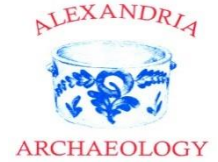




City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



Project Name: *Alexandria Legacies Oral History Program*

Title: *Interview with Mary Ryan and Cynthia Puskar*

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Interviewer: *Terilee Edwards-Hewitt*

Transcriber: *Heather Hanna*

Abstract: *Mary Ryan and Cynthia Puskar both volunteer with the Board of Lady Managers for Alexandria Hospital. Both women grew up in the Washington, DC area and began volunteering for the Board of Lady Managers after they retired. They discuss the history of Alexandria Hospital, the evolution of the Board of Lady Managers for the hospital, and the many different fundraising activities the group has done in the past and currently during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously two significant fundraisers for the hospital were the yearly fashion show, luncheon, and silent auction, and the gift shop which is located in Alexandria Hospital. An important aspect of being involved with the Board of Lady Managers are the friendships which are created by those who volunteer. Both Mary Ryan and Cynthia Puskar also volunteer with other organizations in Northern Virginia.*

This transcript has been edited by the interviewees and may not reflect the audio-recording exactly

Table of Contents/Index

Time	Page	Topic
01:33	3	Introductions
02:40	3	Mary Ryan Background and Schooling
03:40	3	Cynthia Puskar Background and Schooling
05:30	4	Cynthia Puskar Work History
07:05	4	Mary Ryan Work History
08:48	5	History of the Board
09:46	5	Joining the Board
11:28	6	What the Board Did Historically and What the Board Does Now
15:00	7	The Hospital Gift Shop
15:38	7	The Fashion Show Luncheon
17:05	7	The Night at the Theater Event
17:30	7	The Bake Sale Event
19:30	8	Hospital Equipment the Board has Funded
22:38	9	General Fundraising
26:52	10	Effect of the Pandemic on Fundraising
27:30	10	The Pipeline Playwrights Virtual Fundraiser
29:43	11	Conducting Business by Meeting Online
31:11	11	Recruiting New Members
34:43	12	Plans For the Future
38:38	13	The Hospital Auxiliary Board
45:36	14	Mary Ryan's and Cynthia Puskar's Volunteering with Other Organizations
49:30	15	General Accomplishments of the Board of Lady Managers
50:50	15	Fun and Friendship in the Board of Lady Managers

Introductions	
Teri Edwards-Hewitt:	All right well, thank you both very much for joining me! So, my name is Teri Edwards-Hewitt and I'm with the Office of Historic Alexandria and I'm interviewing Cynthia Puskar and Mary Ryan, who are both involved with the Board of Lady Managers for Alexandria Hospital, and I realized I forgot to list the date. So today is August 25th, 2021. A very hot August day, so thank you both very much for joining me.
Mary Ryan:	Thanks for having us.
TEH:	So this is great, so what I would like to do is just get a little bit of background information before we start talking about your involvement with the Board of Lady Managers. So Mary, and both of you are really from the DC area very long term, which is great; I think that goes counter to people's impression that people are just here temporarily, and, you know, here and gone. So Mary you grew—where did you grow up?
Mary Ryan Background and Schooling	
Mary Ryan:	I grew up in Arlington; I was born in the old Providence Hospital in Washington DC but lived for the most part in Arlington County.
TEH:	Oh, very cool! And where did you go to college?
Mary Ryan:	I left this area, going to a small, all women's college in South Bend Indiana.
TEH:	Oh cool, and what did you study there?
Mary Ryan:	I was majoring in political science and history with a minor in secondary education, but because we did not have a robust political science department, I took many of my major classes at the University of Notre Dame, a larger institution across the street.
TEH:	Oh, very cool! Excellent. All right, and then Cynthia, where are you from originally?
Cynthia Puskar Background and Schooling	
Cynthia Puskar:	I was born in Washington DC, and I came home to Alexandria Virginia. We lived in Presidential Gardens, which is still there, I think it's called Presidential Greens, and I lived there until I was eight and then we moved to Rosemont, and I lived there until I married and moved to Pittsburgh for eight years, and then when I got divorced I returned home to Alexandria. My favorite place.
TEH:	Excellent.
Cynthia Puskar:	Although I do have to say I live in Arlington but I'm right across the

	boundary and my heart's in Alexandria, my charitable work is for Alexandria, but yes.
TEH:	Well, you know northern Virginia we're all, you know, part of the same community and the thing I always have for my friends in Arlington is well, you know, they used to be Alexandria, because it was Alexandria County, so if you just go back far enough—.
Cynthia Puskar:	I'm literally one block from the Alexandria border.
TEH:	Oh, very cool. And Cynthia, where did you go to college?
Cynthia Puskar:	College of William and Mary.
TEH:	And what did you study there?
Cynthia Puskar:	I got a BS in biology. At one point I thought I wanted to be a nurse or a doctor and then that never, the closest I got when I got out of college was an offer for a job running a lab at NIH [National Institutes of Health], but they wanted a commitment for five years and I was getting married and moving, so I never got into the medical field as a worker. I ended up as a volunteer.
Cynthia Puskar Work History	
TEH:	Yeah, but very, still very involved with it right? And, so Cynthia you've worked as a federal employee?
Cynthia Puskar:	I did.
TEH:	And, um, and your work, what agency did you primarily work for?
Cynthia Puskar:	Primarily, for thirty-one years Environmental Protection Agency.
TEH:	Oh wow.
Cynthia Puskar:	Retired in 2004.
TEH:	And I see that you worked for a long time on the water policy? I'm now, I'm just interested, for the assistant administrator for water, so I'm just really curious about what that did.
Cynthia Puskar:	The organization of the agency is line organization from administrator to assistant administrator to office directors. But at the AA level they have on their [AA] staff typically policy staff to advise them as to what the line management are bringing forward to look at it more holistically and coordinate across our own office directors and then other AA-ships, so I worked as a policy staffer for years and then I was the director of the policy staff for about four years, every AA wants their own head of their policy shop, so the end of four years we got a new policy head, but the new AA asked me to stay on so I continued on the staff until I retired.

Mary Ryan Work History	
TEH:	Oh, very cool! And then Mary, you were a medical librarian?
Mary Ryan:	Yes, I came to that career rather late in life. I returned to the DC area, back to DC after living for five years in Connecticut. While I in Connecticut I had taken a few classes in librarianship so after returning to the NOVA area I enrolled in a master's degree program at the Catholic University. I was awarded a MLS [Masters of Library Sciences] degree in 1983 and then pretty much started on my library career.
TEH:	Oh, very cool, and where did you work?
Mary Ryan:	I became a medical librarian and worked at almost every medical library in the DMV area. I started at Georgetown medical library, and then I worked at the medical library at George Washington Hospital Medical Center, and in a finally moved out to NIH and worked in the Clinical Center at NIH for the remainder of my career.
TEH:	Oh. I bet, I bet every day was different probably.
Mary Ryan:	Well, as a clinical medical librarian you actually worked with the clinical research staff at the clinical center, did research for them and worked directly with them. That was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed working at every medical library.
History of the Board	
TEH:	Okay. Well cool! So how did each of you get involved with the board? Well, first, I wanted to mention that the Board of Lady Managers has existed for 130 years, 141?
Cynthia Puskar:	One hundred and forty-nine.
Mary Ryan:	Almost 150.
TEH:	Almost 150, okay!
Cynthia Puskar:	Actually, when Julia Johns had the idea, our organization helped found and establish the Alexandria infirmary, which preceded Alexandra Hospital, and so we will celebrate our 150th anniversary at the same time Alexandra Hospital celebrates its.
Joining the Board	
TEH:	Well, excellent. Um, so how did each of you get involved with the Board of Lady Managers?
Mary Ryan:	Cynthia, do you want to take that first?
Cynthia Puskar:	Well, I'll go. I retired like I said, in 2004 and was excited about having time to spend with my son and his family who lived on the west coast. Then friends started saying: "Oh, you should do this volunteer effort," and then somebody said to me: "You should wait; put a year,

	<p>two years under your hat, then figure out what you really want to do.” Then a friend from church who's still a member of the board, Ruth Corlett, approached me about joining the Board of Lady Managers. I was about ripe; I was ready for something to do, so I joined the board in 2006, so I've been a member for fifteen years now.</p>
<p>TEH:</p>	<p>Wow. And Mary, how did you get involved with the Board of Lady Managers?</p>
<p>Mary Ryan:</p>	<p>Well, I'm relatively a newcomer. I retired in 2012 and like Cynthia, I had not been involved in any organizations while I was working and raising my daughters. And so I started exploring different avenues for volunteer work. It was actually through a friend in a card group who was also a member of the Board of Lady Managers, Ellen Jones. She talked about working in the hospital gift shop. I was missing the experience of working in hospitals, so I decided to explore the Board of Lady Managers and joined the Board in 2015.</p>
<p>What the Board Did Historically and What the Board Does Now</p>	
<p>TEH:</p>	<p>Very cool. And can you tell me, both of you, either you, what does the Board of Lady Managers do? What are some of its missions?</p>
<p>Cynthia Puskar:</p>	<p>Well, under our constitution and bylaws, if you think about the fact we were founded by Julia Johns who saw a need for a hospital in the area, there are different stories as to why a hospital was needed, but she went to the churches in the community for help, I think about ten churches. Her father at the time was the fourth bishop of the Episcopal diocese of Virginia, so she had connections with churches. In our history documents it says she worked with women of like mind to do charitable good. It was recognized by doctors and lots of people that Alexandria was a port city and had ships coming in with people that were sick and needed medical care. We had poor people that were getting treated at their homes that were dirty; they might have successful surgery, but not recover due to unsanitary conditions.</p> <p>Julia called on the churches, the priests, pastors, or reverends and asked for people to help and they came together as an organization, and members of that group became the Board of Lady Managers. There were some men that became the trustees, but we became the Board of Lady Managers and were given the responsibility by the trustees to run the hospital, which we did totally on our own until 1941 when they brought in professional administrators. We still had a very active role. We not only helped found the infirmary and all the subsequent locations, but we also founded the nursing school in 1894 and oversaw its running along with the hospital. In the 1970s Inova Systems, for economy of scale, took over management of five hospitals including Alexandria Hospital.</p> <p>But going back to your question, what do we do, what is our mission;</p>

	<p>in our constitution and bylaws going back almost 150 years, we work with the hospital management to identify the hospital needs and to support those need financially. That's the focus of everything we do. Every fundraiser we have; we have a bunch of different fundraisers, including running the Hospital Gift Shop. Mary you may want to tell her some of the specific kind of events we've had in the past, or what is our big—.</p>
<p>The Hospital Gift Shop</p>	
Mary Ryan:	<p>I think, um, the gift shop, which ran, if you'll correct me if I'm wrong, I think the Board of Lady Managers took over the gift shop about twelve years ago. Is that correct?</p>
Cynthia Puskar:	<p>Since 2008. A little over thirteen years.</p>
Mary Ryan:	<p>And had been running it up until it, until March of 2020 when we were forced to close the gift shop due to the pandemic. This was unfortunate, since the Gift Shop was one of our main fundraisers for the hospital.</p>
<p>The Fashion Show Luncheon</p>	
Mary Ryan:	<p>One of our major events is the Fashion Show Luncheon and Silent Auction which dates back to the 1930s. I believe Cynthia, we've had some sort of fashion show luncheon program almost every single year. It continues to be a very, very popular event; we attract a steady crowd of returnees and seem to add new people every year. We would coordinate with local shops, most recently Lord & Taylor, for our fashions for the show. There were other shops that were, that we worked with as well. I believe Cynthia, in the past, and we also were planning before the pandemic on working with the boutique district in Old Town Alexandria, and we were very excited about including them and they seemed quite excited to, to join us in this event. Unfortunately, we are still waiting to have that event because it has not been possible [due to COVID-19].</p>
<p>The Night at the Theater Event</p>	
Mary Ryan:	<p>Another popular event is that we have a night at the theater which usually takes place in the first half of the year.</p> <p>We work with the Little Theater of Alexandria on that event and one of the highlights is a reception at intermission. We provide baked goods and punch. It's a popular addition to the program.</p>
<p>The Bake Sale Event</p>	
Mary Ryan:	<p>We have had a bake sale, which is traditionally done the first Saturday in September. We coordinate with the Fairlington Methodist Church men's group because they do a terrific barbecued chicken barbecue, and we would have our desserts set up right next to them. I</p>


	hate to say it, but the pandemic has put a damper on so many of our fundraising efforts. Cynthia, do you want to add anything to those?
Cynthia Puskar:	No. We've had lots of different things over the time, but the biggest one was the fashion show, luncheon and silent auction, which started out as just a fashion show; we kept adding things to it to make it more interesting. It attracts mostly women; I've often wondered, if we had it in the evening would we attract more men and make more money. That was our biggest fundraiser; typically \$25 to 30,000 a year. Then, as Mary said, we took over running the gift shop, which was really wonderful for us as an organization and allowed us to do a lot more to help the hospital.
Hospital Equipment the Board has Funded	
TEH:	I know, you know, and obviously for hospitals fundraising is such an important thing. Um, has the Board of Lady Managers, are there specific things, or specific equipment that you fund, or is it a general fund? How does, how do you decide what, what do you raise money for, and how do you decide?
Cynthia Puskar:	Well, as I said before, typically the hospital tells us what their needs are. And speaking back, I guess in about 2006 when I joined, they were looking for what they called Giraffe Omni beds, which were state of the art isolettes or incubators for preemies in the newborn part of the hospital and they really were state of the art, I mean maintain temperature, touch, air movement, and they were very welcome. After that, we did anesthesia machines for the surgical services department after that, we bought nine of them; they needed state of the art anesthesia machines, so they basically tell us. They might give us a couple things and see what we want to fund, which is a function of how much we feel comfortable pledging.
Mary Ryan:	Right.
Cynthia Puskar:	So this time—.
Mary Ryan:	—of that, of that five year, before the pandemic, we were getting to the end of a five-year \$500,000 fundraising proposition.
TEH:	Wow.
Mary Ryan:	Yes. But unfortunately having, having had a hard time fundraising, we're still working to, to complete that, but we are at the very end of that \$500,000.
General Fundraising	
Cynthia Puskar:	So generally, they tell us their specific needs. The most recent request is more general. It's more to fund their more general needs. Plus, money went to the chaplain to help with the chaplain work in the hospital which, our organization, being proud of its reputation as women

	of faith, because it was the churches that founded us, was happy to support.
Mary Ryan:	One of the most recent additions we supported was the conversion of rooms in the hospital to negative pressure rooms for treatment of Covid patients.
TEH:	Wow.
Mary Ryan:	Yes, I think our fundraising supported two or three of those rooms. And the year before our big push was for an intra-operative O-ring arm [Medtronic O-arm]. It was really cool because it allows X-rays or scans during the surgery, so they can actually see in real time how things are going. It was a pretty amazing piece of equipment.
TEH:	Very cool. It sounds like you, ah, well, you both, you get some additional medical information in the, while you're volunteering, as part of your work.
Cynthia Puskar:	Sure. I just remembered what I wanted to say about the gift shop.
TEH:	Oh, yes, please.
Cynthia Puskar:	We have existed for years and years, and about the time I joined the board, and we didn't have a lot of name recognition in the hospital. And it was disappointing. When we took over the gift shop, we were there on campus and we had a sign of who we were that ran it, and people would come in to shop and they'd chit chat, and we'd tell them our history and they'd be amazed. We had a little trifold pamphlet we'd hand out and say here are our upcoming events; we hope you'll consider and join us. Now we are known better by the doctors, nurses, and staff. And also by the senior leadership; they knew our Board's name but they didn't know us as people. So that has been a real joy, a real benefit not only in helping us raise more money for the hospital but improving our recognition among the administration staff; workers, doctors, nurses. Christine Candio former IAH [Inova Alexandria Hospital] CEO, came up with the idea to have IAH doctors and nurses model in our fashion show, because it used to be just members of our board that would model. It was fabulous and we still do that. I've got some great pictures of some fabulous doctors some of our members had been to, and they got a great thrill out of seeing them strut their stuff on a runway. Male and female, by the way.
TEH:	Excellent!
Mary Ryan:	Plus the staff love to see that; they love to see their compatriots taking part in the fashion show.
Cynthia Puskar:	Some of them are a lot of fun; swinging their jackets as they walk down. Guys! Doctors! There's one doctor who has always worn clogs, since my sister and I were having babies years ago, he still wears his clogs, he dressed up in a suit and wore them down the runway.

Effect of the Pandemic on Fundraising	
TEH:	Oh, wow. Um, so we've all mentioned briefly the COVID-19 pandemic. So, um, how has that, what changes has that made to your fundraising?
Mary Ryan:	It's made everything difficult.
Cynthia Puskar:	It's had a huge impact. We've tried to be creative and we've come up with some good things but they've been more internal among our members, as opposed to reaching out to the public at large.
Mary Ryan:	Virtual events, yeah.
Cynthia Puskar:	Yeah, virtual events. We weren't able to have our little theater, but you can tell them Mary about the women's group that we help support, and then we made some money.
The Pipeline Playwrights Virtual Fundraiser	
Mary Ryan:	There is a group of Alexandria women playwrights, they're called the Pipeline Playwrights. I don't know, you might be familiar with them. They write and produce their own shows, and in the past, I think they were doing their productions live at MetroStage, but of course the pandemic affected them as well as us, and so they started doing virtual performances of their original plays. And we actually worked with them and offered a production of one of their plays via Zoom. The play was great, and I think it is a very innovative way of dealing with the situation on their part, and lucky for us that we were able to use it as one of our fundraisers.
Cynthia Puskar:	Tell her about the after play, what they also did for us. The Zoom session where we were able to talk to them about what they do and how they do it and ask questions.
Mary Ryan:	Following the production, the Zoom audience got together with all of the actors, the director, the playwrights and anybody in any way responsible for the production for a live discussion. We were able to more or less virtually sit down and chat with them and ask them questions about what it was like to act and put on this production. It was pretty amazing. The actors were all in separate places, but the dialogue and movement made it appear that they all on a stage together.
Cynthia Puskar:	It was innovative; it was fun.
Mary Ryan:	It was, and they were just a great group and I will continue to follow their productions.
Conducting Business by Meeting Online	
TEH:	Wow! And how, um, have you, your organization, been able to meet? Were you doing some organization online during the height of, I

	guess the first wave of the pandemic?
Mary Ryan:	We have not met in person, yet. Our first proposed in-person meeting is for October [2021], and I have to say that we are going to have to assess the situation with the rising rates of the delta variant cases right now, but we have met every month virtually since March of 2020. We definitely have been able to carry on our business.
Cynthia Puskar:	When she says, “We have not met in person,” we have met by Zoom. Both the executive committee and full Board have met monthly by Zoom. And then various, well, we don't have a lot of active committees right now, but the fundraising committee has met by Zoom as needed.
Mary Ryan:	Right, the fundraising committee actually emerged more or less to meet the challenges of the pandemic because at this point in time, we had to figure out different ways of doing our fundraising. We have had monthly fundraising committee meetings and are doing as much or more planning now.
Recruiting New Members	
TEH:	Excellent. And how do you find new members?
Mary Ryan:	That is the thing that has suffered the most, Teri. We have not been able to figure out a way to reach out and bring people in right now. We would like to have people meet us and talk to us in person, via meetings or teas or luncheons, but that is exactly what we have not done since the pandemic hit us
TEH:	Right. And before—.
Cynthia Puskar:	Even in the year and a half it's been difficult because we've lost members who passed away and so it's, that's—.
Mary Ryan:	Not due to Covid.
Cynthia Puskar:	Not, yes, I'm sorry.
TEH:	Right, right. But still.
Cynthia Puskar:	—age and everything else, it's hard. Membership will definitely be a focus of the future.
TEH:	Sure. So before Covid and then hopefully, you know, after Covid, how do you find members? How do you recruit people? Is it word of mouth?
Cynthia Puskar:	Actually, for over 140 years we were tied closely to local churches, and we would encourage each church to provide us two members. Our number of churches went up from ten to maybe thirty at one point, which helped increase our membership for a while.

	<p>More recently, when the hospital was redoing the Chapel and the focus on all of Inova systems became more ecumenical in the design of our chapels and design of our work, we opened up and removed the requirement that members' names had to be sent forward by a church. We thought opening membership up would help us grow. We still use the churches but not as much as we used to. Maybe we should look for new ways to reach out to them.</p>
Plans For the Future	
TEH:	<p>Um, so it sounds like, um, the Board of Lady Managers, you know, you're, you're still working on things. And the play, the virtual, I don't want to say virtual play, the online play; that sounds really fascinating. What are some of the things you're looking forward to doing when, you know, we get past the pandemic with the organization?</p>
Mary Ryan:	<p>I think, first of all, holding social events to attract new members would be something that would be very interesting to do. It will be a lot easier when people are not worried about getting together in gatherings. And also, I think that we want to reach out and consider new and alternative ways of raising money and, and getting back actually to holding our big annual and also getting back to working in the gift shop.</p>
Cynthia Puskar:	<p>We have a date for next year's big event and hopefully we'll have a good turnout, things will be such that we can attract the crowd. And then reopening the gift shop. And that's dependent on Inova systems and the hospital as to when they're ready. They haven't opened up their visitor center lobby yet so we're waiting to hear when that's going to be and then figuring out how many of our members are comfortable going back. We look forward to opening it. And hopefully we'll make a significant amount of money there as well.</p>
Mary Ryan:	<p>I wanted to mention that next year will be the 150th anniversary of the hospital, and also of the Board of Lady Managers, and I think that Cynthia is our resident historian, she has gone through all the very valuable archival material that we have, and that we are going to be sharing, I believe, with, for a project, a display or presentation that's going to be at the Lyceum next summer.</p>
Cynthia Puskar:	<p>I forget the name of the woman we met, but we shared with her what we have.</p>
TEH:	<p>Ah, Kris Lloyd?</p>
Mary Ryan:	<p>Yes.</p>
Cynthia Puskar:	<p>Yes. And we had a nice, actually we met with her almost two years ago to start planning, and then things got shut down, and then we met with her more recently. Originally, we met with her at the hospital with the foundation office, and The Twig, and some others but more</p>

	recently, we met with her. It was Mary, myself, and a couple other women from the board.
TEH:	Oh, excellent.
Cynthia Puskar:	We showed her all we had.
The Hospital Auxiliary Board	
TEH:	Excellent, yeah, so yeah, and this [oral history] is part of that, you know; getting that background and individual information of people who are actively involved. Um, so this is about part of the history, I just didn't know if you had any information about the Hospital Auxiliary Board. Was that a separate group founded in the [19] 20s?
Cynthia Puskar:	<p>Yes, the, we were the Board of Lady Managers established in 1872, and the Auxiliary Board was established in 1921, shortly after they opened the hospital on Duke Street. We were still running the hospital, and the Auxiliary Board raised money to help support it.</p>  <p><i>Alexandria Hospital on Duke Street, Alexandria VA 1917</i></p>
TEH:	Sure. So yeah, the, the thing we were wondering is when the Auxiliary Board stopped existing. I don't know if you know.
Cynthia Puskar:	The Twig was established in 1933, and it's my understanding that they were an outgrowth of the auxiliary; they were younger group [referred to in 1936 as "the Junior Branch of the Alexandria Hospital Auxiliary"], established to help raise funds. I think they had an age limit at the time of, they couldn't be older than thirty-five and be in The Twig. At some point they changed that cut-off for the Twig. Prior to that it's also my understanding that some members that became, exceeded thirty-five would move on to the auxiliary. When they removed the age limit, some of them liked staying with the friends

	<p>they'd been in the Twig with for years, and the auxiliary started losing membership, because they didn't have the feeder group they had had for so long.</p> <p>The auxiliary ran the gift shop. I think from when the gift shop was down on Duke Street. And then they ran it when the hospital moved to Seminary Road. The auxiliary lost members and it got down to the point only two members were running the gift shop, one was already a member of the BLM [Board of Lady Managers] and another one joined us when the auxiliary closed. Fran DeSilva was running that gift shop almost single-handedly at the end for the auxiliary. Working all the hours and doing the buying. She'd been doing it for years, so it came to her kind of naturally. Fran came to the leadership of the board, I think Judy Doering was President at the time, and wanted to know if the board wanted to take over running the gift shop. There was a lot of discussion. It would be a real change, and it was going to take more time, and a lot of our people worked, but we, about twelve of us said "let's try it", and took over, and started running it, and shortly thereafter the auxiliary closed. So if we took over in 2008, I think they folded about that time.</p>
TEH:	<p>Okay. All righty, thanks. Yeah, because I was, you know, just going through the history, trying to get that year. Or those approximate years.</p>
Cynthia Puskar:	<p>Right, and then the other fundraising arm once we were on Seminary Road, the Alexandria Hospital Foundation was established in 1978. They started moving Alexandria Hospital from Duke Street to Seminary Road in the '60s; they moved a part of it, not all of it. And later they closed out the Duke Street site, and I think the whole thing ultimately ended up in, on Seminary Road in 1974, and in 1978 they established the Foundation. So now what you have left raising money are the Board of Lady Managers, The Twig, and the Foundation.</p>
<p>Mary Ryan's and Cynthia Puskar's Volunteering with Other Organizations</p>	
TEH:	<p>Okay. Wow. Well, that's great and, um, it just shows that there's so many moving parts, uh, you know, to make something like this hospital successful. I wanted to just briefly talk about, because in addition to your work, both of you, for the Board of Lady Managers, you're also involved with other volunteer activities. And so Mary I see that you're, ah, have been involved with the animal welfare league?</p>
Mary Ryan:	<p>Yes, I started volunteering with the Animal Welfare League of Arlington right after I retired in 2012 and I've been volunteering there ever since.</p>
TEH:	<p>Oh cool, and what do you do for them?</p>
Mary Ryan:	<p>We're allowed to come back in, so I have been working in the cat room, the cat kennel showing cats for prospective adopters who come</p>

	into, to the shelter, because it is now open again, which was great. And from home, I respond to questions about wildlife in Arlington. The AWLA houses Arlington animal control out of the shelter. People contact them with question and complaints and I'm able to assist in responding to some of their questions. I also assist in the transport of injured domestic and wild animals.
TEH:	Very cool and then Cynthia I see that you're, are involved with Grace Episcopal Church?
Cynthia Puskar:	I am.
TEH:	And what, what are some of the volunteer activities you've done there?
Cynthia Puskar:	I'm on altar guild, I've been on altar guild for a very long time, since probably the late '80s, early '90s. Oh, actually, I was on the junior altar guild when I was a kid. I've been on the vestry, the worship, memorial and lay committees, and a Sunday school teacher.
TEH:	Wow. And Mary you've been involved with your church also, right?
Mary Ryan:	Yes, but not, not as much as Cynthia.
Cynthia Puskar:	Been at the same church forever.
General Accomplishments of the Board of Lady Managers	
TEH:	Well, excellent. Um, was there anything else about the Board of Lady Managers I should ask you about, or that you wanted to talk about?
Cynthia Puskar:	They're an energetic group, very proud that they're women of faith, wanting to do good for the hospital, many have been around longer than I have. We have a member who has been there for over fifty years. We had an emeritus member who just died that was 103. We're very proud of the hospital as our community hospital.
TEH:	Yeah. No, it's, it's very impressive, and one of the things I was doing was looking at the newspaper articles for the past couple of years of the donations you've, your organization has made in the equipment, so that's really very impressive.
Cynthia Puskar:	Thanks! We're all very proud of all we've raised, thanks to all our supporters-donors. We couldn't do it without them. It's hard to quantify the value of what we have given that hospital, you know, to help found it, to run it, to raise money that kept it afloat. When you talk about how we gave \$500,000 this three years, there's more than that. That's not all it's about. Also at the BLM there we've established some great friendships too. So it's work, raise money for the hospital and friendship.
Fun and Friendship in the Board of Lady Managers	
TEH:	And I was, actually wanted to, to ask a little bit about the friendship

	aspect. Um, is that important? An important part of the organization?
Cynthia Puskar:	I think it is. It's not the only thing, but it's what makes the work more fun. You see somebody working hard and lifting a hand and you can't help but admire what they do.
TEH:	Well, excellent. And just, was there anything you wanted to say, Mary, about the friendships or the camaraderie of the Board of Lady Managers?
Mary Ryan:	Well, as, as we tell people when they're coming in that we are a fund-raising organization and but we also put the "fun" in fundraising. It's work but also fun to get together with Board members to work on these projects
Cynthia Puskar:	Absolutely, I will second that. I also think about working in the gift shop, and how many friends I've made working there, because you rotate, you work with different cashiers, suppliers and buyers. The fun of it is really in the celebration when the event is all over.
Mary Ryan:	[laughs]
Cynthia Puskar:	Well, you're excited that it's over, and you can breathe and live your life again, but also that you've raised this money for the hospital, and you celebrate the success of your event and the role everybody played in the success of that event.
Mary Ryan:	It's true. As Cynthia knows, the silent auction is a particularly labor-intensive fundraiser, which is part of our big overall fundraiser, and so you do, when, when that is over, you kind of just go "Whew!" But you have been going straight out for probably like four or five hours for that silent auction.
Cynthia Puskar:	And, and it's fun when we have our fashion show luncheon. There are anywhere from 350 [people who attend] [I think we've had 400 in the past]. You see friends and acquaintances everywhere. It's good to see all the local people that are happy to come out to our event and help support the hospital; we couldn't do it without them.
Mary Ryan:	Absolutely.
Cynthia Puskar:	They're very important to our success.
TEH:	Absolutely. Well, this seems like a good stopping point. And so thank you very much. I really appreciate you talking with me about the Board of Lady Managers for Alexandria Hospital, and what I'm going to do is going to stop recording now.
Cynthia Puskar:	Thank you.
Mary Ryan:	Thank you, too.