think it's a great idea, but you have to give me some time." What we did is we went...interestingly enough we always had to be in the majority, so we went 60/40, sixty percent white and 40 percent black. The 40 percent black would be from the Burroughs, what we called the big school. Bruce said, "We will move in some prefabs onto the Burroughs playground and I will handpick the teachers to do this." That was the beginning. Ray Conard ultimately came along and supported it. Bob Beckstrom supported it, and Bob Riggs. So we had the four votes. Opal Carlson never supported it.

## Chapter 8 – 5:15
## Integration Continued

**John Erling:** Let's stage your model again here now that we are really into this and also maybe briefly describe Open Space and what it means.

**Nancy McDonald:** It was Open Space Continuous Progress, so children were tested. What did they know? What needed to be taught and what needed reinforcement? So they were continuously learning and moving through. It's a lot of work for teachers. You recognize that because it's individualized education for each child. Not all children learn the same. Not all children are on the same page at the same time. There are certainly groups of children that need to be taught the same skills. It's very flexible. It has a lot of movement to it. So children are not trapped. If they already know something, they don't have to learn it again. But if they need to practice it or relearn it, they maybe need another teaching strategy to introduce that. It just works beautifully. It is enriched with a lot of the arts and field trips. The Junior League had a project using field trips finally. It was just a curriculum that had a lot of enrichment and enhancement but was also very basic skills oriented because kids had to know that before they could move on. I always explained it to parents, as this foundation is very firm. There are no wobbly blocks in your child's education because teachers are professional and they know what kids know and they know what kids need to learn, and if they are given help, they can manage this kind of school.

**JE:** This was a concept that Bruce Howell brought to Tulsa?

**NM:** Right.

**JE:** I have interviewed Bruce Howell, which can be heard elsewhere here on VoicesofOklahoma.com and he addresses exactly what Nancy is talking about. So then

at Burroughs Elementary we introduce Open Space and voluntary integration all at the same time?

**NM:** Absolutely, both at the same time and we introduced parent volunteers in the classroom and the access to field trips and enhancement of our wonderful community resources in Tulsa.

**JE:** Again, the year?

**NM:** That started in 1969.

**JE:** Then you opened the doors and what happens?

**NM:** Well, what happened and that was a great experience, we had national television here because who had heard of people volunteering to send their kids to an all-black school? So, NBC was here and CBS and ABC. When our kids got off of Bus 37, 38 and 39, we had media from England here to watch this happen. Now, what was very interesting was the prefabs were not ready for our children and the teachers were not ready for our children. So our children actually went to the big school, the regular Burroughs school. They had no desks and no books and our children sat on the floor for two months. I remember going to Bruce Howell and saying, "I can't hold these families together any more. If you really want this program to go, those prefabs have to open up Monday morning."

**JE:** Okay, so there was lots of parent feedback.

**NM:** Yes, it was tough. These people really wanted this to go, but here we are and our kids were really kind of suffering from this. The teachers in the traditional Burroughs school were not prepared for this. It was not a good beginning, but parents really believed in it and really wanted it. If I reflect on this, the things that made this so successful is that we had community leader's children. Joe Williams' children were there, George Kaiser's children were there, Bill Doenges' children were there. We had a lot of physicians' kids. It was a good group of people who really cared about this city and cared about education and cared about children. Some changes had to happen. At the same time, the school system had closed Carver and had bused out 1,200 black youngsters three weeks before school was going to open that year.

**JE:** Why did they close Carver?

**NM:** Carver was forced to close because it was an all-black school and Judge Doughtery said that we had to desegregate the school and the school system had not moved on it and they closed it.

**JE:** So where did those children go?

**NM:** Those children went involuntarily to some south-side schools, Edison, Wilson, Whitney and Madison–forced in.

**JE:** So that was forced busing?

**NM:** Right. That was forced busing. That was going parallel with what we were experiencing which was a great experience in integration, black and white families working together, a good faculty, everything that we wanted to have happen for our children. Our children were happy and having a great learning experience.

**JE:** The little red school house then–is that?

**NM:** That is Burroughs Middle School. We called it Burroughs Middle School and that was the beginning of the voluntary integration.

## Chapter 9 – 6:10
## Carver Opens

**John Erling:** So move is along in that year then.

**Nancy McDonald:** Well, our kids were having a great experience and we had a long waiting list of black and white families who wanted that experience for their children. So, Bruce Howell called Judy Winger and myself in and he said, "Do you think we could reopen Carver?" Judy and I both had sixth graders that had returned to Edison. It was not a good experience. Our boys were miserable. So Judy said, "Let's tackle this Nancy." We began to talk to other parents at Burroughs about the possibility of reopening Carver. At that point in time we met a gentleman named Julius Pegues who was very interested in reopening Carver. And Julius was very interested in getting his children into Burroughs Middle School because he was living in Central at that time, which was outside of Tulsa Public Schools. There were never enough people interested in the black community in reopening Carver. So Bruce saw it as an opportunity to bring his work in middle schools to Tulsa. He had written his dissertation on middle schools and emerging adolescence and he was eager to try this. We had the utmost confidence and respect for his work and it seemed to us like a good idea. We presented it to the School Board, and then, this is kind of interesting, they always played these kinds of games with us. They said, "Well, before we will even consider reopening it, you'll have to have 250 students, 150 white and 100 black. Carver, the facility was a mess. It had been vacant for two years. I remember Bill Doenges saying, "If we could reopen this school and make it attractive to both black and white, we will have performed a miracle." Bill Doenges headed the curriculum committee because Bruce had to educate us about what was this middle school concept. Is this really something that we wanted for our kids? Judy and I were responsible for recruiting the parents. Judy was going to head this effort and I was going to work with Bruce on faculty selection. But in the meantime, we had a wonderful mayor in Tulsa, mayor Bob LaFortune, who was also very interested in this project. It was

because of Bob LaFortune and his commitment to the model cities project that we had enough money to renovate Carver. The Tulsa Public Schools did not put one cent into the renovation of Carver as a middle school, nor did they fund any of the activities or curriculum development or recruitment. That was money that was raised independently outside of Tulsa Public Schools.

**JE:** So, the School Board at that time in the late 1960s–

**NM:** It was the early 1970s.

**JE:** ...were dragged begrudgingly into integration?

**NM:** Absolutely with the exception of Eugene Harris. And then we had a new member on the Board who defeated Opal Carlson, Hobart Sanders who was an M.D. and very progressive and very supportive of Bruce Howell. At that point, Gordon Cawelti, who was not exactly on board with all of this...

**JE:** And he was the superintendent?

**NM:** Yes, he was the superintendent.

**JE:** Bruce Howell at the time was the associate superintendent?

**NM:** Right.

**JE:** But Gordon Cawelti obviously endorsed Bruce Howell and his innovative ideas and couldn't say no to him.

**NM:** That's exactly right. Gordon sort of always gave us lip service I always felt. That was hard because we just had a concept. We did not have a building. We did not have a faculty. We had Bruce Howell talking about middle school concepts. It was hard to recruit 150 white kids to go to this school. It was going to be a selection process for blacks and whites. We did things like rallies. I mean we put our kids out front. I never will forget we had a bonfire at the Second Presbyterian Church. I remember our little kids up there standing on boxes talking about what a great experience Burroughs Middle School was. When we had 250 people signed up then the Board of Education said, "Okay, we will reopen Carver."

**JE:** So the children really helped you in recruiting?

**NM:** Oh yeah the kids were great. Once we got Burroughs Middle School going the kids recruited. The kids recruited for Carver and for Booker T. Washington. All we did was provide those opportunities and make those arrangements for them.

**JE:** So you observed this mixed population, was there racial tension? Did that rear its head?

**NM:** Not really John. The families that were engaged were there for a common reason. They wanted this to work. They wanted this experience for their children. They believed in what happened. I think in the black community there was always some resentment. But I think for the most part they recognized the alternative, because at Carver, the school had been closed. They knew that that certainly was looming over their heads and was a

possibility. And this was reopening Carver and really gaining some national recognition. I had an interesting experience with Carver and I will never forget it and I tell this story often to people. Carver had not had a good reputation. There were a lot of discipline problems at Carver before they closed and it was always in the paper, so that presented a lot of anxiety to recruit people to go to Carver. I remember at one point saying, "Well, maybe we need to change the name of Carver." Little did I know, this elderly black gentleman came up to me shaking his finger at me and he said, "Mrs. McDonald, I don't want you to ever, ever say that again." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Because, I was a little boy and George Washington Carver came to Tulsa to dedicate this school. I stood on the steps and held the umbrella over his head as he dedicated our school." So that was it. There was no conversation after that about changing the name.

## Chapter 10 – 6:00
## Booker T. Washington

**Nancy McDonald:** About February of 1971, Judge Dougherty said to the Board of Education, "You desegregate Booker T. Washington by 1973."

**John Erling:** Did you bring the Open Space model to Carver?

**NM:** Yes. Continuous Progress is an extension of Bruce's middle school concept.

**JE:** Okay.

**NM:** So that just moved right into Carver and that was a great experience.

**JE:** So the Judge says you must integrate Booker T. Washington?

**NM:** Right. Then the Board of Education had the plans for the desegregation of Booker T. Washington, which are very interesting. I didn't know these plans. One plan was they would have Booker T., Central and Edison. If you were in the tenth grade you would go to Booker T. and if you were in the eleventh grade you would go to Edison and in the twelfth grade you would go to Central. Well, that was great for everybody that lived outside of that district, so that didn't work. Then they had a plan where they would draw little pockets around the city, but you would never know where those little pockets would be. If you lived in that pocket you were sentenced to Booker T. Washington for one semester, so that was continuously changing. That created too much anxiety in the community. Another plan was they would have a lottery. And that was too risky and people didn't like that. So, Bruce Howell said, "Do you think we can do this voluntarily?" And he asked me if I would chair the recruitment. He told me about H.J. Green. He was

going to name H.J. Green as the principal. He had talked to H.J. and Granville Smith about changing positions at Hale and Booker T. And H.J. had agreed and he wanted me to meet him. So, working with Bruce Howell and H.J., that curriculum was designed. H.J. went around to all of the nine high schools and talked to kids about what would they like to have happen in their high schools. And we had everything from every language to basket weaving to sophisticated advanced courses. Had we been able to open Booker T. the next day we would have had our enrollment. But the clench was those parents had to sign off on that. And so when those applications were taken home we had nine returned and we had 600 white kids that we needed. The other concern was the black community was really concerned about what was happening to their black students that attended Booker T. There were about 434 black kids that were attending Booker T. at that time. It was pretty obvious that we were going to need more black kids and how were we going to handle that? We had some white kids that were trapped in the old Booker T. Washington attendance zone but had been allowed to transfer out. So how were we going to deal with that? There were a lot of issues around this whole attendance zone and certainly the black community. Julius Pegues was absolutely fabulous to work with. I think Julius recognized that it had to be desegregated and it was the law of the land. How it was going to look, you know there was certainly and I understand and appreciate that there was a lot of anxiety about what was really going to happen to Booker T. Could we preserve the incredible history of that school as the black institution it was? Trying to really be sensitive to that and respond to those questions. Those were some difficult and perhaps fragile times in human relations.

**JE:** Because again the population number of whites to blacks would have been?

**NM:** 60/40. Now let me tell you the night that the Board of Education elected to go with the volunteer plan, Julius Pegues got up and said, "We are not going to do this 60/40. We are going to do this 50/50 all of the way, and that means Carver and that means Burroughs Middle School." And so I responded and I said, "Yes, that's the way we will do it."

**JE:** Well didn't that just feel naturally right?

**NM:** Absolutely right. Why we had never ever thought of that is beyond my wildest imagination. That was so right. That was the right thing to do and it just sort of diminished a lot of fears. The task was then that we were going to have a school of 1,200. We had to have 600 whites and 600 blacks. Julius was going to be in charge of getting the 600 blacks and I was going to be in charge of getting the 600 whites and we were on our way. He had a much easier time than I did and he held all of the applications. I kept saying, "Where are the black applications?" We didn't have any. He never, ever, ever showed those black applications until I had the 600 whites and then he matched them. (Laughter)

**JE:** So you were wondering how successful he was?

**NM:** Yes! I was wondering how successful he was and he said, "Don't worry!"

**JE:** Booker T. was in the black area–

**NM:** Yes, it was built for segregation.

**JE:** Right.

**NM:** Black children were bused from South Haven, which is in southwest Tulsa, in a black neighborhood. The black children were bused past Webster and past Central to Booker T., and Booker T. was funded by Tulsa County, never by Tulsa Public Schools.

**JE:** Booker T. was funded by Tulsa County?

**NM:** Yes, by Tulsa County, interesting. It was a school built for segregation, as was Carver. So they were County schools they were not part of Tulsa Public Schools.

**JE:** But the School Board had jurisdiction over that school?

**NM:** Right and I really don't know the history of that, but that was another lawsuit apparently and the school system then moved Booker T. and Carver then into Tulsa Public Schools.

## Chapter 11 – 5:16
## Booker T. Washington Opens

**John Erling:** In your recruitment then of whites, that was difficult, or semi-difficult, or more difficult than you thought?

**Nancy McDonald:** Well, I mean you had to convince people first of all, that it was safe. That was their one question, are my children going to be safe? They were really interested in this curriculum. Interesting enough, we had all of the liberal families and then we had the conservative families who felt that it was their duty, so it was an interesting mix. They thought it was their duty to be part of this.

**JE:** I'm trying to figure that out.

**NM:** Well, I think that this was sort of a calling. They wanted to live out their respect for fellow human beings. We had a lot of that conservative, fundamental, I need to be a part of this, this is my calling, this is what Jesus is expecting me to do, I am going to be a part of that. So we had an interesting mix of kids, which sometimes can be a little challenging. So how did we recruit? It was tough. But I finally came upon the model that the community meetings were not working. This had to be done in very small groups of people. If I had one parent, if you volunteered to go to Booker T., I would ask you to host a coffee and invite your friends. And so that summer, H.J. Green and I attended 70 neighborhood meetings to recruit. It came about the middle of August and I was still short about 167 white kids.

**JE:** Wow.

**NM:** I was working with these people and I'm thinking how am I going to get these kids? Joe Williams, who funded most of this, came up with the idea that we would develop a brochure. I remember distinctly, we would send it to 22,542 kids that attended Tulsa public high schools. It was a great brochure. Our logo was "167 men and women needed". We had volunteers put that newsletter together. We mailed it under All Souls Unitarian Church stamp because that would save us money. So it was a morning in August and Pat Bradley and I were going to take down the mailing to the bulk rate mailing station. I unloaded them all and took them in there. This man in charge looked at them and said, "This doesn't look like a church mailing to me. I am not going to approve this." I thought wow, what do we do now? I asked to see his supervisor and a supervisor walked through the door, an African-American. He looked at it and he said, "It looks like a church mailing to me." And he let it go and that's how we got the mailing done that day.

**JE:** I might mention here that you mentioned Joe Williams, he is Joe Williams of the Williams Companies.

**NM:** Right.

**JE:** So, you sent out these brochures?

**NM:** We sent out these brochures and we were successful. We had people apply. It was right before school started. We had 600 whites and 600 blacks and we went before the Board of Education and said, "We have completed this. It's ready to go." And so we were going to open school in September with this incredible faculty and these 1,200 kids and a school that had some renovation done to accommodate some of the curriculum. We had national publicity. I remember standing with H.J. the morning of the school opening and wondering if the kids would actually get on the bus and come, but they did. It was a great experience.

**JE:** So you had national media standing out there watching?

**NM:** Yes, because this had never happened–this voluntary integration as a whole new thing in the United States.

**JE:** The curriculum, you were offering subject matters there that were not available anywhere else in Tulsa?

**NM:** That's right. We offered Russian and Chinese languages and Latin was being reinstituted and Advance Placement courses, all kinds of science courses, Biology, human anatomy, zoology, botany, expanded art courses, music and instrumental music. We had an orchestra and a band. Of course we had a great football team and we even had a white player. The cheerleading squad was being integrated. It was just all falling into place. The curriculum, those incredible teachers at Booker T. Washington under the leadership of H.J. Green and Larry Miller and Ed Lacey, it just all came together in an incredible

school to demonstrate that black and white kids could go to school together if it was an environment that cared about them and wanted them to be successful. It didn't make any difference what color they were. And it worked.

**JE:** I probably shouldn't single out one name, but in talking to Bruce Howell he mentioned Oral Roberts' son Ronnie Roberts who was so adept at languages and he was recruited?

**NM:** He was recruited. He was home from China visiting his family and as I understand it he was thinking about returning home. And H.J. approached him about the possibility of him teaching Chinese at Booker T. He did an incredible job of teaching Chinese and taught there for about three and a half years.

## Chapter 12 – 5:09
## Alternate-forced Busing

**John Erling:** That's Booker T. then finishing in 1974 or about in there?

**Nancy McDonald:** Right, 1974. It was interesting from my perspective at that point then the school system thought it was over. They thought since they had these three schools in place that it would work, and they didn't have to do anything. And I kept saying to them, "No, there's a whole new group of people out there who don't know about the schools and they will not volunteer." They almost lost it the second year. Bruce Howell called me in 1974 and he said, "You are going to have to come back and help us because we don't any white applications." Using the same model, I started again just with small groups of parents. Parents had to come together and they had to hear from other parents. You see, at that point we had other parents and students who had experienced that. So recruiting became sort of a pattern that we could follow in the subsequent years of putting this together and I maintained that as long as I worked for Tulsa Public Schools. That we really had to provide parents the opportunity to experience that. They had to come to Booker T. and see the school and know that their children would be safe. That was always the question that came up time and time and time again. They had to be reassured that this was a program that would work for their child. Then in 1974, Bruce Howell said, "Why don't you come and work for the school system?" He wanted me to do a couple of things. He wanted me to maintain the magnet programs as we now then had that fancy term magnet. We did not have that in 1974. He could see that they were going to have to desegregate the additional five de facto schools. He also said that he wanted me to develop the volunteer program as I had developed it at Burroughs Middle School where we had reopened the school to parents and parents could be engaged

in classroom instruction and support for the classroom teacher. Those were my three things that he asked me to do. I am not a teacher. I never said I was a teacher.

**JE:** It had to give you tremendous satisfaction to work with those schools, but then it culminates in Booker T.

**NM:** Right, it was a huge success but it took so many people to make it successful. I was just fortunate enough to be at the right place at the right time to lead it from a parent's perspective. But it was a tremendous commitment from this total community to make this program work, to offer an alternative to forced busing. Everyone was really a winner in this situation. The black community, of course, I think in some ways felt like in many ways they had lost some of their identity. I feel badly about that and I have worked hard to try to always make sure that we talk about Booker T. as a wonderful school from the very beginning and that this enhanced what children experienced in that school. But we were responding to a law that we needed to respond to as a community. This was an alternative and I believe was best for all children, black and white.

**JE:** In 1974 and 1975 this takes off, and here we are living in 2010. What is your assessment now of Booker T. Washington today?

**NM:** It continues to be a really good school. It was just listed again as one of the top 100 schools in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. I think the real benefit is to talk to children who have experienced it. It never fails that I have the opportunity to talk to young people who have experienced that and they have no idea who I am. I will ask them about their experience and they will tell me, for the most part, black and white, what a great experience that was. How they learned to get along with all people and all cultures. How I made it so much easier for them when they went to college when they would perhaps have a roommate that was of a different culture, it wasn't a big deal. When they were in the workplace, they said that their experiences at Booker T. prepared them for the workplace in getting along with all different kinds of people. It didn't mean race. It means sexual orientation, religion and national origin. That's what it's all about.

**JE:** So, while we had this model working in these schools, what's happening to the rest of Tulsa because there are other schools? Did this voluntary plan continue, or were they finally forced? There was Central wasn't there?

**NM:** There was Central High School, but Central had a natural integration because all of a sudden the black families who lived outside of the old Booker T. Washington High School, they had integrated into the neighborhoods and so they could go to Central and that was really moving toward integration in the 1960s, the middle 1960s particularly.

## Chapter 13 – 6:00
## Central High Riot

**Nancy McDonald:** We had a riot at Central High School in 1969. The reason I know this is because our "adopted son" was at Central High School.

**John Erling:** And his name was?

**NM:** Zachary Jones.

**JE:** Zachary Jones.

**NM:** But his name at that point in time was Clark Jones. Clark was a resident of the Tulsa Boys' Home. When I first came to Tulsa and really was seeking opportunities to work in this community I was asked to be a member of the junior association of Tulsa Boys' Home. At that time in May of 1967, Pop Singleton and Jerry Dillon came into the junior association and said the federal government is going to force us to integrate and so we might as well take this youngster who is black into the home. This youngster was at Children's Medical Center–he was placed there by the Department of Human Services, and so as a child he had very limited language skills. He was brought to Tulsa Boys' Home by the Police Department. So I a counselor at the home said to me, "Why don't you see if you can work with this youngster and get him to talk?" And so I did. My children and I would spend some time with him and we would read books. This little kid he was just 11 at that time grew and grew and grew until he was 6'8". At that time he really did not identify with his parents or with his mother. So he would spend weekends with us, and ultimately holidays. Eddie Sutton was leaving Central High School and had come to the Boys' Home and had said, "You ought to keep your eye on this guy. He's got some talent." Clark then decided, well we decided that he was ready for Central High School because he was not prepared to attend any other school. He was playing basketball with the Boys' Home basketball team. Joe Howard was the coach at Central and he saw something in Clark and really worked with him. I tutored Clark all the way through high school and Ken Hayes recruited him for TU. We knew that he could not make it academically through TU. So, working with Ken Hayes he went to Crowder Junior College in Missouri. He blossomed and did really well and returned to the University of Tulsa as a junior. He came to live with us permanently when he was no longer the Boys' Home. He grew up in our family and our kids recognized him as a brother and he recognizes our kids as his siblings. He calls me mom any calls Joe dad and he is just part of our family. He was starting at TU. He was the center for Tulsa University's basketball team. His mother came back on the scene. She was in Seattle. He learned that his real name was Zachary. So he came home from picture day and he said, "I decided I'm going to use my real name."

He wanted to go see his mother in Seattle and we sent him up there. And that was okay, he returned the next day. Zach was being recruited by the NBA but he was not going to make it. So he tried out for Athletes in Action and their team was full, but he was picked up by France. He went to France on a trial basis and was extremely successful. I remember saying to him, "Take advantage of everything they offer you, like language classes." And he is fluent in French and he stayed in France. He is now 55. He played basketball until he was 47 in France and he is coaching now. He married a French girl and he has two children. We call him Little Jason. Little Jason is 6'8" and is the starting center for Northeastern University in Tahlequah. He was named an All-American. And Sarah Joellen is on the rowing team for Central State. She's a junior and she has straight A's and we are very proud of her work. So that's my connection with Zach Jones. That's how I know about Central High School and the riot because Larry Alexander and Roy Lewis were there and they knew I tutored him and they called me and said, "You need to come down here because he is in the middle of the street trying to negotiate between the white and the black kids."

**JE:** Bring us into that scene then. What was going on? Why were they negotiating?

**NM:** Well, they were upset. Black and white kids were upset with one another and they were fighting and they had lined up on either side of the street and I guess that was on Cincinnati. They were going to fight. They were rioting. Clark was out there in the middle trying to stop this. And Mr. Lewis said, "You've got to get him out of here Nancy. This is not safe."

**JE:** So you went down there?

**NM:** So I went down there and I said, "Clark, come on!" Well, I said, "Clark this is not good. You have got to let the police handle this."

**JE:** Did the tension begin to reduce then?

**NM:** Yes, the tension reduced and things just sort of went back to normal. I don't remember. I just remember taking him out of there and taking him home because it was not a good situation.

**JE:** Yes.

**NM:** So I know about Central High School and some of the challenges that they have. Webster did not seem to have that challenge. The challenge from South Haven, those children went to Webster eventually. They did not seem to have those challenges. You know there certainly were some issues as some of the black youngsters chose to stay at Edison High School and Hale and Rogers. But for the most part, the integration, even though we had some involuntary, worked for the most part. But it took a lot of people, incredible teachers and administrators, just working on it all the time.

## Chapter 14 – 8:38
## President Bush & Barbara

**John Erling:** You developed the school volunteer program?

**Nancy McDonald:** That's right.

**JE:** So here is Miss Volunteer herself getting a program started, which seems natural.

**NM:** Interesting enough, that was a national movement. It was really instigated by the Ford Foundation. The Ford Foundation had some grants available and Bruce Howell was always on top of all of this. He knew that that was some money to develop a volunteer program. We had had that program at Burroughs and so he felt that we could get some funding for developing a comprehensive school volunteer program. He sent me to the training program in Dade County, Florida to learn about how to do that and to bring some organization to that whole plan, of developing a school volunteer program. That's what I did.

**JE:** And you also were involved in the Adopt-a-School Program now known as Partners in Education?

**NM:** That's right. After Bruce Howell had introduced me to these ten schools that were funded by the Ford Foundation for developing comprehensive school volunteer programs, there was a national program that grew out of that, The National School Volunteer Program, and I was active on that board of directors. At the same time President Reagan was looking for the engagement of corporate America in education and he did White House initiatives on education. I participated in that with President Reagan and the 10 school volunteer coordinators. Out of that and the teachers college in New York grew this whole Adopt A School Program. The Adopt A School Program was really piloted in Memphis and Dallas. The White House initiatives with President Reagan after his term was over merged with The National School Volunteer Program under President Bush, the first President Bush and the Points of Light Foundation and became Partners in Education and I served on their national board for a number of years.

**JE:** And President Bush honored you as one of the outstanding coordinators of community involvement in the public schools, so that was a nice experience.

**NM:** It was a great experience to have tea with President and Mrs. Bush. There were 14 of us at the White House. I remember, it would not happen today, but Mrs. Bush saying to us, "If you would just like to walk around the White House, just feel free to go anyplace and look at anything you want to do." And I did. I went immediately to the China Room. I wanted to see that. I remember being in the China Room of the White House all by myself just admiring the china and the crystal and all of the presidents in their display. It was a great experience.

**JE:** President Bush number one is whom you are talking about.

**NM:** Right.

**JE:** And it was Barbara who said, "Just wander around."?

**NM:** Right. Barbara Bush was very supportive of literacy in the schools. She really promoted that. She was a joy to work with and I have tremendous respect and admiration for Barbara.

**JE:** The president, what was it like to be around him and his spirit?

**NM:** He was funny. He has a real sense of humor. You know, I didn't ever see him other than with Mrs. Bush and his graciousness in welcoming us to the White House. And then he and Mrs. Bush would appear at the national meetings of Partners in Education.

**JE:** You also worked on the Early Childhood initiative for the state of Oklahoma. Tell us about how that experience came about.

**NM:** It was always interesting to me John. There were a couple things that really sparked my interest in early childhood development. When I first came to town I met two women, Erma Henson and Carole Wyatt who were very much involved in the Junior League and they were working in the South Haven Day Care Center. They invited me to go out and just see what they were doing. They were beginning to really focus on the standards for daycare in this state and as you know, Oklahoma has incredible standards for childcare. They were developing a task force to research what needed to be put in place for daycare standards. So, I was fortunate enough to be a part of that group and I really then began to be much more aware of the incredible learning opportunities that daycare and preschool provided for young children. Many of the children that I saw in the daycare centers were not having the same experience that my children had in private preschools. It just appeared to me that these children were being penalized, not intentionally. There was just a lack of knowledge about what these children could do and learn in a quality preschool daycare environment. I was always really interested in what was happening, and I could see in the schools as I started working in the schools with Sandra Nicholson, some of our children were coming out of the early childhood development center, which was another one of Bruce Howell's projects, so well prepared and so in tune with learning and so excited about learning. They may be seated right next to a child that never had anything. It just always made such an impact on me about, why are we doing this? We are really penalizing young children. Poverty, lack of experience on the part of young parents, lack of experience on the part of daycare workers and quality training for them. Most daycare workers at that time were not provided opportunities for training or learning. Out of that grew the Friends of Daycare and Erma Henson and Carol really worked on that. We worked with the state department to really begin to enhance and change the standards for daycare in this state and have had a number of studies since

that moved us and I think we are now in the top four in the nation with our daycare standards. Martin Fate who was then president of PSO was going to become president of the Chamber of Commerce and he was really looking for a project and his wife, Ruth Ann Fate is very much engaged in early childhood development and she was one of the founders of Bethany Daycare Center. So I knew of Martin's interest in early childhood development and I had just been out at an elementary school in north Tulsa. The teacher had requested some volunteer help and I went out to try and figure out what we needed to do. She said, "I just want you to know Nancy that the majority of my children do not know their names or their colors, let alone anything to do with numbers." So I thought, well, here's an opportunity, I am going to take Martin out there. So he went out to this school with me and I remember him walking away from that experience and him saying and I am paraphrasing...my gosh, these are going to be my workers for PSO. These are going to be our customers. We have got to do something about this. Martin was really interested in this and he is the one that just got the ball rolling in early childhood development. And so then at that point there were lots of things that were coming together, the Chamber and the Community Service Council was really looking at early childhood development. George Kaiser was looking at early childhood development. We had been moving through doing some work with the legislature on Children's First. I'd had this grandiose idea that as we were working in child abuse and what the state was going to do in child abuse that if we could just put children first in everything that we did in this state it would just be wonderful. But unfortunately, when we introduced that child abuse program, under the umbrella of what I thought would be Children's First, the legislators identified it immediately with child abuse. So the child abuse program became known as Children's First. So when we came in with the early childhood development initiative, initially I thought it would be a part of the Children's First umbrella. But it had to take on a life of its own as early childhood development in our four-year-old program in the state of Oklahoma. Ultimately, now, we have three-year-old programs. I didn't quite get it under the children's umbrella, but Children's First is still funded by the state legislature and it's an incredible program to identify parents who are at risk for abusing their children. It's a program done through the health departments with nurses. It's very successful. It's been evaluated and it is funded totally by the legislature.

## Chapter 15 – 6:50
## Girl Scout Murders

**John Erling:** You were on the Council of the Magic Empire of Girl Scouts on June 13, 1977, which was the date of the Oklahoma Girl Scout Murders. Your involvement with the Council, what were you doing for them in that time period?

**Nancy McDonald:** Well, let's go back a little bit because the Council was sort of in a reorganization pattern. Their participation levels in their camp had fallen. They were struggling to get volunteers for troops. I had a very successful Girl Scout Troop. I had been a Girl Scout as a little girl. My mother had insisted that I be part of the Girl Scout's Troop in town. I was really a Girl Scout. So when I came to this Council I had a very successful Brownie junior cadet group and I was doing some training for the Girl Scout Council and they then asked me to come on their board. At that point in time the board of directors was made up of primarily Girl Scout leaders. We were also moving toward getting a new director. I felt we needed to have more corporate engagement on the board if we were going to broaden our horizons and do a much better job at fundraising. I was serving as personnel chair and recruited a dynamic executive director from the Las Vegas Council to come to Tulsa. Her name was Bonnie Brewster. I was then elected president of the Magic Empire Council in 1976. We were focusing on camp. We were going to have a new organization at camp. We had a new camp director named Barbara Day. We were really excited that our camp would be full for the first time in a long, long time. At that point in time I had a Brownie Troop with my second daughter. The only reason that she was not at camp was that we were going to go to Northwestern in Chicago to pick up our oldest daughter from college. I remember feeling really proud about the camp and about the Council and how we were moving and things were really, really going well. We were driving back from Chicago and it was about 4 in the morning because Joe had to be at work the next day and she could get out of her dorm that afternoon. It was raining. It was about 6 o'clock when we made it back to Tulsa. Joe had gone on to work and I had lain down on the couch to sleep a little bit because I was driving while he was sleeping and the phone rang. It was a staff person from the Council who said, "We have had a tragedy at the camp and Bonnie has gone on to the camp to really determine what has happened." She said, "But it's important for you to come to the Council office immediately. We have to make arrangements for getting the girls home." So I went to the Council office. At that point we knew that three little girls had been murdered at the camp. We had a system in place where we could alert the parents to come–that their daughters would be coming back on the bus and would be back in

Tulsa by hopefully 9:30am or 10am. So I sat down with the staff member and we started calling the parents. At that time it was also breaking on the news that their had been a tragedy at Camp Scott and three girls had been murdered.

**JE:** We might mention it was three girls ages 8, 9 and 10.

**NM:** Correct.

**JE:** They were raped and murdered and their bodies were left in the woods near their tent at the summer camp. It was Lori Lee Farmer who was 8, Doris Denise Milner who was 10 from Tulsa and Michele Guse, 9, of Broken Arrow.

**NM:** Correct.

**JE:** That's the setting.

**NM:** We had a camp counselor, a counselor in training who had found the bodies, and was really together. She alerted the camp staff. The camp staff immediately woke up the girls and the little girls really did not know what happened. They did not know what happened until they returned to Tulsa and their parents could tell them. And then we had of course the Oklahoma Bureau of Investigation and the Locust Grove Police.

**JE:** Camp Scott was part of the Tulsa-based Magic Empire Girl Scout Council and it was a 410-acre compound located between Locust Grove and Tahlequah.

**NM:** Right. Pete Weaver was the County Sheriff and Pete Weaver was there. I did not go to the Camp. I stayed in Tulsa because all of a sudden we were dealing with national media, local media, parents and then certainly the parents of the children who were murdered. I would say it was the day I really grew up in my work in not-for-profit because I mean we were dealing with all kinds of issues–public relations, murders, staff relationships, counselors who were falling apart, parents who were falling apart, my own family, the threats on my own family.

**JE:** Why were there threats on your family?

**NM:** Because they thought I was responsible for it. It was such an incredible experience personally, from my point of view. The national media was in here. I came home one day and had a reporter from the National Enquirer sitting on my front porch. I had threats on my life, threats on my girls' lives. The police–I had 24-hour security at my home. I had never experienced anything like this.

**JE:** So there were other members of the Council who probably had threats as well?

**NM:** Yes, they had threats as well, the same thing. Joan Eaton, she was another, she was vice president of the Council. But Bonnie was just amazing. She is an amazing woman and Barbara Day who was the camp director and of course we had to tell the three families.

**JE:** Were you involved in that?

**NM:** Yes. You know each of them dealt with it in a different way. It was a tragedy. No one ever thinks about anyone entering the sanctity of a Girl Scout Camp or any camp with

children. Even though you think you have all of the security and the precautions that you need in a situation like that, we now know that that's not the case. I said to myself that day, we will never reopen Camp Scott. I made that promise to myself and to those three little girls that we would never open Camp Scott. That was not a popular decision. There were people who really objected to that. But I held fast to that and Bonnie supported me on that because I knew from my own experiences at Camp Scott that there would always be the stories that would be real to little girls.

**Chapter 16 – 8:13**
**Gene Leroy Hart**

**Nancy McDonald:** And so at that point in time I had met with Jack Zink because I felt that and certainly with Bonnie, both of us felt that we needed to reopen our camp immediately. We needed to offer these little girls day camp and so we did with the support of the Tulsa United Way. We were able to bus children every day to Camp Tallchief for the camping experience. They never stayed overnight.

**John Erling:** Was that on the Jack Zink Ranch?

**NM:** Yes, then ultimately Jack gave us the property to the Girl Scout Council to develop Camp Tallchief. So, camp has in the Girl Scout world Camp Tallchief, plus some other properties that we have as a viable wonderful experience for children and the don't have the stories. I try to go out there every year just for my own peace of mind. First of all, we have a very sophisticated security system that is a model for many camps. We did a tremendous amount of research on camp security and we worked with the Oklahoma State Legislature to upgrade camping standards, which then were adopted by the American Camping Association to include security in all camping experiences for children. So to be certified through the American Camping Association, you have to have in place a comprehensive security plan. For my own peace of mind, that is my work on behalf on these three little girls who were murdered. You know, I never forget thinking about them. They are the same age as my daughter. And how difficult that must be for those families. But it was an incredible experience. We had a civil suit as well as criminal charges.

**JE:** We might say here for those listening and want to do further reading about this, it still is an unsolved crime. Gene Leroy Hart escaped four years earlier from the Mayes County Jail. He was convicted of raping two pregnant mothers. He was born about a mile from Camp Scott and he was on the loose. He was arrested within the year at the home of a Cherokee medicine man. He was tried in March of 1979 and was acquitted by a local jury.

He died I prison in June of 1979 while jogging. He died of a heart attack and I believe the Sheriff said he was "1,000 percent certain that Gene Leroy Hart was the one." Do you care to comment on the idea that there might be someone else out there?

**NM:** Well, I guess we will have to just leave that to the law enforcement agencies. In my heart of hearts, I believe that there was evidence that was not allowed in the trial that certainly identified in my opinion Gene Leroy Hart.

**JE:** He had been on the loose for some time. In fact, they gave up looking for him for all those many years.

**NM:** That's right.

**JE:** And it is believed that he actually lived in a cave not far from there.

**NM:** That's right.

**JE:** Were there signs? Two months before the murders a note was found on a camp counselors doughnut box?

**NM:** That's true.

**JE:** The note said three campers would be murdered and the note was treated as a prank. And summer camps are known for ghost stories and unusual stories and maybe somebody–

**NM:** You know when you think of camping experiences for children and you recognize that most of our camp counselors are young. They are experienced campers, most of them having been through camping as a child. We certainly have qualified camp directors. But I know as a leader of two Girl Scout troops that there are stories, there are ghost stories and there are pranks. There are things that happen and as I said before, no one really thinks about anyone entering the sanctity of a Girl Scout Camp or any camp with children to harm them. You're not in that frame of reference. But now, from that experience that we have had it makes it real. And so I have said to this council and to other councils and camping programs that you must adhere to the security rules and the regulations. We have learned that you absolutely must think about the security for the children in this day and age.

**JE:** Out of this, Richard Guse, father of one of the victims helped the state legislature pass the Oklahoma Victims Bill of Rights.

**NM:** Absolutely. Richard Guse is an absolutely incredible man. They have a wonderful family. In this incredible tragedy that they faced, they were a loving kind family to work with. They were focused on Michelle's life and celebrated her. Mrs. Guse was principal of the high school in Broken Arrow and just an incredible mom. I treasure them as my friends.

**JE:** And we can point out that Richard also chaired the Oklahoma Crime Victims Compensation Board, which came into more of a prominence for its Murrah Fund after the Oklahoma City Bombing.

**NM:** You're exactly right. He is just one of those special people that makes a contribution in whatever he is doing.

**JE:** So this whole case then, I think you have already referred to it, left a profound effect on you?

**NM:** Oh yes, on our whole family. For my girls, I mean, I have a...my youngest daughter, just this spring just called and she said, "You know my six year old is going on an overnight camping experience mom and I am having tremendous anxiety about this." She said, "I don't think I can let him go. I think I am going to have to go with him." I said, "Go with him, that's what you have to do." So, yes, particularly with our youngest daughter who was the same age, it had a tremendous impact on her. She struggled. She even participated in Outward Bound in trying to get over these anxieties about being outdoors. She loves the outdoors. She sails and she camps and to have that just crushed for her, as her mother you just, what can you do to help her get over this? Our oldest daughter that particular year was a camp counselor at the camp in Maine and she had to give it up. She couldn't do it. She said, "Mom I can't do it. I just can't do it." She had the same anxieties with her own daughter who was in Girl Scouts and went camping. She said, "Mom, you'll have to come and go with us." So, we did it together, but it really created a lot of anxieties for my girls.

**JE:** Anxieties that linger to this day in 2010. None of the children can say that they heard sounds or screams or anything.

**NM:** Nothing.

**JE:** And what a horrible feeling to say I was there and I didn't hear anything.

**NM:** So it's something that you just live with your entire life. And you go back and you think about it, but I know that at that point in time everything that we did was right. We had taken the precautions with Pete Weaver the County Sheriff. We had taken the precautions with Camp Garland the Boy Scout Camp. We had talked about safety with all of the counselors. We had gone through a comprehensive training on safety for girls, safety in camps and safety in the camping experience. So everything that we knew we had done in my opinion correctly. But this experience moves you to another level and so you have to learn from this experience, incredible tragedy that it was, what did we learn? My commitment was to make some changes. Certainly what we did in this council, but hopefully in the standards that the ACA adopted.

**JE:** You and other counselors have reviewed again and again and again what you just did. This is what we did. We did that and that and you have done that hundreds and hundreds of times.

**NM:** Absolutely.

## Chapter 17 – 7:09
## PFLAG

**John Erling:** Okay, PFLAG stands for Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. It had its beginnings in 1972 in New York City when Jeanne Mannford marched with her gay son in New York's gay pride parade. And many gay and lesbian young people wanted to talk to Jeanne to see if Jeanne would talk to their parents. That was the beginning. And of so many things that you've been involved with, you are also involved in now with the local chapter of PFLAG, and became president of Tulsa-based PFLAG as it was known then. Tell us how that came about.

**Nancy McDonald:** I think ours was a typical story of a family who has a child who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender or questioning. Our youngest daughter struggled in emerging adolescence and adolescence. And as a family we were not sure about what our struggles were all about. I thought and Joe thought that we had always been a very open family with lots of interaction and lots of dynamics. But this little girl seemed to be more withdrawn, not as talkative, not willing to share exactly who she was and what she was doing or what she was dealing with. So you know, we would ask questions like, "How are things going for you?" She would say, "I'm okay." You have to remember this is it the early 1980s. The words gay, lesbian, bi and transgender were not words you heard on television. They were not words used in the Tulsa World. They were not in books in the library. There wasn't a lot of information for young people dealing with their sexuality. So our daughter had a difficult time in high school. She had lots of friends but she didn't date. She was a tremendous soccer player and a great student and in many ways she was an overachiever. People liked her, at least from her mom's point of view. She was accepted at Tufts University which is a private school out east to play soccer. At Christmastime that year, 1985, she came home and she said to us, "You know mom and dad, I think I'm gay." At that point in time it became a real issue because now all of a sudden it was on the table so we had to deal with it as a family.

**JE:** Were you suspecting this all along?

**NM:** We sort of thought about it, but I don't think we had the words. I didn't have the words. It was not something that was talked about. Joe certainly knew more about it than I did. But even Joe who was a physician said, "I didn't have any of this in medical school." They didn't talk about this in medical school. So you know our experience with this was first in 1985 when she said, "You know mom and dad I think I'm gay." Then it was real. We really had to think about it. I had read an article written by a mother whose son was HIV positive in a women's magazine. But it had made a reference to Parents and Families

and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, which was headquartered at that point in time in Washington, D.C. So on January 2nd, I called their national office. Their response to me was that there was no one in Oklahoma, no one in Texas, no one in New Mexico, there's no one in Kansas and there's no one in Missouri. But there is a mom in Denver, Colorado that I think you could talk to. I went away from that experience thinking, my gosh, I am the only mother in this region who had a lesbian daughter.

**JE:** What was your immediate response to your daughter? How did you handle that at that moment?

**NM:** I said "I love you" and I remember Joe just embracing her. And telling her we will go through this together and we will figure this out.

**JE:** So then it was up to you to reach out to someone else.

**NM:** Right. Right. It's not easy because I really didn't know anything about this topic. I really didn't. I was very ignorant. But I really got on the fast track of learning. I did call Ellinor Lewallen in Denver, Colorado and she was extremely helpful. It is so helpful to have a parent talk to another parent about what is this and what is the child's dealing with and how did you deal with it as a family, particularly at that point in time. It has changed today. Joe and I sort of struggled and we really got a lot of reading material and we brought ourselves up to speed on this. Morva went back to college feeling really good about all of this. She felt good as most gay kids do once they come out. Locally, I remember Joe saying, "We are not the only parents Nancy, come on." So we started the local PFLAG chapter here in Tulsa. Our first meeting we did not have anyone come. I mean, we did not know how to do this.

**JE:** How did you announce it? How did you advertise it?

**NM:** Well, I went to the editorial board before I started the chapter and told them what I was going to do. They agreed to do an article in the paper, and interestingly enough, Joe and I did not use our real names. We used fictitious names because there was some concerns about us being identified.

**JE:** The paper chose to do that?

**NM:** Yeah, right. The Tulsa World did an article on PFLAG and these parents. But they also did as a parallel to that an article on Exodus, which is a group for parents of children who could change. So anyway we had some calls and we set up a helpline and from that article we began to get some response. Because we were still searching for the gay community in Tulsa, we didn't even know if that existed. Eventually we found Tulsa, Oklahomans for Human Rights, which was meeting at the library at that point in time, but was really dealing with the HIV and AIDS crisis. So, we started the PFLAG Chapter in Tulsa and it just took off like gangbusters. The interesting thing John that I learned, and eventually was difficult for me to handle, is that I also became much more aware that the

youngsters that were committing suicide in Tulsa Public Schools were probably gay and we were not doing anything for them. Nothing. Nothing. And no one was willing to do anything for them. And the administration was not willing to do anything for them. Our teachers were not prepared and our gay teachers were not willing to do anything for them because they were not protected.

**JE:** This is 1985 that you are talking about?

**NM:** That's right. That was a really difficult time for me, because kids were taking their own lives.

## Chapter 18 – 6:40
## Hate Crimes Act

**Nancy McDonald:** I've looked back on this whole experience. I think about many of the kids that I placed at Booker T. Washington, were gay. Not because they were gay, because I certainly didn't know about that, but because they were looking for some other place. They were looking for an alternative. They were seeking a different kind of experience from traditional schools and they were holding hope that this might be the place. So, as I look back, many of our gay and lesbian kids migrated to Booker T. because it was more open, accepting and not as judgmental. It was an interesting dynamic.

**John Erling:** But did their sexuality come forward?

**NM:** No.

**JE:** So you don't know.

**NM:** I don't really know, but as I talked to the gay kids who attended Booker T. as I now talk to them in this particular time, they will say, "It was much more open. It was safe. We weren't being called names. We weren't being judged for how we looked or who we were or perceived to be gay.

**JE:** Because there were obvious signs and other kids knew that they were gay but it was more accepted.

**NM:** Right. It wasn't a big deal. You are a great football player or a good student or artist or whatever, that's what kids were interested in. It was not about whether you were black or white or gay or straight or Muslim or fundamentalist or Christian or Jew. It's a very interesting environment that promoted this acceptance.

**JE:** Then as you were organizing PFLAG, you were drawing support from other parents who came forward and so they helped you as much as you helped them.

**NM:** Absolutely. We had a tremendous chapter. We really did. We had one of the largest chapters in the country.

**JE:** How big would it have been?

**NM:** We had about 160 members.

**JE:** And there were parents and friends?

**NM:** Right here in Tulsa, Oklahoma. And people would be ecstatic that this was happening and so I organized chapters in Norman and Oklahoma City and all across this region. I really then became regional director and organized chapters in Colorado and New Mexico and Texas, Kansas and Missouri and even one in Omaha, Nebraska.

**JE:** The way the community saw this issue then and the way this community sees it now, how would you compare that?

**NM:** Well, I think what has happened is gay and lesbian issues have become accepted as part of our culture. We are much more knowledgeable about sexual orientation and what causes our sexuality, although we have not pinpointed whether it's hormonal or genetics. You can turn on television and children hear the words lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Religious communities have chosen to become open and affirming of gays and lesbians. The culture has changed. But we also have families who will not accept their gay kids. I just held the PFLAG support group last night and we have a family who has disowned their daughter and has thrown her out because of their religious beliefs. So, you know we still have that dynamic, that is still there. There is still hate. But as a community and as a nation we're moving to be more inclusive of gays and lesbians, recognizing that this is not a choice. These are human beings. They are Americans and they have a right and a privilege to all of the rights and privileges that we all enjoy as Americans.

**JE:** And yet to show as far as we have come, Brandon Patrick in October of 2009 was beaten and stabbed right here in Tulsa.

**NM:** That's correct. Hate crimes are still prevalent. But what we do have now is we have national legislation that includes sexual orientation. Unfortunately, the state legislature was never ever going to include sexual orientation in the hate crimes legislation in the state of Oklahoma, but federal law supersedes state law and so the federal hate crimes legislation is in place and Oklahoma must respond to it.

**JE:** You are referring to the Matthew Shepherd act?

**NM:** That's right.

**JE:** And officially the James Byrd Junior Hate Crimes Prevention Act?

**NM:** Correct. That's right. Matthew Shepard was a young gay teenager that was murdered in Laramie, Wyoming. He was tortured and murdered.

**JE:** And then James Byrd?

**NM:** He was the African-American that was dragged behind the car in a community in Texas.

**JE:** And decapitated in Jasper, Texas in 1998. So that federal act now protects and punishes now in that regard.

**NM:** Correct. And that means that then if there is a hate crime in Tulsa, and if the Tulsa police Department feel that they need to have assistance from the federal level, they can access that. There is nothing to prevent that from happening, if the crime as they perceived it was based on sexual orientation or anything else for that matter, race, ethnicity, whatever.

**JE:** And as you described it in 1985 and yet in June of 2010 our city council voted to add sexual orientation to the employee non-discrimination policy and this protects all city employees from discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

**NM:** That's correct.

**JE:** So we have come a long way, but it has taken a long time.

**NM:** That vote was a culmination of 15 years of work. We have worked diligently with the city council. So I applaud G.T. Bynum, a Republican who took the leadership. He participated in a forum at PFLAG and OKEQ (Oklahomans for Equality) where he was asked the question whether or not he would support the inclusion of sexual orientation in the nondiscrimination (policy) and he was appalled that it was not there and he made a commitment to the members who participated in that forum that he would take the leadership and he did exactly what he said he would do. As you know, I am sure you all know that he is Mayor LaFortune's grandson and so I think he represents another generation of incredible leadership.

## Chapter 19 – 5:35
## Other People's Lives

**John Erling:** Finally you have been in Washington, D.C. testifying and all, but you met with President Clinton and you discussed the needs of gay youth and safe schools and civil rights legislation. Were you into discussions one-on-one with him?

**Nancy McDonald:** There were several occasions. I was fortunate enough being elected national president of PFLAG. At that point in time President Clinton of course had had a disaster with Don't Ask, Don't Tell. And he really in my opinion had sort of reneged on his commitment to the gay community to abandon the Armed Forced position. And so I think as I saw it, President Clinton certainly with some pressure attempted to respond to this by bringing this task force together to hear about what the needs of the gay and lesbian community were. I was fortunate enough to be a part of the 11 people to meet with him to discuss gay and lesbian issues. My points were safe schools for children. Youth suicide is incredible among our gay youth. It's three times the national rate for

other youth. We certainly were interested in the hate crimes, certainly because of Matthew Shepard, and Judy Shepard was very much engaged in this. We really were seeking protection in employment because in the state of Oklahoma, as it is in 39 other states, gays and lesbians can be fired for just being gay or being perceived to be gay. That's why it is so important that corporations like Williams, and now the City of Tulsa and American Airlines and QuikTrip and I can go on with a number of Tulsa corporations and 47 non-for-profits that protect their gay employees by including sexual orientation, because they are not protected in the state of Oklahoma. So these were some of the issues that we talked to President Clinton about. He then really picked up on the hate crimes and took a leadership role in hate crimes legislation. The White House hosted a seminar on hate crimes, bringing law enforcement...Drew Diamond was a part of that, our former chief of police.

**JE:** Is there a word of advice that you would like to say to a parent now...and this could be heard 25 years from now because of today's technology...and when this comes to their attention, what are they supposed to say and how are they supposed to act and knowing that it is a major surprise I suppose, or maybe it isn't.

**NM:** What I always say to parents, is that you should be so proud and so pleased that your child has given you the gift of honesty. You have raised this child to be honest with you and open with you. Now when this child says to you, "Mom and dad I'm gay," they are being honest. And I hope that you will accept that even though you may not understand it, that you will embrace your child and love them because now you know the whole truth about them. And that you will take it upon yourself to educate yourself and in this case, work for equal rights for them because they do not enjoy the equal rights that our straight children do, and affirm who they are.

**JE:** You have received numerous awards and recognition, but for all of your volunteer work, can you even say one has brought you the most satisfaction or not?

**NM:** That's really a hard question to answer. I am really proud of my "Thanks Badge" from the Magic Empire Council of Girl Scouts. That to me was a sign of recognition of what I thought was a job well done. I am very proud of my recognition from PFLAG at the national level because I believe that my leadership brought it from a mom and pop organization to one with national credibility. I am very proud of my award from Tulsa Community College for my work in early childhood development and I am very proud of my award that I just received from OCCJ, which is "The Spirit of Nancy McDonald" which will be a perpetual award for those volunteers and teachers and principals who embrace "different and the same".

**JE:** OCCJ meaning–

**NM:** Oklahoma Conference for Community and Justice.

**JE:** Okay then, some advice for students that are listening in the area of volunteer work or social issues, what would you say to them?

**NM:** Well, you know I have a favorite saying, it goes like this from Edwin Markham "There is a destiny in this world that makes us brothers. None go his way alone. For what you put into the life of another will come back into your own." So I always think that my like is richer and fuller because I have chosen to engage in other people's needs and lives and hopes and dreams. I hope that children that are listening to this will look at the opportunities that they may have to make a difference.

**JE:** Very good. Well, I thank you Nancy for sharing all of this.

**NM:** Well, it's my pleasure. I hope you'll get a little bit out of it.

**JE:** We will get a lot out of it and it will be preserved for a long, long time.

## Chapter 20 – 0:21
## Conclusion

**Announcer:** It is our hope this story of volunteerism will inspire listeners of all ages. Please consult our For Further Reading and Books For Sale sections as a follow up to our conversation with Nancy McDonald. We thank our Founding Sponsors for making these oral history stories possible on VoicesofOklahoma.com.