

Audrey Veath

I: So can you please tell me how you first came to Barrington?

AV: I was born here.

I: And what was the first experience that you remember?

AV: The very first?

I: Uh-huh. (unintelligible) or going outside to play or –

AV: We shared a dog with the neighbors down the street. It was a cute little dog, he'd come by us for a few days than he'd go down to our neighbors for a few days. And I remember playing with him; he was a sweet puppy.

I: So tell me about the neighborhood you grew up in then.

AV: I grew up on Summit Street which was a totally residential street and several of my classmates grew up there also. Back in those days we had chickens and a big garden –

I: You had a chicken (unintelligible) er, chicken coop

AV: A chicken house

I: (unintelligible)

AV: We had rabbits. My dad was – anything that curled or barked or

I: So did you guys have the animal house or did everyone on the street have chickens?

AV: There were other people who did. It was pretty common. I was born in '33 in the midst of the depression and my dad was out of work. He would do any kind of work he could to put butter on the table. We lived in a tiny, tiny little house. It was four of us. I was the caboose of the four children. An older sister and two older brothers and we lived in a little house that had one bedroom, a kitchen, and a living room and that was it when I was little. Not as big as most people's garages are today. But times were very tough and we sold some of the eggs to neighbors from the chickens, and of course we had a garden. My dad used to go out and catch chickens to butcher for a load of groceries and my mom and we would kill the chickens and we would dress them and sell them to the grocery store so we could grocery shop. Totally unacceptable in today's world. But we made enough money to buy our first car. And then (unintelligible)

I: Did the car get up Summit Hill?

AV: Oh yes. In the winter when there was a good snow fall Summit Hill would be closed for sledding and the whole town would come over and sled down Summit Hill. And it was just a lot of fun.

I: Now would you guys go down on big tires when you sledded?

AV: We had sleds with runners and even my mom and dad would go sometimes. My dad would lay on the slide first and then my mom and I would be on top of my mom. As I said, everybody in town would come over and sled down the hill. During the week all us kids would go out and slide down the hill. I remember one time one of my brothers' friends lost control of his sled, and his sled was underneath a car that was parked on the street. He got a big gash in his head. And my brothers brought him to my house – she was always patching up someone who got hurt, and she would clean him up and send him back up to his house after she got the bleeding pretty well stopped. But everybody got more careful about where they were going sledding. And on Sundays, Baker's Lake was a favorite skating place for townspeople. And they would come up and build bonfires around the edge of the lake and skate on the ice. Just a small town community. Fun.

I: (Unintelligible). So you would have gone to Hough Street?

AV: Un-huh. I went to Hough Street when it was a K-12 school. And I finished my last two years of high school in the new high school which was a lot smaller than the present one, but it was just build and I was in the second class to graduate

I: Was that kind of cool being in the new high school or –

AV: It was very cool. It was a very long walk from Summit Street to the high school and there weren't any buses to take kids in town then. It was about a mile and a half. Once in a while parents or friends would give us a ride, but we loved the new school. It was – it was very impressive to be in there – it was bright, and looking at all the books that (didn't fit in there?). On the lower level there was like a basement track that was used. (interference)

The air was not good and they completely closed that a few years after. And we had an outdoor amphitheater that was going to be - it was a big scooped out hill by the side of the school. It was supposed to be for assemblies but it got filled up with water. And so –

I: You had a swimming pool.

AV: Yeah. So they changed their mind on that, but it was a good school and a wonderful superintendent, Frank Thomas, who really tried very hard to produce quality education for the kids in town. At that time, our school district ran almost to Bartlett, I think.

I: (unintelligible)

AV: It was just farmland. There were just farms around the edge of town and all the (living?) was just farms and it seems like (unintelligible) to take in all of that property. It turned out not to (?) and all that property formed another school district.

I: You said that Superintendent Thomas really cared about education (unintelligible)

AV: Oh yes. For about ten years he would take the graduating seniors on a trip to Washington, DC. Now the classes were small, you have to realize, my class of '51 was the last class that was under a

hundred people. We had 75. But our class would work all through high school making money to fund this trip to Washington, DC. We went by bus and there were a couple of parents who would drive cars and transport kids and we would rotate from the bus to the cars. It was a wonderful experience for the kids. Some of them had never left the state before. We were a little small farm town when I was growing up. We planned our itinerary and we had bake sales and rummage sales and we sold pop corn at basketball games. We did everything we could to make the thousands of dollars that we needed so that when we actually went on the trip, I think it only cost the students about ninety or a hundred dollars each. This included a five dollar a day food allowance that we got every day or two and we stayed at hotels which, for many of us, was the first time we'd ever stayed in a hotel. We went to Washington, DC and (Gettysburg?). We were driving along the Blue Ridge Parkway and it was pretty blue and we were all in awe of how beautiful it was.

I: Especially when it was fresh. (sic)

AV: Yeah, and we went to (?) and Boston and went to the Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown. It was just a grand adventure. Mr. Thomas went along and every class that went, it opened up a lot of eyes to what was out there that we didn't know about. It was wonderful

I: I see. Tell (unintelligible). Let's go back to the animals. You had chickens, I see.

AV: We had several dogs and a cat. One time my dad brought home some goose eggs-fertile goose eggs-and we had some banty hens -little tiny chickens, miniature chickens is what they were – and one of the hens was (ready to brood), so he put this goose egg under her, so here was this little hen with three great big goose eggs under her and when they hatched, little chickens were always huddled under their mother's body and they are adorable. Well, by the time they hatched, they were way too big to fit underneath her and she was very worried about this and didn't know what to do and was all upset and finally she figured out to put their heads under her and let their butts stick out.

I: (unintelligible)

AV: Repeats above. So I wish I had taken a picture of her because it was so – it was just so cute. These three little goslings under the wing of this banty hen. We always had a menagerie going on. My dad brought home some guinea fowl one time which are black and white birds, native to Africa. They do make wonderful soup. However, they are like watch dogs. When anything disturbs them at night, not during the day, they go (noise). It was very embarrassing to come home from a date and I'd get out of the car and they'd go (noise)

I: If any of the boys ? –you'd know he was a keeper.

AV: Yeah. Barrington was a nice town to grow up in. It was small and if you didn't know everybody by name, you could recognize them by sight. There were only about three thousand people in the town then, and they knew you. And your parents. So kids didn't get too far out of line because there was always somebody who was watching what you were doing. But it was a pretty vibrant little town. We

had general stores, a couple of hardware stores at one point and there was an A&P grocery store and a National Tea, several delis –

I: (unintelligible) tell me you used to have four grocery stores here.

AV: Uh-huh.

I: (unintelligible)

AV: She worked in the Village Hall a number of years.

I: Everybody did. So you really like animals. Do you think that sort of pushed you to what you've done now with the Heifer Project?

AV: Absolutely. Very definitely. I know what a difference a flock of chickens can make in a family so it can feed itself. We would have had a very, very hard time surviving without our chickens and the garden. Because my mother canned everything. I mean, chickens were a source of income as well as food, so yeah, definitely. And we had rabbits and bred rabbits. They were to eat, they weren't just pet rabbits. Eating was pretty good.

I: I thought he was pretty cute, but he wasn't just the mascot. (sic) So you were obviously born during the Depression and you were born poor. Before you graduated high school did your family want to get out of poverty. You say they saved up and got a car. Did you plan on a move or did you want to get out of that house?

AV: I grew up in that house – we all did and we all have and we all still love each other. It was pretty much living on top of each other, and by today's standards, we'd probably be classed as "deprived". We were not deprived. We had parents who cared about us and made sure we were fed and had clothes – my mother had a sewing machine. I remember her saying that during the depression that they had been buying the sewing machine at so much per month, and she said, "That was the only thing we lost." And my father told her, "As soon as I get a regular job, the first thing we'll get is another sewing machine." (unintelligible) "How did you survive?" And she said, "Well, it seemed that whenever one of the kids needed shoes or something for school, a job would make up for Dad and he would make enough money to get those shoes." Or material for a dress, or whatever it was. Then he got a job as a butcher at the Royal-Dix (?) store which was downtown and from there he went to work at the Jefferson Food Lockers which is where the Ice House is now. This was the days before home freezers, so if you had raised or butchered a cow or a steer or a beef or a pig or chickens or anything, you'd bring them in and they'd freeze them and store them in their food locker. And there was a butcher shop that dressed the meat, wrapped it, and packaged it. And now you'd get your key and take out whatever you wanted because the butchers didn't have freezers and home freezers weren't invented yet. So it was nice to know that you had food in the freezer, and it was yours. And when my dad started working there, we started freezing some of our vegetables from the garden instead of canning them, but we always canned a lot and we used jars as well as containers from the (?) and actually tin cans (?), and you'd grind the

top(?). It was always my job and you'd grind and grind to make sure you got a good seal. Then you'd pressure cook them.

I: The other children didn't help then?

AV: (unintelligible)

I: (unintelligible) How then did you come to (unintelligible)

AV: Well, we both worked together. Working at the Towne Shop was my first job. At that point, my husband's brother and his wife owned the shop. My brother worked at nights because he was doing construction during the day and I think I was a freshman when I started working there. And (?) was a senior and we started dating, and he always said, "Oh, my God, I had to marry her because she was the best help."

I: (unintelligible) So you were in high school together?

AV: He was out of high school. He was eleven years older than I was.

I: (unintelligible)

AV: The kids used to say, "Mom, what would you do if we were dating somebody eleven years older than us?" "Probably lock you in the closet?" It didn't make any difference to us. We were just very (unintelligible) very good buddies, and it didn't make any difference to us. We worked together and we played together. And I could never understand women who would say, "Well, I married him for better or for worse, but not for lunch." Because we always enjoyed our times together. Whether we were home or traveling, he always helped. He helped as much at home as I helped at the store. Our kids all worked there because we had it for twenty-seven years. And they worked all through school, weekends, and during the summer. They'd go to college and they'd come home; they didn't get to go to Florida, they worked at the Towne Shop so we could get away. Because it was a seven day a week job, three hundred sixty-five days a year.

I: You were open Christmas then?

AV: Uh-huh. We were open on Christmas morning incase there would be people who forgot to pick up food or dairies or want to get out of the house for coffee without the kids or who didn't have some place to go – we had a lot of those. (Unintelligible) And usually we weren't completely open on Christmas Day. But when the kids were little, they (unintelligible) that there was something special about Christmas Day (unintelligible). I used to make plates and plates of fudge that we would have on Christmas Eve

I: (unintelligible)

AV: They really liked it. And I made so much of it, I got so I couldn't stand the sight of it any more.

(laughter)

I made soup for the store and pies and cookies and we had sandwiches.

I: It was a bakery as well as a shop?

AV: We had a lunch counter. I did something then that I couldn't do now – I cooked everything at home and took it to the store. I couldn't do that now. We didn't make a fortune, but we were able to put our kids through school and met a lot of (?) people, and heard a lot of stories. All the basketball games were replayed in the store. All the political events always were discussed. It was a place where people related to each other

I: (unintelligible) Towne Shop?

AV: We sold it. And we hoped that it would continue on. And of course it was a limited market, mostly (?), but there style was very different than ours (unintelligible).

I: What made you sell it? Were you just getting old? So you couldn't work any more?

AV: It was really my husband. He had (?) by-pass surgeries by that time and our youngest child, our son, had graduated from college and none of our kids wanted to take over the store. They knew how much work it was. They said, "No thanks. We're going to do something else." And we felt it was time to sell. So we did. We found a lot of people who had no clue as to what energy running a business. "We just want to do something during our retirement." And we said, "This is not for you."

I: There is no rest. It never stops.

AV: Yeah. It was a good thing. The kids learned a lot, and every once in awhile when we are all together, they will talk about things that happened in the store when they were growing up: "Oh, do you remember that guy who always got a coffee with one cream and three sugars?" And the other one will say, "Oh, yeah, I remember him." It was a very good experience for them; they all learned how to deal with people. (Unintelligible) social worker and (unintelligible) she was working in a library. Second daughter is a nurse and she works at Good Shepherd; our son(?) the artist became a fireman which he always wanted to be and is a paramedic and works with the Cary fire department. All the Barrington firemen used to come into the store on a pretty regular basis. And they were always his heroes. They would tell him all about the fires that they had fought (unintelligible) that made him want to be a fireman.

I: (Unintelligible) So you sold the store (unintelligible) when did you first begin working with the Heifer Project? Did you –was it during or some time after you sold the shop?

AV: No. I was aware of it because our church had been involved in it since 1960. They still had a store (sic) until the end of '84. At that time I went to work for Sydney Johnson, Bookseller, who has since passed away. That was in Barrington on Main Street. And she was one of our customers (unintelligible). So I talked to Sydney and he found a job at one of the big hardware stores on Route 12 – I forget which one – and he was there for about two weeks, and he said, "I can't stand all those young kids who don't do anything. They just stand around and disappear. I can't do this. I can't work this way." And so he

quit. And I found I loved working with the books and I worked with Sydney for about five years with the understanding that when I wanted to go away, we would go. We (?) in Tucson and we'd be gone for a week or ten days. Those were probably the best years of our lives.

I: Which was not like this.

AV: Very much not like this. There is a better way to spend winter than shoveling the snow and the ice. I still go out there. His sister lives out there and I have a brother and his wife who live just south of Tucson and I always spend time with them. It was after my husband died (unintelligible) now what am I going to do because by this time the book store had closed. I called up the Chicago office of Heifer Project and said, "Can you use volunteers?" and they said, "We sure do. Come on in." You can come in tomorrow." And that's how I became involved. It was a really good fit. I met some marvelous people and traveled with them on my first overseas trip. We went to Kenya, (?) and Rwanda. And when you travel with Heifer, you visit the people who have received the animals that have been donated and you find out how it has changed their lives with food and with (unintelligible). What you do is save up and send your children to school (unintelligible) and buy school uniforms for them so they can go to school. Or I can (unintelligible) because I have this wonderful cow that the Heifer Project has provided. I don't know if you are familiar with the story of Beatrice's goat. Beatrice is a little girl in Rwanda. She had been featured (unintelligible), and I said "All I want to do is meet Beatrice." She was in boarding school at that time. She was thirteen at the time. When she was nine, her family received a couple of goats (unintelligible). There were six children; the father had left to try to find work. He was gone. The goat provided them milk to drink and to sell. And pretty soon one of the glories of animals is that they multiply and soon there were lots of goats and lots of milk to sell, and Beatrice was able to go to school. And what she wanted more than anything else was to go to school. Beatrice is now twenty-five; she graduated with a master's degree in public service and she is working in New York City. (unintelligible) She is just a remarkable young lady. And there was a book written about her called *Beatrice's Goat* and how it changed her life.

I: As I listen to this, can you give me a thirty second synopsis of what the Heifer Project does?

AV: Well, Heifer Project provides farm animals for needy people all over the world. This will improve their nutrition and get them a marketable income, because we not only provides heifers (and you'd be surprised how many people don't know what a heifer is). It's a young cow that has not had its first calf. We would provide cows and goats, sheep, pigs, chickens, and ducks and geese, and llamas, alpacas, and rabbits and (?), fruit seeds and vegetable seeds. Anything that will help (unintelligible). We work with groups of people, not individual families. It might be a community group, it might be a church group, or it might just a group that gets together and they apply to receive some help from us. And that process takes a few months and the beauty of the program is that everything will be that every group that receives an animal is (?) to pass on the first female offspring to another, and they in turn will do the same, and they will do the same. So that gift just keeps giving and giving and growing and growing and pretty soon the whole village is changed because of the livestock they have received. And when you have received something as valuable as a goat or a cow you will want to share that. A totally impoverished person can become a donor and you are able to share the wealth that you have. They

take this very seriously. They sign a contract that they will pass on the first female. They have a ceremony called “passing on the gift” (unintelligible) and it is a very, very moving thing to be a part of (unintelligible). When I was over in China there was a “passing on the gift” ceremony for goats when the Chinese people were very concerned that they pass on the goats they have received. So they weigh all the goats before they pass them on. (Laughter) The host didn’t think very much of that idea, but it was very important to the people that they do it that way. In China we met a young man who had received a Heifer Project – rabbits. I think he received forty rabbits, and he became a very successful rabbit farmer.

I: Rabbits multiply a lot.

AV: Rabbits multiply a lot. They were beautiful, and he took great pains figuring out what kind of cages had the happiest rabbits because happy rabbits multiply better than unhappy rabbits. And it turned out to be a box with just a strip of wire across the front. Not a total wire so that the rabbits could sit and put their paws on the top and they could see and (?) with the rabbits next door. That was very important to him. He even had an employee to help feed his rabbits. And he invented a machine that would make alfalfa into pellets which made it easier to feed the rabbit. They were required to pass four or more rabbits to somebody else. He passed on 4000 rabbits. And he set up rabbit seminars for people to come and find out how to do this properly and healthily(sic). He was shipping two hundred rabbits a week to be butchered and processed. It was amazing. Just amazing that grassed field (unintelligible).

I: I’ve read multiple articles about how much you’ve done and how much you (unintelligible). What’s been the biggest challenge?

AV: We’ve had quilt auctions – one of them every few years. This work is fun but also challenging because in my other life, I’m a quilt auction addict. I go to a lot of quilt auctions all over the US (unintelligible). Any my heifer project director at that time found out I did that, she said, “Do you suppose we could have a quilt auction for a Heifer project?” And I said, “I guess so.” And the reason why we could was because I had been going to quilt auction school all these years. And so our first one was in 1997 and then every three years. We have changed locale several times. Our last one was this last November and we had it in Glenview; it was November 6. And we had our best one in New York (New Orleans) in ’07. We cleared over \$90,000. That meant a lot of cows. We were hoping to match that but because of the economy, but we did clear over \$65,000. And we had some of the most beautiful quilts we had ever had. We still have about fifty or sixty that we are selling (unintelligible). Some we sold at (?), at this church, and some we sent off to (?) in Rocky Mountain, Virginia which (?) Operation Heifer as well as some local soup kitchens. So these quilts are still out there looking for a heifer. (Unintelligible). It’s an amazing project because when you see it in action, you realize, Oh my gosh, what would we do to raise funds for those animals. It’s successful. It’s changed numerous lives. It’s given a way to help take care of these (fellows) and really it has been just a wonderful experience. 1997 was my first trip in to see the China effort. In ’05, I took my just graduated granddaughter from high school and we went into (?). It was a wonderful trip. It was so good and I was able to share that with my granddaughter.

I: You've been to Africa and to China, and you've traveled quite a bit but you keep coming back to Barrington

AV: Well, it's my home.

I: (Unintelligible)

AV: When I die, my ashes will be scattered in Arizona. That is where my husband's ashes are – scattered around Keystone (?). That is where I love. But there is a part of me that will always be in Barrington. (Unintelligible). I traveled to West Africa with archeological tours. It is very different from the eastern part of Africa where all the game animals are. It's much more desert country. We got as far as Timbuktu. When I told my grandson I was going to Timbuktu, he said, "Grandma, is that a good place?" But that was a wonderful trip and I traveled with archeological tours to (?akistan) on '04 and we ended up in St. Petersburg, Russia which was a wonderful and amazing experience because we talked with archeologists that were on the trip and told us what they had found and what they had uncovered. One of the said, "Oh, we just unearthed a teapot and pieces of jewelry but we haven't catalogued them yet. It was Haliburton had touched them. The teapot was two thousand years old, but it looked like it had just come off the shelf at Macy's. Just like an old teapot. Things haven't changed much. When you've got a good thing going, you just keep it the same. Those were two interesting trips. I went to Guatemala in '97 after my first trip with Heifer. A friend called and said, "I want you to go on this trip to Guatemala." And I said, "(Unintelligible). I just took a trip." And she said, "This is a really important trip. We are going (unintelligible), and it's with a church group and if you don't (unintelligible) So I went and it was an amazing, amazing trip. I loved it. I would like to go back on a heifer trip because Guatemala is one place we do not have heifer projects. We've got quite a few in Central and South America. But it was amazing to see all the festivities and processions and music – the patterns of flowers in the streets- the flowers and colored sand. It was really a very unusual and different experience. The travel bug bit me late, but it bit me hard.

I: Well, that's all I had actually.