



THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



Oral History Interview

with

Patty Sheetz, Margaret Murphy, Helenmarie Shipp,
Linda Lovell, Kathy Hirsch, Mary Shoen, Seema
Nawaz, Sarah Higgins, Elizabeth Frank, Janet
Hawkins, Rosemary Bush, and Mary Olivia Macleod

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Narrators: Patty Sheetz, Margaret Murphy, Helenmarie Shipp, Linda Lovell, Kathy Hirsch, Mary Shoen, Seema Nawaz, Sarah Higgins, Elizabeth Frank, Janet Hawkins, Rosemary Bush, and Mary Olivia Macleod.

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Summary:

Members of the Twig Thrift Shop reflect on the history of Twig, its connection with the city of Alexandria and its commitment to giving back and serving the Alexandria Community.

Note:

This recording is part of a project for the Alexandria Hospital Exhibit, which opened at the Lyceum in 2022. For this project, individual and group oral history recordings were conducted with The Junior Auxiliary of Alexandria Hospital, or the T.W.I.G.

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INTRODUCTION

Francesco De Salvatore [00:02:43] My name is Francesco De Salvatore, so I manage the oral history program in the city. So, I do things like this. I also, I do a lot of recordings one on one with individuals. We also have a big collection that we have online, of stories. And so, we've been working with Twig, the past 2 or 3 years, really, even before I started. I started about a year and a half ago, doing one on one recordings. I know some of you have done those already. And I'll show you what we call these stories in these larger group conversations. And the hope is that we're going to have a larger collection about Twig, about the hospital, that, you know, in fifty to hundred years, you can listen to these stories, you know? And so, yeah. And so, the way Story Circle works, where we'll go for about, we usually go for about an hour and a half where, you know, we'll see how it goes. And, you know, they're very simple, right? But, the idea is that we really want to encourage listening and witnessing. Right? And so, you know, I won't be a big stickler about it, but we usually go one by one in the circle. If there is some interruption, you know, someone around, like, "Oh, yeah, I remember that." That's fine. I won't give you a detention or something. But, the idea is to give people kind of just space. And usually, it's about a couple of minutes and there's a larger group, so we don't have a whole lot of time per person. But, a couple minutes for someone just to kind of answer a question that I'll ask. And so I have about 5 or 6 questions. Patty, also give us some suggestions. If you're working on the brochure, right, about.....

Patty Sheetz [00:04:36] Working on the Twig history.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:04:37] Oh, yeah. Okay. So, yeah. And you'll see all these recorders here. So, we are recording this. And so, like I said, it'll be part of the collection. I will have it online that is accessible to the public. Are there any questions so far?

Patty Sheetz [00:05:01] I think we're good.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:05] So, we'll start by going around and just having each of you talk about how and why you joined this group for the first time. So, we can start with you and we can just go in this direction.

Margaret Murphy [00:05:21] Okay. I'm Margaret Murphy, a newbie, relatively. About five years, I think. Anyway, I shopped at the shop and always enjoyed it. Thought that it was a great cause. And so I came in.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:37] And make sure you introduce yourselves also. And your connection to it. So thanks for doing that.

Patty Sheetz [00:05:43] Patty Sheetz. I'm mostly here as an observer and a scribbler of what you say. But, I had two friends that just said you got to join Twig. So, I just showed up at the fabulous cocktail reception, and the rest is history.

Patricia Klingenmaier [00:05:59] I'm Trish Klingenmaier. I knew about Twig for a very long time through a friend, but I couldn't join because of work. So finally, when I retired, she said, "You are joining." She brought me in and I couldn't be happier.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:06:18] I'm Helenmarie Shipp. I've been a member since 1984. I joined as a result of someone taking a picture that was turned into a silk screen for Labor and Delivery. And when I lived in Farlington, and, I was invited to get a copy, and it was all Twigs and I decided to join.

Linda Lovell [00:06:48] I'm Linda Lovell. I joined Twig in 2004 and another member of our storytelling session, Janet Hopkins, is the one that brought me in. So, thank you.

Kathy Hirsch [00:07:02] I'm Kathy Hirsch, and I've been in Twig for 24 years, and Paula Klein is the past president that brought me in. She invited me to come to a coffee. And that's how I got in.

Mary Schoen [00:07:17] I'm Mary Schoen, and I joined ten years ago, and I can credit Janet Hawkins for introducing me to Twig and encouraging me to sign up, because I kept running into Janet at the Board of Lady Manager luncheons and that kind of thing. I was also familiar with the 'Twigs Cooks Tour' many years ago, and would have loved to join at that time. But like Tricia, I was working, full time and I wasn't sure I could manage it.

Seema Nawaz [00:07:41] I'm Seema Nawaz and I joined Twig in 1994. I've been in active service for 25 years, but association with Twig for 30 years, and I joined Twig because my girls went to Saint Stephen's. Saint Agnes. It used to be Saint Agnes School at that time, and most of the mothers there were already members of the Twig, and they would invite me and I would say, "No, no, no. I have a young family and I'm too much involved." But in 1994, Stevie Gillespie was the president, and she said, "Sima, you have to come to one of our membership, receptions." I did that, and there was no turning back.

Sarah Higgins [00:08:22] Hi, my name is Sarah Higgins. I joined Twig in June 2000, at the invitation of a very good friend of mine, Roseanne Garber, who was also, I think she became president that following year. And, she encouraged me to take on numerous roles within twig. And, I've been really happy since then.

Elizabeth Frank [00:08:44] I'm Barbie Frank. I joined Twig in 1983. I did go honorary in about '95, and because of work, I started working downtown Washington. And then, when I retired in 2018, I came back. I was brought into Twig by my aunt, Lola Biggs. Aunt by marriage. She's only five years older than I am. And by Patty Savage, who was my neighbor. She was two doors down from me. And, they're the ones who brought me here, and I missed a lot by being honorary for so long, but I've got some early knowledge. And then, of course, since 2018, being sustaining. Sustainer.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:09:25] And your photos on the wall.

Elizabeth Frank [00:09:27] And my photos on the wall. Yes. I'm the oldest one on the right. And my baby, my triplet sisters are in the middle. And my sister, Lily, who is three years younger than I am, is on the left. My sister, my baby sisters, were the first surviving triplets born in Alexandria Hospital in 1959. So, I have a lot of hospital stories. More hospital stories than Twig.

Janet Hawkins [00:09:56] I'm Janet Hawkins. I joined Twig in 2000. Cathy Hersh, and myself and Candace Reed, we were all, I think last. There was six of us, and three of us that were in that class. Candace and I were both active in the Junior League of Northern Virginia, where I knew Mary, and

we were looking for something closer to home, and we thought about the Twig, and my father had just died in the hospital, and he had received really great care there. So, we said, "You know maybe we should do something for the hospital. This is important to both of us." And Candace had just lost her father-in-law for the same reason. And so, we remembered our neighbor, Hope Woods, who belong to the Twig. And so we asked her if she would sponsor us. And that is how we got involved.

Rosemary Bush [00:10:42] I'm Rosemary Bush and I went to a Girl Scout meeting and as I was completely speeding towards the exit, I was confronted by Joy Langer and Roseanne Garber. They were like, "Would you like to go to a coffee?" And that was in 2002. But, I have been active since 2000.

STORIES OF ALEXANDRIA HOSPITAL

Francesco De Salvatore [00:11:08] So, I know you have some hospital stories, but if anyone volunteered for the hospital while they were in Twig, could you maybe share some stories about the hospital?

Kathy Hirsch [00:11:21] Kathy Hirsch. I'm going to read something on behalf of Roseann Garber, would could not be here today. Roseanne Garber-Brody. She sent this to me. "When I joined Twig in 1992, active members worked two shifts in the shop and one shift in the NICU [Neonatal Intensive Care Unit] at the hospital. I love working in the NICU. We're responsible for buzzing in family members coming to visit the babies. We also made diapers for the preemies because at that time, there were no manufactured diapers. We also ran errands for the NICU staff, often to the pharmacy. Wow. Typing this reminds me how times and technology have changed. My very favorite activity didn't occur every shift, nor often, but occasionally when a baby was being released to go home, I would assist the staff in transporting the baby from the NICU to the family car. A member of the NICU staff would push the mother in a wheelchair, and I would carry the baby in my arms, down the hall, into the elevator and then outside to the car. It was emotional. The proud, but nervous dad, would be waiting outside next to the family car. Mother and baby would be secured in the car. I usually had tears as I waved and watched them drive away. It was simply wonderful. At some point, due to fear of liabilities and lots of stories nationally about stolen babies, the hospital decided that the Twig could no longer work in the NICU, nor work in the hospital. I cannot recall what year this happened. I was personally disappointed when the hospital made this decision, because one, I loved the work, and two, for people like me who are employed full time, it meant I had to work two Saturdays at the thrift shop. The shop only had two shifts and the actors worked three shifts. That's from Roseanne.

Seema Nawaz [00:13:16] Roseanne and I are from the same class. We joined the Twig at the same time, and I also did one shift at the hospital in the NICU because at that time we had three shifts. So, I did two at the thrift shop and one at the hospital, and I didn't do what Roseanne just wrote. I used to help the nurses do the paperwork. You know, they had folders that needed all the required paper in it so that, you know, at entrance and at the discharge, the nurses only had to pick the folder and all the papers were in there. The required forms were already in there. And then they needed those little splints for the preemies, you know, for their hands. So we used to make those out of popsicle sticks. You know, have the tapes there, and then I would also stock the formulas and, you know, things like that, so that the nurses were freed from doing those jobs. And I loved it. And very disappointed, like Roseanne, when they stopped that. Then we all had to do the three shifts at the thrift shop.

Elizabeth Frank [00:14:27] I also worked at the hospital. I did not when I was doing it. We weren't in the NICU. You know, this was '84, '83, '84, '85. We were in with the Candy Stripers and, would do some of their responsibilities as well, mostly escorting people out of the hospital, pushing them out in the wheelchairs. I know Chris has already done his own that we used to do flowers. Distribute flowers and that kind of thing. But, like I said, we were in with the Candy Stripers and did some of the same things they did. So I didn't have, I mean I would have loved to have worked at NICU, but that was not an option when I was doing it.

THE CANDY STRIPERS

Francesco De Salvatore [00:15:05] Good. Could you explain the Candy Stripers for the other people?

Elizabeth Frank [00:15:09] There's one of the uniforms right there. The candy stripers were usually teenage volunteers who worked in the hospital and did a lot of the, taking the bookmobile around, snacks around, flowers, escorting people out, that kind of thing. And we, they were usually there after school, and we were there during the day. So, we kind of supplement. Sometimes we cross over if we were doing an afternoon shift. But, they did a lot of the work that Twiggs also did. And then, so of course, I was also working full time. So, one Saturday a month, all day at the hospital. And then, I was able to fit in the, I mean, all day at the thrift shop and fit in the hospital.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:15:53] Part of the rationale for us not being at the hospital anymore, because I was president when we stopped doing it, was twofold. It was, first of all, they were looking for people who could have an assigned shift every month, 12 months a year. And, we were in and out when the summer. The second thing also had to do with the fact, that they were Candy Stripers and Twigs and an increasing number of hospital senior volunteers, and there was almost not enough work for everybody to go around.

Seema Nawaz [00:16:35] And, I think that the uniform that is displayed on the wall, belongs to Alexandra. And she is now a member of the hospital foundation board at Alexandria and where they used to serve on the board. And now she's on the board.

VOLUNTEERING AT ALEXANDRIA HOSPITAL

Francesco De Salvatore [00:17:44] Are there any other memories about volunteering at the hospital, if any of you did that?

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:17:53] I never did that.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:17:58] I'm just really quick. Could you maybe introduce yourself?

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:18:03] I'm Mary Olivia MacLeod. Sorry for the lateness, but I was.....

Francesco De Salvatore [00:18:05] That is okay.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:18:05] Trying to find a parking spot. And trying to get free parking. I have a real problem with paying for parking.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:18:18] You've been in Twig since when?

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:18:21] '94, '95. I don't remember the mid 90s. Yeah. So I've been around.

Kathy Hirsch [00:18:26] How did you join? Why did you join Twig?

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:18:30] Because, Val asked me when I was taking my child to an orthopedist. To see Doctor Andersen for a checkup. 'Oh, you should do it.' So, look, Dr. Andersen was a member for years.

Seema Nawaz [00:18:45] So, Val was your sponsor?

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:18:48] Yeah.

MEMORIES OF THE TWIG THRIFT SHOP BUILDING

Francesco De Salvatore [00:18:52] So, I'm gonna start going into the thrift shop. And, I know each of you have a lot of memories about working there and being there, and so just start out with, can you describe any memories you have of the building? I saw multiple thrift shops.

Elizabeth Frank [00:19:10] Well, I visited earlier thrift shops, but the one we're in right now, when I first joined, I started working in the thrift shop, there was no interior access to the basement. You had to go through the alley and down the back stairs to get into the basement. And it was basically, concrete floor and very, not very nice. And there was no dumbwaiter. And I don't remember exactly what year it was. I think it was '85 or '86. I was the co-chair. And, I hate going braindead on names. Sharpe. Lynn Sharpe. Who is now, Lynn Wilson. She was the chair of the renovation. And during that renovation, we had an engineer come and look at the basement. And he said, 'Oh, you got a leak here.' And, there was some water in there. And it turned out, after doing some research, we discovered that it was coming from the toilet of the office, the attorney's office, right behind us. And so, I got tagged with going over and talking to the attorney to say, you know, 'this is a problem and we really need you to fix this. And we're this poor little organization.' And he was, he finally agreed to fix it. So, we got that fixed and got the place dry, although there's always been water and there's something worse. But, I don't remember who the contractor was or anything like that. It was so long ago. But, we had the stairs installed. We cleaned up the basement to make it usable, and we had the dumbwaiter installed. And that allowed us to expand our inventory. Because of course, that first floor is pretty tight. And we were selling children's clothes. We were selling up more furniture, things like that, in those days. But, that was my relatively small contribution to the way the shop looks today.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:21:26] And did they fit? And then, they expanded the marking area too. Didn't they? When they did that part?

Elizabeth Frank [00:21:32] I don't remember that part.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:21:33] I think they did. I think that it was smaller when you first started. Yeah.

Elizabeth Frank [00:21:38] It was so long ago. Yeah.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:21:40] Yeah. Do you have any memories?

Kathy Hirsch [00:21:43] I have only known this building the way it is, so I do remember when the dumbwaiter stopped working.

Seema Nawaz [00:21:55] But now, we are very lucky to have the dumbwaiter go all the way down to the basement.

Elizabeth Frank [00:22:02] No, it didn't go all the way down.

Seema Nawaz [00:22:03] Now, it goes all the way down to the basement also.

Elizabeth Frank [00:22:09] I don't think we could afford to do that.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:22:12] Just. Yeah. And we pray.

Elizabeth Frank [00:22:16] Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Rosemary Bush [00:22:18] When I first joined Twig, the dumbwaiter did not work right. So, we would run all the clothes downstairs because, it wasn't a mess, but by the time you got out of there, you were like, we got our workout that day.

Seema Nawaz [00:22:43] You know, when I joined to the Twig, we were already in this building. But, I do know of a small extension that would have been part of this section, if Twig was able to purchase it at that time. And, that was when Janet Hawkins was the president and the space right next to us and it's addressed as 106 and a half. We are 106. And that is 106 and a half, and it was a narrow space, but that became available for sale. And the Twig really looked into it, did lots of investigation and, you know, but in the end, it wasn't feasible for us to buy it. But, we did rent it for a little while, saying to the landlord that we need to see if we can really make use of the space. And, we did make use of the space. We used to, we don't accept furniture, but at that time, we started accepting furniture, and we set it up as a showroom with paintings on the wall and, you know, little. Very cool. And, it was a shame that we couldn't, get it. But yes, I do know of another small space that was right next to it. Now, I think it's a barber shop.

Janet Hopkins [00:24:00] At the time, we had an opportunity because the gentleman who owned the building, Ron Kaufman, his wife, was an honorary Twig. And, was in touch with another Twig, who is no longer with us, Starling Zarach, and suggested that we try to rent the space. And so, we did. And, the rent was like \$100, \$200 a month. And then, we had another Twig, Julie Rascal, went around looking in thrift shops and picking up different cases. I think one of the cases is still in our current shop. And, so we had a lot of merchandise, sort of how ultimately the special sales committee kind of evolved from this because we have a lot of upscale linens.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:24:44] Janet, wasn't there space in the back? It wasn't just the barber shop. It was.....

Janet Hopkins [00:24:49] There was extra space.

Seema Nawaz [00:24:51] Well, it's.....

Helenmarie Shipp [00:24:52] Around the back.....

Seema Nawaz [00:24:52] Part of the barber shop. That used to be storage.

Janet Hawkins [00:25:05] It was a lovely space. But, one of the issues for us, which today wouldn't be an issue, is we didn't have enough Twigs to work the shop. And so, we were asking people to do For The Love of Twig Above and Beyond to come help out. A number of people that are here volunteered. So let's say it was a cool thing.

Margaret Murphy [00:25:28] What was the reason you didn't buy it?

Janet Hopkins [00:25:32] Well, I didn't have the money. And also, we didn't have manpower. The womanpower, I should say. There were people on the board who felt we just didn't have enough resources to do it. Because at that time, we were at about 120 members and how many were active? Mary, you may remember better than I.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:25:54] We were capped.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:25:57] And the cost of it back then. Which would have been nothing for us now.

Janet Hawkins [00:26:01] Asking people to do more than two shifts a month. And we had just, this president before me, we had just switched over to two shifts a month. One more minute about this. When Kate Walker was president, in.....

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:26:23] 2013.

Janet Hawkins [00:26:24] 2013, we had another actual real opportunity to buy the property. And, we moved into, we hired an attorney. We went through that conversation and we figured out a way. We actually had somebody on Twig as a design person, works for our design company, going to break through the wall and expand. But again, the board just wasn't ready to make the financial commitment. Somewhere in the history stuff that is over at the Barrett Building.

Seema Nawaz [00:27:03] It was a fun project.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:27:07] There was a point, and I don't remember exactly when it was, when a Twig, who was now honorary, who had been president, who was also a realtor in Alexandria, had suggested we look at what was then, Yamaha music at the corner of Mount Vernon and Monroe. It's now a restaurant or whatever. And she was pushing us to move because it had a parking lot. As with the question of.....But, that didn't go anywhere because everybody did not want to sell the historic piece of property that we now own, free and clear.

Seema Nawaz [00:27:57] I wish someone had millions lying around and we could have kept this property. Because I was in favor of that property, you know, because of the parking lot.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:28:09] Well, it would have been. And also, maybe one big, huge room. My kids went to Yamaha Music Fair. We would have had to reconstruct. It would have been very different.

Elizabeth Frank [00:28:19] Is that where Junction is now or where Walgreens is?

Helenmarie Shipp [00:28:21] No, across the street from Walgreens.

Linda Lovell [00:28:27] They plan to use half of the parking lot for sightseeing.

Elizabeth Frank [00:28:31] Which they do right now anyway. They do it anyway.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:28:37] It was also right at a bus stop. That was the other thing. Over the years, our clientele has changed dramatically as thrift shopping has changed. As, and the fact that in consultation with the hospital, we stopped accepting and selling children's clothing. Fire retardants and lead paint and all sorts of CPSC things, they suggested that we no longer do it. And I think between that, the changing neighborhood, and then the changing nature of thrift shopping, it's a very different building. You know, it's very different inside. Right? You know that.

Elizabeth Frank [00:29:28] When I, when we first started, our clientele was, relatively poor. There was a lot of, a lot more public housing in the area. And so, a lot of our clientele was literally there because it was the only place they could afford to buy nice clothes and children's clothing in the beginning. And so, we were not only a not-for-profit, but in some ways we were a charity for those people because, at the time, our prices were much lower. But as you said, the neighborhood evolved and it became a lot of the public housing kind of went away. And it's been redeveloped. It's much more upscale, and our contributions are much more upscale. And thrifting is now a thing.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:30:18] But, I think the transition of it was when we started accepting the vouchers from, we started with Christ Church, where we did the vouchers, and then we kept expanding the number of service organizations in Alexandria from churches mostly. Correct? That we would, they would come in with a voucher for X-whatever. And, then we would settle with the church.

Janet Hawkins [00:30:54] And, we used to sell a lot of things that we don't sell anymore. Part of it is thanks to our Burgundy GI person underwear and stockings. So, I remember there was this little gentleman, who would come once a week, or when I had my shifts, on a bicycle, he would go in and buy used women's nylon stockings. And I kept wondering what it was, and I never asked him. And, he was always very grateful and very polite. And at that time too, we were still just taking just cash. That was a big difference too, in terms of how our, how much money we started making because people would pay for everything in cash. And we had things that were \$0.50 and so on. And I don't know how much these nylons were. They probably were like, \$0.50?

Helenmarie Shipp [00:31:46] And then we no longer take bedding pillows.

Seema Nawaz [00:31:49] Not anymore.

Patricia Klingenmaier [00:31:51] But we do. Nothing goes to waste. The things we can't use, go to a mission. Bedding goes to the animal shelter. So, we pretty much don't waste.

Rosemary Bush [00:32:11] They say that every season. Reuse the threads and recycle. Everything's used.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:32:21] Very little gets actually thrown away.

Seema Nawaz [00:32:24] You know, going back to what Barbie had mentioned about the clientele and how that's changed. I'm still very thankful that we are serving different clientele, but, everyone who, not only people who just show up there for fun, but even those who are in need, the prices are such that anyone can afford those things. And I remember a story, when I first joined the Twig in the 90s, I was working with Anne Rush, wonderful Twig, who is no longer with us now. And I was

working in stock upstairs with her and, going through donations, and I came upon an electric shaver, and I took it out, and I said, 'Oh, this is a personal item, so should I just discard it?' And she looked over and she said, 'No, plug it in to see if it works.' I did, and it worked. And she said, I said, 'Yeah, but you know who's going to buy this?' And she said, 'No, no, no.' And she gave me some, you know, spray and some tissues. And she said, 'Clean it.' And I'm looking at it, so I said, 'Really? You want me to?' She said, 'Yes, we'll put it down on the floor.' So, I cleaned it up and, you know, priced it and sent it down. And in the afternoon, I was doing my second shift and I was at the counter. And the lady walked up, she had other things. T-shirts and stuff like that. And then, that electric shaver also. So, I looked at it and I said, 'Oh, I'm so glad you found this. I just sent it down this morning,' and as I was counting her stuff, she says, 'Well, I have a son, a grown up son, in a mental hospital facility and other people come and take away his things. So, I always come to the thrift shop to find things, like these, that I take and then, I don't mind if, you know, he loses them. I don't mind. I always find something.' So that really, humbled me and has stayed with me all these years that, you know, you can't discard things away. You can't throw them away. You have to, there's always someone who'll need it. So, that's the good thing about the thrift shop, that we serve the community in so many ways.

Margaret Murphy [00:35:01] Do we still do vouchers?

Seema Nawaz [00:35:04] Yes.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:35:05] I don't see as many.

Seema Nawaz [00:35:07] Oh, yes. The other day, I been had through, two young Afghan ladies came in and they were from Christ Church. They were sent to the shop and they bought some stuff. They've got some stuff.

MEMORIES OF ITEMS SOLD AT THE TWIG THRIFT SHOP

Francesco De Salvatore [00:35:21] But, what are other items that you've seen sold or help sell at the shop? Things that stick out in your mind over the years.

Linda Lovell [00:35:41] I bought a raincoat that is a trip. My travel raincoat that is reversible. And every single time I wear it, I get compliments on it.

Elizabeth Frank [00:35:50] And I have a coat that I wore today that is very unique. I don't know. Not sure where it came from, but it's very unique, very warm-lined, and I get compliments every time I wear it.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:36:03] A sweater.

Rosemary Bush [00:36:21] It was pretty funny because we've never seen some of these. We don't have a secret closet with them hung up.

Kathy Hirsch [00:36:31] Most of them go to Helen Marie.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:36:37] Oh, yeah, there's a Twig who is not here, who I buy for, trying to put it up on the wall. But, people who have any taste take it down. Yeah, I put it up for her and they take it down. I've been in the thrift shop a couple of times. One, I had a woman come in who said, 'Every time my husband comes to DC for business,' she said, 'I come with him and I take the train. I take the metro out because I want to come to your shop.' And then, we also had a group of flight attendants who, on the off time, would take the train from national airport, come down with their empty suitcase and buy our stuff.

Rosemary Bush [00:37:29] We do have a client that comes to work in DC for a couple of months out of the year. And he doesn't pack anything, comes to the thrift shop and buys them. And then, when he is finished, he donates them.

Janet Hawkins [00:37:45] My husband graduated to expensive shoes thanks to Twig. I was working stock and there was a pair of Mephisto shoes, and I bought it for \$44. They're like \$300 ten years ago. And I kept saying, 'Really?' I said, 'I brought you these shoes. I think you're going to really like them. He wouldn't try them, he wouldn't try them. I think you really should try these shoes. They're really nice shoes. And then after that, it was all over. Best shoes ever. So, I worked with the shop. 'Did you find anything for me?'

Helenmarie Shipp [00:38:18] I think people who come into our shop, are very aware of the two things: that we support the hospital, and also that we are all volunteer. And, I think that engenders us to a lot of people.

Elizabeth Frank [00:38:37] And, I also think that Annalise's flowers out front attract people to come in. People who would never have come in, in years past. I was working not too long ago when a couple came in from overseas. I think it was, the Netherlands or something. And they came in because the front was so attractive, and they ended up spending like \$200-250 on some of the higher end things, and said 'This, this is fabulous. I wish we were coming back again.'

Seema Nawaz [00:39:08] The curb appeal does matter. The curb appeal does matter.

Elizabeth Frank [00:39:13] Yes, it really does. It makes us look high end.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:39:17] Well, and our bottom line is so much higher. When I was president in the Dark Ages, in 1991, we were doing three year pledges of \$100,000. Hospitals. We're now doing seven year pledges of \$1 million that we're paying off in what, five years?

Seema Nawaz [00:39:41] Six years.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:39:43] You know, the nature of what we do has, you know, kind of quadrupled in value and effort and whatever.

Rosemary Bush [00:39:54] Well, I have a story to tell. Back when Pam Rinn was president, I was co-chair, and I got a request that Pepperdine University wanted use our shop to film some obscure laws. Like, if you leave your bracelet in the dressing room, the next person goes in and gets it, who owns that bracelet? Anyway, so, at that time, we we worked on Fridays. We made about thousand dollars. Now, at first they wanted, allocated \$500. They only used the shop for half a day. Then, they decided that they'd be here all day. And I said 'Fine.' \$1,000. So anyway, we didn't lose any money. So it was pretty cool. They changed our shop to look like it was in the '20s. It was really good for trades. And I mean, it was amazing. And then, they sent us the potato whatever. Yeah. It was really cute. I mean not just cute, it was a little less enchanting than it was. You know, they took it down. I think because legally, they they took it down. They told us we could only have it for a certain amount of time.

Kathy Hirsch [00:41:23] You should have made a call to the store.

Rosemary Bush [00:41:26] Probably do have a copy somewhere, but.....

Seema Nawaz [00:41:29] We should get a copy.

MEMORABLE TWIG CUSTOMERS

Francesco De Salvatore [00:41:40] Can you maybe describe some more memories of memorable customers?

Linda Lovell [00:41:44] Well, one person that I met first at the Twig shop, that later I kept running into when I was volunteering for the Office of Historic Alexandria, the Anna Lynch and I would come and she was a constant customer. She would come all the time. Everyone's nodding their head and knows. Lovely lady. Incredibly gifted in helping people, she would sit in the library at the Queen Street library. And, if you were looking for genealogy or some book or just history about something, she would volunteer to help you do that. And, she then volunteered for the archeology museum. She volunteered for, there is a history award, the volunteer award is named for Anne Lynch in the Office of Historic Alexandria after she sadly passed. But, she was, that's where I first met her. And then, of course, after I do a lot of volunteering for Historic Alexandria and I kept running into her. Where do I know you from? And then I was in, you know, working in Twig once. That's why I know you. So, yeah, she was quite a lovely lady.

Seema Nawaz [00:43:09] And very helpful. And she was always willing to identify items for us also at the thrift shop. Because, I always knew she would come in. So if something, you know, we didn't know the price or whatever the value, I would save it. And I said, 'Oh, when Anna comes, I'll show it to her.' And she would really and sometimes she would take the items back to the torpedo factory.

Linda Lovell [00:43:33] She was from France? Belgium?

Helenmarie Shipp [00:43:35] Belgium. She spoke with a little bit of an accent. Yes, yes. Oh, yeah. Yeah, she was fabulous.

Seema Nawaz [00:43:40] She would always go for the books first.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:43:42] Yes.

Seema Nawaz [00:43:44] She would go downstairs, look at the books and always find something. But, she helped us identify many objects, you know, in value for the thrift shop.

Elizabeth Frank [00:43:52] Another memorable client is William. William is, I think, homeless or, he shuffles around. I see him around here, but he comes in very frequently. Always ask for Phyllis, who was our shop chair last year, et cetera and he buys CDs. And so, he's always going through to see if we've got any new CDs and if he needs something, quite often if Phyllis is there, he'll get some shoes and she will pay for it. But he, you know, he looks awful, but he's a very sweet person and very respectful. And, you know, I always say hello to him if I see him around town. So he's another memorable client.

Linda Lovell [00:44:40] To segway back to another, we should start selling records again, ladies. My great niece got a record player for Christmas. They are back.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:44:53] So they have been back.

Linda Lovell [00:44:56] I remember when I moved. I moved, I gave my record collection and there was, we had it set up so that there was a man here who bought used records. And he was there when I brought mine in. So it was sort of like, I gave them and then he gave the money all in the same day. But, we need to start accepting and selling them again. I think they're a hot ticket.

Rosemary Bush [00:45:25] We do have a client who, during the day, he dresses like a guy. But at night, he dresses like a woman. Anyway, now that I am thinking about it, I want to say, I went up to him and thought this person needs, because I was used to seeing him in regular clothes. But, he does look a little different. How about the homeless guy that always came in to buy the socks? He would come in, hand you money and buy a few pairs of socks.

Janet Hawkins [00:46:09] We used to have a woman who would come in, she probably was like our age now. But anyway, she would come in and shop for about two hours and then she would pick, like every sweater under the sun. And said, she was buying it for her niece or some family member. I don't know if you remember this or not, but, and then she would come to the counter with 20 sweaters and try to get you to help her decide what to buy. And we would go back and forth about which one. And so on. And usually, she would never buy like two and then we had to put all the stuff back and have that. And then the other thing, there were several women who did this, like, I sort of remember their faces when we were trying to get rid of merchandise, we would have a dollar tag sale. So, we would have the colored tags. So, if we had like a red tag this would be for a dollar. So, people would come in with that. It was like the bag sale. It was pretty exciting to have these dollar tags. So, people would come in and just start grabbing stuff, but if they saw something they really liked and it wasn't on the dollar, they would take the tag. But, we'd have tags all over the floor and people would come and say, "Wow, it must be a dollar tag," and you have to go back upstairs.

Rosemary Bush [00:47:25] The three men that, you know, went gambling every day? We had the gamblers one and two downstairs, and there was three. I don't know if that was really true.

Janet Hawkins [00:47:36] It was true because they would leave little pieces of paper.

Seema Nawaz [00:47:47] I think once we got the security cameras installed from the hospital, that took care of such activities.

Rosemary Bush [00:47:54] What about the time Val Kilmer came to our store?

Linda Lovell [00:47:56] Thank you. You also remember. I was going to wonder if anybody else remembered that Val Kilmer came in.

Rosemary Bush [00:48:09] He bought a book. There's a hardback book and it was for sale for twenty-five cents. And he looked through the whole entire shop and he would see our cameras. And so, Chris, we had to take that. We looked at the film when he left, and it was hysterical. So, it became, he knows we're a charity thing. Why didn't you give us \$10 for that thing? And the next week, he put his place in New Mexico, on sale for \$33 million. He could have afforded a dollar at least.

Elizabeth Frank [00:48:45] \$0.95 a month.

Rosemary Bush [00:48:51] Well, I guess he wanted to be a regular person, I guess.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:48:58] I think what's interesting, I work on Thursday nights, and once we started opening on Thursday nights, it was a blessing to those of us that were working during the day. We didn't have to give up a whole Saturday or something like that. So, thank you to Twig for doing Thursday night shifts and they'll understand we have Wednesday night. But, the Thursday night crew, we love our customers that come in. They're regulars, and we greet them like they're our friends and we miss them if they don't show up. We have these two women who come in regularly. And, I think a lot of us have met them before, but these people just keep coming back on Thursday night and are so excited that we are open. It's like a little family on those nights.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:49:46] It's a social occasion.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [00:49:47] It's a social occasion. We greet them. One time, one gentleman who comes in every Thursday night, he brings back his bags and everything. So it really is, I think I appreciate Twig opening up on Thursday nights, now Wednesday, and I hope it works as well.

Kathy Hirsch [00:50:08] Sorry to disrupt. This is for our communication chair. She wanted a picture of this. And this nice lady here, is going to take a picture of the observers. That's right.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:51:22] You know, in the context of today, it's a sweet little niche. You know? People know what we're trying to do, benefit from what we have, and everybody is sort of copasetic, you know?

Elizabeth Frank [00:51:42] But, we do still have the people who come in and take tags off.

Janet Hawkins [00:51:47] We have shoplifters, and the loss has always been, well, if they're desperate enough to steal a pair of socks, we should just let them take it.

HOW ITEMS SOLD AT TWIG HAVE EVOLVED

Francesco De Salvatore [00:52:06] But, please do share, I mean, you talked a little bit about it, but over time, what items were, you know, in vogue? What thing was discontinued? What have you seen change over time?

Elizabeth Frank [00:52:27] Fur coats. Because, there was a long period of time where nobody was wearing fur. You risked getting paint. And that's changed. We're now selling fur coats.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:52:36] And people come in for the designer handbags, that are pink tagged. You know, we have special sales, and I think we have a lot of people who come in for our pink tag selection.

Elizabeth Frank [00:52:51] Because they're still way.....

Helenmarie Shipp [00:52:52] Higher.

Elizabeth Frank [00:52:53] More expensive than our normal merchandise, but way less than you would pay if you went into a retail store. And that one woman, that we had last year that gave something like 200, she passed away, in her estate, gave us like 200 very high end, never used pocketbooks. And we made a killing on those.

Janet Hawkins [00:53:13] So are you talking about, like, fashion styles? Because, when I first started in 2000, we used to have a lot of suits and blazers. And now, we don't have as many of those because I don't think people wear suits like they used to.

Seema Nawaz [00:53:27] Especially after the Covid years. And since people don't go to the workplace. People are working from home. It's sort of more relaxed. And then, there's also, I think, more shoppers, younger shoppers coming for the vintage stuff. So I see, I've seen that change.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:53:52] When I first started and Barbie first started, and there were children's clothing, my husband, we have three boys and a daughter, and my husband used to call the navy blazers the Alexandria Clothing Exchange. You go in and, you know, I buy a blazer and khaki pants and loafers or whatever. And then, when the kids grew out of them, you get them dry cleaned and you bring them back to the shop. You know, that aspect of it is gone too, because we don't have children's clothing anymore.

Janet Hawkins [00:54:28] But, that was always something when you're working at the shop, and somebody would say, 'Well, my son needs a new blazer in the size. Can you see one? Let him know.' You know, so you're going through clothing and stuff like that.

Rosemary Bush [00:54:47] Sometimes we get, like a woman passed away at her door, who was cleaning out her attic, and she brought in clothes that were from the 1920s. So, we talked about is this valuable, is this not valuable. So, we had a person take a look at it. And, it was a designer of that day. And we sent it off to an auction house in Philadelphia and we made eight thousand dollars on that one.

Elizabeth Frank [00:55:15] That's right. When was that?

Rosemary Bush [00:55:19] That was a couple years ago. One dress made the cover of the catalog.

Seema Nawaz [00:55:25] Of the catalog.

Patty Sheetz [00:55:28] It was a Fortuni dress and it went for five thousand dollars because it is in the heartbeat.

Janet Hawkins [00:55:28] The other thing that came in one time when I was working, the woman brought in donations, and there was a tuxedo in one of the bags. And, we started looking at it and it had initials in it. And it was.....

Helenmarie Shipp [00:55:48] George. George Herbert Walker Bush.

Janet Hawkins [00:55:51] George Bush Senior. So, there was much, much discussion. Margaret Bush, I think, was on that foundation board. Is that right?

Kathy Hirsch [00:56:01] I think she was. Early, she was a member of the 1872 Society.

Janet Hawkins [00:56:05] Bush Senior would give his clothes to Marvin, one of his sons, because they were the same height. So there was, we had major discussions at board meetings, many hours trying to decide what to do with this tuxedo. So, the president at the time, she sent letters to Margaret. 'We have this tuxedo. Are you sure you really want us to donate it? What do you want us to do?' She would never answer. So, I think finally, I was going through some of our Twig papers, and I think we finally gave it to some Twig who really wanted it.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:56:35] We are also some of our best customers.

Rosemary Bush [00:56:41] Yes we are.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:56:42] My daughter is at a business meeting, and spoke to another girl her age. And the girl said, you know, something about a sweater. And the girl said, 'Oh, my mother got it at a thrift shop in Old Town.' And my daughter goes, 'Your mother is not a Twig.' Julia Gustafson said, 'Oh, yeah, she is.' I had a thing where someone, I was ill, and someone brought some food. I had a shirt on. I opened the door and she went, 'Oh, my God, you've got on.' It was Josie Cassandra, she said, 'You've got on my daughter's shirt.' Yes, I bought it at the shop. She said, 'So did I.' Yeah, I got it back and then I bought it. So I think that's got, you know, I don't know how much of that goes on anymore.

Kathy Hirsch [00:57:38] Well, I think that how, you know, you show up at a meeting or coffee and somebody comes up to you and says, 'Oh, I donated that.' It's like, fine. You're like, 'Okay. Thank you. You have good taste.'

Margaret Murphy [00:57:50] When you buy it and realize you donated it.

Kathy Hirsch [00:57:57] That's great.

Janet Hawkins [00:58:01] One time I was doing stock, and I took my sweater off because I got hot, and the next thing I knew, it was hanging up. Somebody had tagged it.

Rosemary Bush [00:58:09] That happened to me. That I'm not ready to donate this one. We do throw our folks 3500. Yeah. We, one of our Twigs had, had her coat on the steps and somebody hung up the coat. Then, somebody bought it. And she goes, 'That's my coat.' So she goes, a customer had just left, so she chased her down. She said, 'That's my coat.' And she said, 'No, it's not. It's my thing.'

Linda Lovell [00:58:38] Should have been on the Pepperdine exam.

Rosemary Bush [00:58:45] Yeah. I mean, you know. So, she fired off a number. Yeah. She paid \$20 more.

Kathy Hirsch [00:58:55] Oh my goodness.

Patricia Klingenmaier [00:58:59] I think that sort of thing happens more than we realized. One Twig brought her laundry in, to take to the laundry. I put it in a box upstairs, and we found it, and so we started tagging it. She came up and she said, 'Where are the clothes that were in the basket?' And we said, 'When we tagged them there in the dumbwaiter, they're going down.' She said, 'That's my laundry.' Oh, it didn't look bad, you know. It wasn't even worn.

Elizabeth Frank [00:59:28] So, the lesson is don't leave anything anywhere except in the closet.

Patricia Klingenmaier [00:59:33] Unless you put your name on it.

Seema Nawaz [00:59:35] You know, I learned my lesson once. What was her name? Barbara. Barbara. She was chair of the bazaar committee at the hospital.

Helenmarie Shipp [00:59:45] Barbara McCaffery?

Seema Nawaz [00:59:45] No, no, the young Barbara. Anyway, she was taking, yes, she was taking things. We used to have a bazaar at the hospital, where we would take stuff and set it up in one of the education rooms, for the hospital staff. She was getting stuff upstairs, and I was about to leave. I had my coat on, and I brought my purse from the cupboard. And then something happened, and I put it on the counter upstairs. My purse, right? And I went to do something in the kitchen, and I came back and my purse is gone. In the meantime, I see Barbara working and taking stuff in. So I said, 'Where's my purse? Where's my...!' I am looking around. Everyone is looking. 'Oh, Sima's purse is gone. Sima's purse is gone.' And then someone says, 'Well, Barbara was taking some bags from upstairs.' So, I don't have my telephone, I have nothing. So, I used the shop telephone calling Barbara. She doesn't answer. Obviously she's driving, and I don't know if she's going to the hospital now to drop off this stuff, or going to. I don't have a license. I don't have my car keys. So finally, I called my husband and I said, 'Will you keep trying this number? Did she pick up a bag?' And finally, I think she got in touch with her and she said, 'Yeah, I have bags, and I'm home.' And, she lives near the Mount Vernon station. So finally, someone dropped me home and I called her, and I said, 'This

kind?' And she says, 'Yeah, it's in my bag. It's in the box.' So I said, 'Barbara, you didn't feel that it was a heavy bag? The others were all empty.' So, I drove out and picked my bag up.

Janet Hawkins [01:01:28] Oh my goodness.

Seema Nawaz [01:01:29] Never, ever have I left my bag anywhere except the cupboard.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:01:33] Or the kitchen table.

Seema Nawaz [01:01:37] I don't leave things on the kitchen table either.

Janet Hawkins [01:01:43] So, at the end of the shop day usually, whenever they close out, if there's money they deposit it in the bank. So, one year, if there's any issues with the bank they call you. I assume now, they email. This was 2006. So, they usually call you. So anyway, I got a call from the bank on Wednesday or something, saying 'We didn't get a deposit from you yesterday.' And I'm like, 'Really?' Because, whenever the shop closes, a person drops the money off in the dropbox. One of our Twigs said she would drop it off on the way home in one of the banks. And she just forgot. And so she took, she was going to pick up her son from college. So, she was driving down. So, I had to call or say, "Oh yeah, I forgot to do that.' So, that kind of looks like that happens.

TWIG FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

Francesco De Salvatore [01:02:37] Moving away from the shop, I'm curious if you maybe talk about other fundraising efforts or pledges that somebody has given that stick out to you.

Margaret Murphy [01:02:54] The cook's tour.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:02:54] Could you talk more about that?

Margaret Murphy [01:02:54] Well, it's fabulous. I've lived around here for 40 years, and I never went until I became a Twig and had to go. I have been very sorry I hadn't gone for the other 35 years. And it's wonderful.

Elizabeth Frank [01:03:09] But, we inherited that. We did not start that. We did the cook kitchen. the cook's tour. And the year that, Jim Brady was a participant, my parents' house was on the tour, and he was at my parents' house, in the kitchen there. And of course, this was after his incident where he'd been shot and his wife, Sarah, they had made his special chili, which was in our cookbook. And they were giving samples of it in my parents' kitchen. And, he was just a really nice person, you know, just it was really enjoyable.

Margaret Murphy [01:03:53] So what was the cook's tour?

Elizabeth Frank [01:03:53] It was, like a home tour, but it was it focused on kitchens, and every kitchen.....

Helenmarie Shipp [01:03:59] Almost every year.

Elizabeth Frank [01:04:01] We did. Yeah. We didn't do it every year. Not every year, but most years we tried to do samples from the cookbook. So there.....

Janet Hawkins [01:04:08] We sold the cookbooks.

Elizabeth Frank [01:04:08] And we sold the cookbooks that fit every house.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:04:12] And it would be Jim Brady. Or there might even be a local chef. Yeah, we could get them or whatever.

Elizabeth Frank [01:04:17] Yeah, at one of the houses. But then, there were other, multiple houses on the tour and I think the reason that they chose my parents house is because the Bradys didn't live that far from them. They lived off of Fort Collins Parkway.

Janet Hawkins [01:04:32] The Cook's Tour was in different neighborhoods around Alexandria, rather than Old Town proper. And the Old Town tour, we sort of took over from the Senior Auxiliary by the hospital. It's actually another reason why Candice and I wanted to join Twig, is because we thought the cook store was so cool.

Elizabeth Frank [01:04:52] And when we took over, that was about the time too, I think, when we eliminated the age restriction for Twigs, because when we joined, I think.....

Helenmarie Shipp [01:05:02] 46. Wasn't it 48? Couldn't be older than 46.

Elizabeth Frank [01:05:04] 36.

Seema Nawaz [01:05:05] 36.

Elizabeth Frank [01:05:06] It was 35-36. It was young. We were the junior league. It was 36. If you were over 35, you couldn't join.

Patty Sheetz [01:05:17] When did the age restriction get implemented?

Elizabeth Frank [01:05:20] I think it was when the senior auxiliary went under and we absorbed some of those members. I'm not sure exactly.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:05:29] There was a foundation board member that wanted to join. And she was older and we relaxed it to let her join. And I can't remember.....

Janet Hawkins [01:05:46] It was heard soon after I came and I joined because I think there was a vote on it with the membership. So I would reach out to Roseanne, if you haven't. If she doesn't remember, then you need to go through the minutes.

Patty Sheetz [01:06:16] To be honest, the minutes are very skeleton. It doesn't have any of this information.

Seema Nawaz [01:06:16] I don't think there was any formal.....

Elizabeth Frank [01:06:18] They would have to.....

Seema Nawaz [01:06:19] It was just sort relaxed, because people who were joining us were much older.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:06:26] The age?

Janet Hawkins [01:06:27] Yeah. That was the bylaws. I am talking about the minutes.

Seema Nawaz [01:06:32] I don't think there was ever a formal vote on that Janet.

Janet Hawkins [01:06:44] I would ask Helenmarie when she remembers when the cook's tour started.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:06:54] When did the Cook's Tour start? The Cook's Tour started maybe late '80s?

Elizabeth Frank [01:06:59] It was after our first cookbook, wasn't it? Didn't we start it with our first cookbook?

Helenmarie Shipp [01:07:04] I think the first cookbook was already out, wasn't it? I know Heritage of Good Taste was out because my first job in Twig was with Mary Beth Ketchum, going up and down King Street, because there was a retail and a wholesale section of the cookbook. And if you were new, you got on the wholesale. And Mary Beth and I used to go down the street and, you know, go into places. 'Would you like to, you know, sell our cookbook?' And that was when The Pineapple and Why Not and all those places and everybody had it in their thing. So, that was working out. Maybe to promote it? I don't.....

Patty Sheetz [01:07:48] It was about '86-'87.

Elizabeth Frank [01:07:52] That sounds about right.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:07:53] Yeah. Something like it. Yeah. That would have been.

Elizabeth Frank [01:07:59] Because it was definitely the first cookbook. It was definitely to promote his cookbook, because that's the book that Jim Brady's chili recipe was in.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:08:10] And then we've had four? Janet, how many cookbooks? Four?

Janet Hawkins [01:08:16] Five.

Rosemary Bush [01:08:25] I really loved when Twig used to make and sell carnations on the corner. And then they used to have tea dances on Sunday afternoons. And, what else did they do?

Janet Hawkins [01:08:40] Another thing we, I don't think we've talked about, and Seema might be able to address this, is the Antiques in Alexandria. Yeah, that was a fundraiser we participated in that was organized by the.....

Seema Nawaz [01:08:55] There were three, three organizations.

Janet Hawkins [01:08:59] Alexandria Association or.....

Seema Nawaz [01:09:02] The Atheneum, Alexandria Association and the Twig. And we were all beneficiaries of the show. And, it used to be held at Episcopal High School in their gym.

Janet Hawkins [01:09:17] Yes.

Seema Nawaz [01:09:19] We had vendors from all over the country, not just the local vendors, but from all over. And high end antiques. And they did very well, until Episcopal put in a new gym floor. And, they decided not to have the show anymore. They didn't allow us. So, then it was moved to the Waterford in Springfield.

Rosemary Bush [01:10:04] It was at the Radisson. Or in the transition between Episcopal, and then before we went to the Waterford, we were at the one on Seminary Road.

Seema Nawaz [01:10:04] Yeah, the Marks and the Hilton. One year, but then they found sort of a permanent, they thought it was going to be permanent at the Waterford building, but it didn't do that well. It was just not in the heart of Alexandria. And it just sort of moved away.

Janet Hawkins [01:10:28] It had an opening night reception. And there was usually an honorary chair, like Senator Warner, one time was a chair. Twigs would come and work the event, they had planned food, there were flowers. It was very large. And then, there were all these antique vendors and different groups. Sometimes the Lyceum staff participated. Sometimes dance was down in the museum, and there were different groups in addition to the Twig, you know, would work the front desk, make breakfast and lunch.

Seema Nawaz [01:11:00] We would be the first to the greet the guests at the show. And then, we took over providing breakfast for the vendors. We would lay out a nice breakfast. And they were very pleased. We were told it was better than Four Seasons.

Mary Schoen [01:11:22] Did we make a lot of money from that?

Janet Hawkins [01:11:24] That's what I was trying to remember. We usually did about \$25,000 or something.

Seema Nawaz [01:11:28] A little more also sometimes. But in 2010, we didn't get that much because I think they didn't do well. We got a very small amount, maybe \$15,000 or \$16,000. I remember that.

Rosemary Bush [01:11:41] We used to get around \$35,000.

Seema Nawaz [01:11:41] But, that was.....

Rosemary Bush [01:11:41] When Oscar died it changed.

Seema Nawaz [01:11:53] Oscar Ryder.

Rosemary Bush [01:11:53] Yeah. I can't remember Oscar's last name.

Elizabeth Frank [01:11:57] Ryder.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:11:59] Who's that?

Janet Hawkins [01:12:01] He was a prominent Alexandrian.

Seema Nawaz [01:12:06] Philanthropist.

Janet Hawkins [01:12:07] His father was a doctor, and he lived over in Old Town off of, what was it? Wilkes? Was it a big house?

Seema Nawaz [01:12:15] I can't remember.

Janet Hawkins [01:12:15] His first wife was an honor, was a Twig. I think that's how we got the connection to participate in Antiques of Alexandria. He wanted to do something in her memory. That was my understanding.

Elizabeth Frank [01:12:28] Wasn't there like a wealth management person?

Janet Hawkins [01:12:31] I want to say that.

Kathy Hirsch [01:12:43] And it's still named McLaughlin-Ryder, right?

Elizabeth Frank [01:12:47] Yeah.

MEMORABLE GIFTS AND PLEDGES

Francesco De Salvatore [01:12:50] Are there any other gifts or pledges that stick out in remembrance?

Seema Nawaz [01:13:00] You know, in the late 90s, I think we, we gave obviously support to the hospital, but we did support the community also directly by giving immunizations in the Arlandria.....

Rosemary Bush [01:13:12] Arlandria

Seema Nawaz [01:13:13] Area. Right? And one day.....

Rosemary Bush [01:13:16] Breast Cancer Walk Festival.

Seema Nawaz [01:13:19] And one time we also did, mammograms for the under-insured and the uninsured. So, that was a direct contact with the community.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:13:30] We supported something, a gal who was not a Twig, whose husband was the ambassador to NATO, Carolyn Abshire.

Janet Hawkins [01:13:43] Oh yeah.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:13:45] Carolyn traveled extensively to Belgium, to Brussels, and she befriended, a gal who is no longer a Twig, Claudia Ellen, and we put on something called, 'The Belgium Fair.' And it was at Carolyn's house on Saint Asaph. And it was, all things that were brought over from Belgium. And it's interesting, because we had tried at that point to sell it, sort of, as something where we could buy a mobile van for mobile mammographies for underserved communities or whatever. And we were told, that that was not really feasible because of the litigious nature of what happens if you get a positive result and you can't find the person or whatever. And that effort has now morphed into the Carolyn Abshire Fund, to which we.....

Mary Schoen [01:15:00] We donate every fall \$2,300.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:15:00] We contribute every fall. But, that whole idea started with 'The Belgium Fair.'

Elizabeth Frank [01:15:08] And I still have a crystal.....

Helenmarie Shipp [01:15:12] Jam?

Elizabeth Frank [01:15:12] No, I have a crystal penguin.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:15:14] You have one of those?

Elizabeth Frank [01:15:14] I have one and it's still in my living room, displayed on a shelf.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:15:20] And there was, she brought lace and she brought cookies, and she brought all sorts of stuff. It was a 2 or 3 day affair.

Elizabeth Frank [01:15:27] Yeah, I remember that very clearly.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:15:28] And Twiggs volunteered and.....

Elizabeth Frank [01:15:30] Bought.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:15:33] And bought.

Margaret Murphy [01:15:37] So what does the foundation do now?

Helenmarie Shipp [01:15:40] I believe they support mammographies for underserved individuals. I don't know if there's a van.

Seema Nawaz [01:15:51] No, there's no van. They combined different donations that we give towards the breast cancer program, and it all comes under one. It's all under one umbrella now. So that, you know, it can make a bigger impact.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:16:05] And she was a survivor. A breast cancer survivor.

Seema Nawaz [01:16:10] And, they combined this maybe two years ago.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:16:12] She did?

Seema Nawaz [01:16:12] No, the hospital did. The foundation did, you know, combined all these different smaller donations.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:16:18] To make it the Carolyn Abshire Fund.

Seema Nawaz [01:16:19] But, I'm sure of that. Yes.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:16:23] We talked about the money we raised, and what it goes to the hospital. I think one of the best things that we give a donation to is the nursing scholarship. I truly feel that is, that's hands on. It won't change every year. Equipment changes. Buildings change. But we need the nursing staff, the technicians, all those that need to continue getting continuing education. And I truly think, that is a direction Twigg needs to move into, working more toward supporting those individuals who will go from building to building, to division to division.....

Helenmarie Shipp [01:17:02] To take care of us.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:17:02] Yeah, to take care of us.

Elizabeth Frank [01:17:04] I agree with that. I think we ought to expand it. I think we should give much more than we do.

Kathy Hirsch [01:17:10] Well, we did up to \$10,000, two scholarships, \$10,000 each this past year, which is the most we've ever given.

Elizabeth Frank [01:17:19] We could do more.

Seema Nawaz [01:17:21] We also contribute towards different programs to enhance the education of the nurses. Like we, Alexandria was the last amongst the five in other hospitals to reach magnet status for the nurses.

Kathy Hirsch [01:17:40] The fifth in the.....

Seema Nawaz [01:17:41] Fifth one not.....

Kathy Hirsch [01:17:43] To get Magnet status.

Seema Nawaz [01:17:45] To get there, but Twig was a big part, when they first started in 2009. We gave them money for this. And then in 2010 also. And then, I think it just sort of got dropped or got delayed and they just achieved that status.

Margaret Murphy [01:18:06] What is that?

Seema Nawaz [01:18:06] So, the magnet status is the highest certification for nurses. Those are the best.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:18:17] The most nurses in a hospital have the most X. It's continuing education.

Seema Nawaz [01:18:26] It is a national certification. Yeah. And all the NOVA hospitals now have that certification. So this gives, I think, the nurses are more involved with the doctors, and they can make decisions on their own. And it's giving them a higher status that's just being, they can make decisions.

Elizabeth Frank [01:18:48] And, it makes it more attractive for nurses to come in.

Margaret Murphy [01:18:52] Was there any thought about changing the focus of Twig once that Alexandria Hospital became a NOVA?

Elizabeth Frank [01:19:06] It's still local, meaning it's part of the community.

Seema Nawaz [01:19:08] It serves the community.

Elizabeth Frank [01:19:09] It's still there.

Kathy Hirsch [01:19:10] It's still our community hospital

Seema Nawaz [01:19:12] And it's even better now, because they all work together. All the hospitals work together. All the hospitals work together. And, if you don't have a specialized unit at

Alexandria, they will take care of you at another hospital. They'll make all the decisions, you know, they can transfer you right away. And so, it's better.

Margaret Murphy [01:19:34] No, I think it's fine. I just was curious if that was ever a conversation.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:19:38] I think it was spoken about, but I don't think there was ever any, there was nothing serious about it.

Rosemary Bush [01:19:49] Like giving \$35,000.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:19:49] We talked a lot about.

Rosemary Bush [01:19:51] I think we gave something around \$35,000 to get them, to save money for the magnet program.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:20:01] One year, we did give some, but I don't remember.

Seema Nawaz [01:20:04] We gave \$25,000 and then \$30,000. We gave \$25,000 in 2009 and \$30,000 in 2010. And after that we didn't, Twig did not contribute towards the magnet status.

Patty Sheetz [01:20:16] Just because I lived near the library.

Seema Nawaz [01:20:18] Sorry?

Patty Sheetz [01:20:20] Because I live at the Barrett Library in between Twig files.....

Seema Nawaz [01:20:22] Oh my goodness.

Patty Sheetz [01:20:26] At one point, after Alexandra Hospital became a NOVA, some people and again, it's very scant, they said, 'Gee, we think this is kind of corporate and we'd like to give to smaller nonprofits.' And, it didn't seem to go very far. But then, the other mention is when, there was a fundraiser and it went to the Arlandria Health Clinic. Right. And, you had to get special permission from the hospital because our charter says everything goes to the hospital, and the hospital gave permission for that.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:21:03] There was a push from a group of people, at one point, to diversify. And that did not pass.

Patty Sheetz [01:21:15] Yes.

Rosemary Bush [01:21:16] So, just as an aside, when we had the Covid outbreak, for Mother's Day that year, the first year, we gave all the new moms little bun cakes because no one could come and visit them or anything.

Kathy Hirsch [01:21:34] That was nice.

Rosemary Bush [01:21:37] So we gave a little basket for those new moms. We also gave money to pay for, so people can afford their hospital bills. So, we gave money for that. Aside from everything else.

Mary Schoen [01:21:59] Rosie, when you were president, that spring when Covid first hit, we gave \$100,000 to the Covid Emergency Preparedness Fund. So, that's when we realized how enormous this pandemic was going to be.

Rosemary Bush [01:22:10] It seems like a drop in a bucket, when you say \$100,000, you know? But, it's, we helped our community, we suspended what we were doing with the closures and everything. We went and helped the community. Nobody knew what was going on. We wanted to open up. Our shop chair that year was a doctor. She'd check every day with the CDC, as to whether to open the shop or not.

Kathy Hirsch [01:22:52] If the numbers are too high, we couldn't have the shop open. And everybody had to wear the mask obviously and sanitize and overspray everything everywhere.

Rosemary Bush [01:23:03] And people would just wait in line. Patient as could be.

THE FUTURE OF TWIG

Francesco De Salvatore [01:23:09] What are each of your hopes for the future of Twig? What do you hope to see?

Elizabeth Frank [01:23:18] I'd like to see us get more younger members. Because a lot of us are older, retired and.....

Margaret Murphy [01:23:27] Every volunteer organization.....

Elizabeth Frank [01:23:29] Has the same issue. Yeah.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:23:31] I think it's going to be harder because of women working.

Elizabeth Frank [01:23:35] Yes. I work. Yeah. But it's.

Sarah Higgins [01:23:39] I hope we don't lose our focus on community service and that, you know, a lot of our inventory, as somebody mentioned before, shifted towards more high end items and we have more high end donors and such. But, I hope we don't forget, like, you know, you said the nursing scholarships, you know, which is definitely community based and knowledge sharing, you know, supports knowledge sharing initiatives. But then also, you know, let's remember our voucher program. Let's remember community outreach. Let's remember, you know, sales of carnations on the corner and things like that. It's like, you know, I think sometimes you make a big splash by a lot of little drips sometimes. And, I just hope that we don't lose sight of that.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:24:24] I think the face of philanthropy is changing. Time is kind of the new money now. People will give money, but they either don't have the time, because they work full time, the women, or they work full time and their focus is elsewhere. The younger members. Children. And whatever, we may have to morph a little bit in our membership requirements. I don't quite know how to do that, to accommodate, because we've always seemed in the 40 years that I will have been in, we have morphed into what we need to be. And we have accommodated changing roles, women in communities and society and whatever. And I think we've got to continue to do that. To continue the breadth of the work that we do.

Rosemary Bush [01:25:32] Well, we could open a Twig retirement home.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:25:40] Well, we have no paid, there's no paid staff. Which is sort of remarkable given the amount of money that we bring in. The things we support.....

Elizabeth Frank [01:25:52] The complexity of what we're doing.

Sarah Higgins [01:25:53] But, isn't our membership up though?

Helenmarie Shipp [01:25:56] Yeah. But long term.....

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:26:00] I don't think you see members staying in as long. Like Helenmarie, Sarah Higgins.

Janet Hawkins [01:26:04] And I think people have different reasons for joining. I mean, I think Twig has always been a social thing. That's why, you know, we knew different people and how we got involved. But, I think sometimes we lose our goal, which is really to support the hospital. And still, even though a NOVA is a NOVA and it has many hospitals, we are still focusing on supporting our community, our local Alexandria Hospital. Sometimes, I don't feel that message is still getting across to our current Twig membership, at least in the few things I have attended over the years.

Kathy Hirsch [01:26:41] I will tell you, Jennifer Kilmer's really good about that. She's our current president. And, she's very good about the new members that are coming in, about telling historical facts about the past and whether or not they take it to heart like we have, time will tell.

Seema Nawaz [01:27:01] We just have to keep working hard, Janet. We just have to keep working hard at it. We'll get there.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:27:08] I sometimes think we need to, this is relating to the shop, I feel like we need to bring in more of our people who were, we started out really serving. And, we need to not look at the dollar amount we're bringing in all the time, but think, how can we help our community reach out to people who might need a pair of jeans for a dollar or something. And not out price us, so that we bring back in our community that we started serving in 1933.

Rosemary Bush [01:27:40] And I'm pretty sure everybody in this room knew somebody who, they have the need, but they don't have the money.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:27:53] I think we all treat every customer that comes into the shop as if they are the king or queen of the world.

Kathy Hirsch [01:28:04] And we always tell them, thank you for supporting Alexandria Hospital.

Mary Schoen [01:28:09] Come back and see us again.

Seema Nawaz [01:28:22] Have you been to the thrift shop?

Francesco De Salvatore [01:28:24] I have. Yeah.

Seema Nawaz [01:28:25] Did you find anything?

Helenmarie Shipp [01:28:26] Did you buy anything?

Francesco De Salvatore [01:28:27] No. I think when I started to talk to Janet, I stopped by. Maybe a year and a half ago. But, I hadn't been before that.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:28:35] Come Thursday night.

Seema Nawaz [01:28:50] If you're in the market for something, let us know.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:28:55] I will say this again. I say this all the time. This is an extraordinary group of women. It really is. And this is just a smattering of the women, and it's up.....

Rosemary Bush [01:29:09] We have our common goal.

Helenmarie Shipp [01:29:12] Well, I don't believe in trophies for kids, but it's fun. It is fun doing good. It is fun helping other people. It's self fulfilling. I mean, it's just, and you're helping the hospital. And when you need it, you would like it to be the best community hospital that is in your neighborhood and it's just, you know, it's a pleasure to be a member. It really is.

Rosemary Bush [01:29:42] We also shake our neighbors for donations when we're close to our tickets now or whatever.

Sarah Higgins [01:29:48] I need to add on to what Helenmarie said, you know, the organization has shifted and changed focus and expanded and contracted, you know, in many ways over, evolved over the years. And I think it's great, that we're not afraid to try new things. Like for a while we were doing eBay sales. You know? Julie Brasfield went ahead and sponsored that, you know, when that was a big thing. And, she worked that really hard and sold a lot of our high end items and, I think over time, it just like it just seemed we found other venues for the high end items, but we tried it and we stopped it.

Elizabeth Frank [01:30:24] King's Jewelers.

Sarah Higgins [01:30:24] Oh, yeah. That's right.

Elizabeth Frank [01:30:26] One of our members is one of the owners of Kings Jewelers. And so, when we have really nice things, they'll evaluate them and either say, you can sell it for this, or they will sell it and basically consign it.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:30:39] And they always put new batteries in.

Elizabeth Frank [01:30:42] And they put new batteries in all of our watches

Margaret Murphy [01:30:43] Necklaces.

Kathy Hirsch [01:30:46] All our necklaces. We get \$50.

Elizabeth Frank [01:30:50] Who designed that necklace?

Kathy Hirsch [01:30:52] Oh, I think they just found it. I don't.

Elizabeth Frank [01:30:54] I would think.....

Kathy Hirsch [01:30:55] I think Kathy found it.

Seema Nawaz [01:30:56] So in short, the community is very generous towards the Twig by giving us donations. And then when we, in terms of the community.....

Kathy Hirsch [01:31:09] It's a win-win.

Seema Nawaz [01:31:10] It's a joint effort. It's a joint effort. We're very grateful to everyone in the community.

CLOSING REMARKS

Francesco De Salvatore [01:31:17] Yeah. And, thank you so much for each of your service. I've done a couple of these story circles and like, I'm just floored that like you said it's not, none of you are paid. It's all your own time. It's all your own passions. So yeah, thank you so much for all that you've done for the city, for the hospital.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:31:51] So have you done any other story telling with any other organizations? I am just curious as to where this is going.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:31:59] So, we've done two other story circles. So, I have a story circle in March with, just a senior citizen group at Charles Houston Rec Center. We work in Arlandria, so we work with.....

Elizabeth Frank [01:32:13] Share a lot with.....

Francesco De Salvatore [01:32:14] Yeah, share a lot with other people. We work with an organization called Hands and Workers United.

Janet Hawkins [01:32:27] These ladies back here are from Trinity Methodist Church.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:32:31] Trinity, we have a project that we are working on. They're going to be doing story circles with their members. We also work on a lot of city projects. So we're working on, like, Douglas Cemetery.

Elizabeth Frank [01:32:43] My balcony overlooks the Douglas Cemetery. I sent a picture to The Patch of the cemetery in the snow, and they put it up in their email.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:32:57] Yeah, so we're doing a whole oral history project with descendants of that cemetery. Working on a project on Colored Rosemont. So, where the Braddock station is, that's where some of the first black homeowners in the city live.

Elizabeth Frank [01:33:11] Parker Grady High School was over there.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:33:13] Right, Parker Grady was part of Colored Rosemont. So we're working with descendants from there.

Seema Nawaz [01:33:18] So much history, isn't it?

Francesco De Salvatore [01:33:19] Yeah. So, we're working on a number of projects.

Seema Nawaz [01:33:23] Interesting. Cool. That's cool.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:33:25] Yeah. Are you from Alexandria?

Francesco De Salvatore [01:33:27] I'm not.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:33:28] So, you're really learning about our city.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:33:30] That's going to get me in trouble here.

Mary Olivia MacLeod [01:33:31] It gets a whole good perspective.

Elizabeth Frank [01:33:36] I was born here.

Sarah Higgins [01:33:37] And you approve?

Francesco De Salvatore [01:33:40] I do love Alexandria. I wasn't born and raised.

Elizabeth Frank [01:33:44] I was.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:33:47] You were?

Elizabeth Frank [01:33:47] Yeah. I was born in the old Alexandria Hospital.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:34:13] Just so you guys know, we are a community service. The story circles we do, they are recorded. So, I have people come in and say, 'I want to record, you know, my aunt' or 'I want to record my daughter.' So, if you ever want to do reporting on your families or anything like that, it's a service we do.

Elizabeth Frank [01:34:36] Are you doing storytelling about just the hospital?

Francesco De Salvatore [01:34:40] Yeah. So, we've done oral histories with doctors who work there, with nurses and technicians there.

Elizabeth Frank [01:34:47] Because, I spent a decent amount of time in the hospital.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:34:50] Yeah, a lot of people have. So, you should probably try to do an oral recording. Yeah, but thank you so much.

Elizabeth Frank [01:34:59] Thank you.

Janet Hawkins [01:35:01] Thank you very much.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:35:02] My pleasure. Yeah.

Elizabeth Frank [01:35:03] Thank you so much. And I learned a lot.