

Mariemont Preservation Foundation

Transcript of Oral History Interview with
MRS. E. BOYD (MARIE HAWK) JORDAN

INTERVIEWER'S NAME: Lois Ralston

DATE OF INTERVIEW: March 28, 1984

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Sheldon Close, Mariemont

This is an interview with Mrs. Marie Hawk Jordan, retired teacher of the Dale Park Elementary School, a part of the Mariemont SAY school system. Not only is Mrs. Jordan knowledgeable about the early days at Dale Park, but she has firsthand knowledge of the Mariemont Community Church. Her husband, Mr. E. Boyd Jordan, was organist and choir director for the Church for many years. He was Mayor of Mariemont from 1941 until his death. He served as the Village carillonneur for many years also. This conversation was recorded on Wednesday afternoon, March 28, 1984. The interviewer is Lois Ralston for the Mariemont Preservation Foundation.

I am talking to Marie Hawk Jordan today in her home on Sheldon Close here in Mariemont. It's a grey and rainy day and we are just going to have a chat about some of her early memories of Mariemont as a retired teacher in the City schools. Before we begin, Mrs. Jordan, in the early days of the school, would you tell us something about yourself. Where were you were born and when if you can tell us.

Jordan: I was born near Harrison, Ohio, on January 14, 1903 and then my parents lived on a farm very close to a Shaker village, and when I was five years old, a Shaker brother took me to school every morning in his carriage and two horses and he made a chair for me that I have at home - a Shaker chair which I love very much and he was very, very good to me. The teachers at school were very good to me too. The first day that I went to school at Edgewood School, I only went to visit, but I liked it so much and the teacher was so nice to me, that I decided that I would go the next day and when I got ready to go she said to me "Come back again some time" and I said "Oh, yes I'm coming tomorrow!", so she said alright. I was just five years old then, so I went the next day and continued the next day for the rest of that year. And then at the end of the first grade, I was promoted to the second grade, so I just went on and continued to go to that school until I was in the seventh grade, and that year I did most of the eighth grade work at the same time and when the County tests came for the eighth graders to take, I took it too and I passed, so I went to High School the next year, and I was just 12 years old when I went to High School. And so I graduated from Harrison High School when I was 16.

Interviewer: Did you go on to College right then or were you too young?

Jordan: Well, I had to wait two years and I stayed home those two years and then I went first to Miami University and then graduated from Cincinnati University, and then the County School Board members were all very dear friends of my father's and they knew that I was interested in teaching the next year and they had heard about Mariemont being started. One of the County Board members lived in Newtown so of course he knew a lot about it and they told me to come over to Mariemont and apply for a position here, which I did and I got the job. I came over on 1st September and there was no school building here, so they told me to go back home and come back on the 1st October. When I came back on 1st October a temporary school building had been built at the corner of Beech Street and Wooster Pike. There were two rooms in the building and we had four teachers. Two in each room and I had never taught before and I had 14 pupils from Fairfax in the first grade. The other teacher had taught many years and so she was very helpful to me and that was a good year for me because of her help. The next year Dale Park had been built and those children that we had that first year went back to Fairfax to school.

Interviewer: What was the name of the more experienced teacher?

Jordan: Mrs. Carrie Conklin

Interviewer: Were there any other teachers hired at same time besides you, Mrs. Conklin and Mr. Lyon?

Jordan: Her name was Minnie Hook at that time, she is now Minnie Dooglin.

Interviewer: Why were they so anxious to have a building if they didn't have Mariemont students yet?

Jordan: They knew that they were going to build a lot of streets in Mariemont from October to January, and so by January of that first year we changed students. Our students, the original students we had from Fairfax went back to Plainville and we had enough students living in Mariemont. We had six rooms.

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Interviewer: And then the teaching staff moved over there at the same time?

Jordan: Yes.

Interviewer: Going back to your education, did you ever consider doing anything besides teaching?

Jordan: Yes I did, but I never considered anything very seriously because of the influence of my brother. He was a school principal and was very eager for me to go into school teaching.

Interviewer: He probably saw your talents and understood them. Who was it that hired you then? You said you applied over here.

Jordan: Mr. Parks. I went to Mr. Parks' home which was on Wooster Pike and Plainville Road where the school is now - his home was there. I went there and Mr. Parks hired me.

Interviewer: In the name of the Company?

Jordan: In the name of the Mariemont Company.

Interviewer: And I suppose the other two teachers were hired in the same way.

Jordan: Yes, and Mr. Lyon

Interviewer: Have you any recollection of what salary you were hired for?

Jordan: It was around \$90.00 a month, but I don't remember exactly. For seven years the school was a private school and so we didn't get considered by the State retirement system because we were not a public school.

Interviewer: I hope you made that up though in later years?

Jordan: Yes, I did. I taught 42 years. You teach 36 years in order to get your retirement money, then I taught 42 years to get to retirement and make up that difference.

Interviewer: In the time that you were in the temporary building do you remember any particular difficulties that you had or interesting children, or any incident. Did Mrs. Emery visit her school - you might say it was her school in a way!?

Jordan: She stopped at the school one afternoon after school and I was the only one there. She told me to be sure to call our Village Marymont because there was another one by the same name, but she wanted this one called Mariemont too. The other one is spelled M-a-r-y-m-o-n-t but she wanted this one called Marymont.

Interviewer: Well, it is nice that we know her desire in that respect. Was she pleased with the way things at the school were developing?

Jordan: Yes, she was very, very happy about everything. She was happier, I think, about the way the Village was developing. All the lights were being put underground and so much work was being done underground and she was real pleased about that.

Interviewer: When you were there you didn't have any lunchroom facilities, did the children bring their lunches with them.

Jordan: They brought their lunches and everyday we took our lunches over on the churchyard and watched them build the Church and Dale Park. We saw them bring the stones that had come from Bedford, Indiana, and watched them uncrate the roof of the Church which came from an old church in England and we spent every noon hour watching them build the Church and Dale Park. In the fall the weather was nice and we ate our lunches over there on the grounds.

Interviewer: I imagine those children are telling their children about that experience now. At what point did the Mariemont Company turn the schools over to The Board of Education. Do you have any idea how long it was?

Jordan: Seven years, and Lucia Hermanes was one of the first School Board Members.

Interviewer: Yes, she was a well known in the schools and very interested in the PTA and developing that.

Jordan: Yes, she worked very hard in the school.

Interviewer: When the Board of Education was organized, did it include a larger district as it does today, that would include Plainville and Fairfax. Did that Board govern more than Mariemont schools?

Jordan: Yes, we had the children from Fairfax and Plainville, and then we helped Fairfax build a school building of their own and dedicated it. The Mariemont people were all there for the dedication. I don't remember the date. I remember I stood in the receiving line that night but I don't remember the date.

Interviewer: Well, the important thing is that we have always worked closely with Fairfax and its been a good relationship. Could you tell me the names of other Principals. Well, first of all, where did you live? There were no apartments or that sort of thing when you came out here.

Jordan: The first year the Lyons, Mr. & Mrs. Lyon and Minnie Hook, who was Mrs. Lyon's sister lived in Madisonville, and so they helped me find a room in Dr. Knight's home and I went home every Friday and came back Sunday evening for that first year. Then the next year there were places in Mariemont to live and I lived in the Dana apartments with two other teachers.

Interviewer: That must have been a real enjoyable time of your life - getting started in a profession.

Jordan: Yes, it was really exciting.

Interviewer: What other Principals can you recall. I am sure you remember Mr. Lyon - who were the other Principals for Dale Park.

Jordan: Mr. Beeson, Elmer Beeson, was one of the early ones.

Interviewer: Was he just in Dale Park?

Jordan: No, in all three schools.

Interviewer: Was he Principal?

Jordan: He was a Superintendent.

Interviewer: And then Robert Taylor?

Jordan: Robert Taylor was the Principal of Dale Park School under Mr. Beeson.

Interviewer: Then you taught under Mr. Evert who was a later one. Were those the only Principals that you recall.

Jordan: Yes, that's all. I don't recall any more.

Interviewer: Did you teach any particular grade when you were teaching?

Jordan: Yes, when I first started in the temporary building that first year I taught the first grade, but I had not been prepared for that - I wanted to teach intermediate classes. So I had the fifth grade the second year and I had the fifth grade for many years. Occasionally I would have to change over to a fourth grade, but not often, mostly it was just fifth grade.

Interviewer: The fourth graders were probably more advanced because of that. You probably gave them a little fifth grade teaching!

Jordan: I don't know! There were some very wonderful children in the school.

Interviewer: What would you say was the greatest pleasure as you think about the 42 years. In general what do you think brings you the most pleasure in remembering those years. I am sure the association with teachers.

Jordan: Well, just watching the Church and the school grow and develop, to see how they were going to turn out, what was going to happen. There were many times when we were in doubt as to whether they were going to last through the years, and I think that was the greatest satisfaction.

Interviewer: When you questioned whether they would last, there was never any problem with funds in the Mariemont district was there?

Jordan: No.

Interviewer: It wasn't a matter of tax levies?

Jordan: No. And not until after 1935 perhaps -that's about the time it became a public school.

Interviewer: It was under the Hamilton County before that?

Jordan: Yes, it was a Hamilton County school.

Interviewer: I know you probably don't remember outstanding students, I imagine they are all just one big class.

Jordan: I think so - I can't think of anybody particular.

Interviewer: Were there any special incidents over the years, for instance celebrations, or do you remember anything particularly during the second World War, but perhaps those hard times, didn't touch your grade as much.

Jordan: No, I don't think so because of the early grades.

Interviewer: There probably weren't many students whose parents were in service.

Jordan: In those days people didn't live in Mariemont a long time. I don't know just how to say that. They didn't own their homes, so many of them rented and they came and went.

Interviewer: There was more rental residential property at that time.

Jordan: Yes, much more. All of that section was rental.

Interviewer: I believe that there was a family by the name of Jaap who lived over in that area at one time.

Jordan: Yes, George and Ruth Jaap. Ruth Jaap is still living in Mount Healthy in a nursing home, and her son George Jaap lives in Northern Michigan. Ruth Jaap played the organ at Church in the early days. I think she probably was the first organist.

Interviewer: Now, didn't Mrs. Van Pelt also play.

Jordan: Yes, Mrs. Van Pelt followed Mrs. Jaap. The Jaaps moved to Terrace Park from here.

Interviewer: Of course, I think Mrs. Emery always had the feeling that the school and the Church were the center and important institutions in the community.

Jordan: Yes, that's right.

Interviewer: And they were right there together. Of course you have had a little bit closer connection to the Church through your husband. When you were a young teacher you met your husband around that time didn't you?

Jordan: Yes, in 1926 I met him at a community affair. We had a dinner and a meeting of a club, the first club that was formed in Mariemont - the Community Club. We had a banquet or dinner at the Inn one New Year's Eve and that's where I met my husband.

Interviewer: Was it just a social evening.

Jordan: Yes a social evening dinner at the Inn. The Inn had just been finished and it was very new and we had the dinner in one of the big rooms at the Inn. It was not divided up as much as it is today. It was all one big room.

Interviewer: Did they have the big fireplace there?

Jordan: Yes, we stood in front of the fireplace that night.

Interviewer: The Inn was quite a focal point of the community and yet it wasn't the center as it is today. The Old Town, what they call "Old Mariemont" was really more of the center of Mariemont at that earlier day at the beginning.

Jordan: Yes. The Church and Dale Park. You see we had no high school then and no other school. Dale Park was the only school and it and the Church were really the center of the activities. And when they built the Recreation building, that's when things started to meet there.

Interviewer: I recall that at one time there was bowling on the green up there by the Inn. I have a faint recollection of there being an outdoor garden with something, perhaps it was just for a short time.

Jordan: I don't remember

Interviewer: I know that the Inn was always a spectacular building. Were you and your husband married here in Mariemont?

Jordan: Yes, we were married in the Mariemont Church. The first minister in Mariemont married us.

Interviewer: What was his name? Was that Mr. Hoppy or Holly? Jordan: No.

Interviewer: Was he from the Christ Church - Rev. Nelson.

Jordan: No, the Mariemont Church hired him - Mr. McDaniels.

Interviewer: Oh yes, Asa.

Jordan: Mr. McDaniels was the second minister. There was one before him.

Interviewer: You met on New Year's Eve?

Jordan: On New Year's Eve in 1926 and then the next Christmas Day we were married in the Church. On Christmas morning in 1927. We were married about 9:30 in the morning and then we went away on our honeymoon.

Interviewer: Did you live in Mariemont from then on?

Jordan: Yes, we had an apartment in the Dana apartment building and we lived there for about 2 years, and then we moved to the MacKenzie apartments. We were there for a little while and then we lived on Elm Street and then we bought a house on Lytle Woods Place.

Interviewer: Was the house there before or did you build it?

Jordan: It was perhaps one of the oldest houses in Mariemont. It was built a long, long time ago.

Interviewer: You don't happen to know the original owner?

Jordan: No, I don't. Ferris was one of the original builders, but I don't remember. We bought the house from the Mariemont Company. It was an old house.

Interviewer: Were there other original houses here in Mariemont at that time.

Jordan: Yes, I would guess about six, mostly farm houses and Mr. Parks lived in one on Plainville Rd. and Wooster Pike, and of course where the museum is on Plainville Rd. that house was there. And there were several over on Petoskey and in that part of Mariemont.

Interviewer: But it was included in Mariemont, of course, it was part of the original land.

Jordan: Yes, it was part of the original land.

Interviewer: I believe that your husband was closely connected with Church activities, and of course that meant that you were even closer connected to the Church. When did he take part in the musical program of the Church?

Jordan: Very soon after we were married. We immediately started to go in 1927 – we went to the Mariemont Church because we were married there. And we've been members ever since.

Interviewer: You're a loyal member, I often see you there.

Jordan: Two years after I came in here in 1924 to teach and then I went home to Harrison every Friday night because I was teaching a Sunday School class out there and I wanted to see all my family too. That first year when I lived in Madisonville there was nothing to do here on weekends, so I went home. Then the first year I was in Mariemont on Plainville Rd. I went home every week too.

Interviewer: Mr. Jordan had a musical background, I know, and also a legal background. Where was his musical education?

Jordan: From the College of Music. He went to the College of Music and he went to Cincinnati Law School.

Interviewer: Did he do this consecutively or at the same time?

Jordan: At the same time. He went to the World War I. He had just graduated from high school, he was not quite 18.

Interviewer: What high school was that?

Jordan: Woodward High School. They took him in the army then and he went overseas in about 10 months and while overseas he was gassed and he suffered from that all his life. I think that's what caused his cancer and finally his death.

Interviewer: In what year did he die?

Jordan: In 1959. April 1st.

Interviewer: You were still living in Lytle Woods Place all that time until he passed away?

Jordan: Yes, until he passed away.

Interviewer: He majored in organ, I believe. At least I think of him as an organist.

Jordan: Yes, that was his musical interest, but he loved the Church organ and he loved his Church choir more than anything else in the world.

Interviewer: It's a heritage that the Mariemont Church has had a hard time continuing. Because of his legal background, I suppose that led into his interest in government to a certain extent. I know he got into the Village government.

Jordan: I think that was just because he was interested in the Church and in playing the bells and he became very much interested in the Mariemont Company. Mr. Livingood used to come to our house to see him so much, and Mr. Hogan. It just seemed to be a natural interest for him to see how Mariemont was going to come about.

Interviewer: Did he practice as an attorney on his own or was he part of a company?

Jordan: His father was an attorney and he was in his father's office as long as his father lived, and then he continued that same office and had several different partners who did not live here.

Interviewer: Now, the Mariemont Village - there must have been a time when they didn't have a Council and didn't have a Mayor and so on.

Jordan: Yes, up until 1941 we had no government and I remember so very well at a town meeting one night when they were going to try to organize meetings for the Village because that was in the background, you know. Boyd and I were at the meeting, the Village Meeting they called it, and they were trying to think of a name for it. I was sitting with Boyd up in the balcony and I said to Boyd why don't we call it the Town Meeting like they did in New England in the olden days. He said I'll mention

Interviewer: We were talking about the first Town Meeting at which you were instrumental in giving the Town Meeting its name. I believe that there must have been some other things that began around that time and one of them was probably the Town Crier.

Jordan: Yes, we had a man in charge of the meeting that night who came in and I said to Boyd "Why don't we call him the Town Crier" so Boyd stood up and said that at the same time that we called it the Town Meeting, and they did that. So we had a town crier as they had in early New England days.

Interviewer: Now, Ralph Smith is our present Town Crier. Do you recall any others.

Jordan: No I don't remember.

Interviewer: The costume, I suppose was the next step.

Jordan: Yes. That was a copy of the early New England town crier.

Interviewer: Then Boyd became Mayor at that time, around 1941?

Jordan: Yes. This Town Meeting took place I expect in about 1940 and then in the summer of 1941 they had an election and elected a Mayor and a Vice-Mayor, and other officers, clerk and treasurer, and I remember them having the meeting in 1941, one Sunday summer day when it was terribly hot and they had it out in our backyard and we carried chairs out there for them to sit on. I was thinking of some of the people - I remember them but I can't remember their names.

Interviewer: Of course Mr. Parks was always there.

Jordan: Yes, Mr. Parks was very much interested in the Town Meetings.

Interviewer: Maybe Julian Bailey?

Jordan: Julian Bailey was one, yes, and I can't remember their names - one who lived over on Center Street and that time.

Interviewer: Now did they divide the Village into districts at that time.

Jordan: No. that didn't come until voting time. Hamilton County Board did that.

Interviewer: Well, it has been a very successful and interesting type of government that has continued for a long time.

Jordan: Well, they wanted it to be something that everybody could join in and have an interest in. They were very anxious for that to happen.

Interviewer: Well, I'm sure that you and Boyd had great hopes and enthusiasm about the Village and its development. Do you remember any particular angle to the government or to the Village that he was particularly instrumental in developing?

Jordan: No, I don't remember anything.

Interviewer: Of course the Fire Department, all those things developed at this time.

Jordan: They had lots and lots of meetings in those early days. Every Monday night they had a meeting till about 12 o'clock or one. I never knew when Boyd was going to get home because the meetings were so long because there was so much to plan.

Interviewer: With all his activities and yours too, how did he find time to develop his interest in the Bells of Mariemont.

Jordan: I think that came about through his friendship with Mr. Arthur Justice. He was interested in the bells and the Church organ, he played the Church organ.

Interviewer: Did he also play the carillon?

Jordan: Yes, he played the Carillon and Boyd got a lot of his interest in the church choir and the church organ and the bells through Mr. Justice. Mr. Justice was a professor at Cincinnati University and they lived in Mariemont for many years then they had a cottage in Michigan and they built a cottage up there for us too and we went to Michigan every summer for many, many years.

Interviewer: Did playing the Carillon require any special training for Boyd or was his musical training enough?

Jordan: Oh yes. He went back to the College of Music for some of that training and then Mr. Justice gave him a lot of training. That was the way he became interested in it, through Mr. Justice.

Interviewer: The Bells, of course were smaller in range at that time. We have had bells added.

Jordan: Yes, there have been one whole octave of bells added. Yes, it was very limited. That was the reason that the choice of programs was so limited, because of the few bells.

Interviewer: Did they have the concerts on Sundays as they do today?

Jordan: On Sundays and holidays, very much like they have today.

Interviewer: Did he have anyone else that he could in an emergency turn to play.

Jordan: Yes, Ron Haldeman learned to play the bells while he was here and he did a lot to help Boyd and he played the bells when Boyd was in the hospital, and Ron Haldeman also played the bells after he moved east. But I don't think he is interested in it now. He's living in Mason, Ohio now and I don't think he has any access to it.

Interviewer: Was there any particular type of music or any particular hymns that Boyd particularly favored.

Jordan: Oh yes, he had a lot of favorites. I can't remember what they all are now.

Interviewer: I have heard that the signature for all the programs was Boyd's choice and the closing hymn that's played, and I can't remember what the name of that was.

Jordan: Nearer My God To Be, I think.

Interviewer: I know that almost every concert to me is like a memorial to those early carillonners and its made Mariemont very famous.

You have talked to some of your co-teachers from the early days, have they particularly recalled anything about their days? There was Mrs. Pince, who was originally Miss Demling.

Jordan: She came here in 1926 but she didn't lived in Newtown. Her father and mother had a house in Newtown and she lived there, so of course she didn't enter into the activities of the Village very much, she just came to teach every day.

Interviewer: In later years I recall her living with her mother in the Ripley apartments.

Jordan: They lived here many, many years after her father died and the home was sold in Newtown.

Interviewer: Now, she taught for many years here and did Mrs. Dougan teach here a long time too?

Jordan: Not as long. She left and taught at other places and when she was married she didn't teach here and she hasn't been back since. She taught for quite a long time when she first came in the very early days and then when she left she never came back.

Interviewer: Dale Park will be 60 years old next year and now its closed. I hope it will be retained as a center for the community in some way as an important building.

Jordan: The MariElders are there now and they are finding it very useful.

Interviewer: I think there is an office. Now the Preservation Foundation has a room there which they hope to eventually develop to a min-museum, you might say, and keep this sort of tape and other records. They have the blueprints.

Jordan: I'm so glad that Dale Park is being made use of. I've been worried about it. I've just felt awfully bad when I knew that there wasn't going to be any school there.

Interviewer: It's too valuable and beautiful a building.

Jordan: All of that - Dale Park and the Church - were all so beautiful.

Interviewer: It really is the center of many happy memories.

Well, Marie, I want to thank you and we'll bring our chat to a close. We've been chatting a long time, but I appreciate so much you sharing your memories and I hope you have enjoyed talking to me as I have to you.

Jordan: I've enjoyed it very much. I hope that I haven't got everything all mixed up. It's been a long time to remember.