



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



Oral History Interview

with

Margaret Johnson

Interviewer: Francesco De Salvatore

Narrator: Margaret Johnson

Location of Interview:

The home of Sara Higgins, 1122 N. Gaillard St. Alexandria, VA 22304

Date of Interview: 9-20-2022

Transcriber: Michele Cawley, PhD

Summary:

Margaret Johnson, an Alexandria resident since 1926, reflects on her experiences growing up in Alexandria, serving in the TWIG (the Junior Auxiliary of the Alexandria Hospital), and the Alexandria Hospital Board of Directors.

Notes:

Janet Hawkins, Kathy Hirsch, Lucelle Flaberty, and Sara Higgins were present for the interview. Before moving to its Seminary Road location in 1962, Alexandria Hospital was located at the corner of Duke and Washington Street since 1917. The TWIG is an organization of women dedicated to providing financial aid, volunteer service, and support to the hospital. Since its founding in 1933, the TWIG contributed over \$4.5 million to the hospital. The Hospital Auxiliary, or

Senior Auxiliary, disbanded in 2008. It is a separate organization from the hospital's Board of Lady Managers. The Senior Auxiliary sponsored the "Old Homes Tour" for many years, and turned it over to the TWIG in 1997, where it was relabeled the "Historic Alexandria Homes Tour." The Senior Auxiliary sponsored the "Old Homes Tour" for many years, and it turned over to the TWIG in 1997, and it was relabeled the "Historic Alexandria Homes Tour." Ms. Johnson broke her hip and leg in the referenced auto accident. She was in the hospital for nearly two weeks and then in a shoulder-to-foot-cast. The Alexandria Hospital on Duke Street opened in 1917 and served the community until 1974, when it was torn down and replaced by a commercial building. Vice President Lyndon Johnson spoke at the 1962 opening of the hospital on Seminary Road.

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General	Childhood; Junior Auxiliary of the Alexandria Hospital (“TWIG”); Volunteer organizations; Alexandria Hospital Board; Dances; Old Home Tour; Social events and dances; Historic Alexandria Home Tours
People	Margaret Johnson; Patricia S. “Patsy” Ticer; Thomas F. Johnson; Dr. Oliver “Ollie” Ryder; Fannie Lee Carter
Places	Twig Thrift Store; Alexandria Hospital

Margaret Johnson [00:00:12] I'm Margaret Johnson and I'm 96 years.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:00:17] Ok, and what's today's date?

Margaret Johnson [00:00:18] And today is the 20th of September, 2022.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:00:25] My name is Francesco. I'm 30 years old. Today is September 20th, 2022, and we're at Sara Higgins's home in Alexandria, Virginia. So, hello, Margaret. How are you doing today?

Margaret Johnson [00:00:40] Pretty good, thank you.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:00:41] Great, great. So, we have a lot to talk about today. And so, I want to start from the beginning. So let's start out. Can you please tell us where you were born and some of your earliest memories growing up?

Margaret Johnson [00:00:57] I was born in Columbia Hospital in Washington, D.C. and did not come to Virginia until I was 13 days old. So I can consider myself an Alexandrian.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:01:11] Right. And can you tell us what are some of your earliest memories in Alexandria?

Margaret Johnson [00:01:20] We lived in Rosemont, which was a very neighborly area and my home till I started school. Most of my contacts were the children in the neighborhood. And probably the most dramatic thing that happened before I started school was a woman learning to drive, and she hit me and I ended up with a broken hip and leg in the Old Alexandria Hospital. And there I was for 2 weeks until they could set the leg. And then I went to Maury School at 9:00 in the morning, came home for lunch, and went back at 1:00 till 3:00. And we stayed there in Rucker Place until I was 10, when we moved up to King Street, where I stayed until we built the house up here 50 some years ago.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:02:34] Right. Well, so let's start in Rosemont. So can you describe the neighborhood of Rosemont?

Margaret Johnson [00:02:46] It was a post-World War One construction houses, I would say middle class America. My father paid the enormous sum, I think of \$900, for the house, three bedroom house. It was a very comfortable house and fortunately, I did not have brothers or sisters, so one bath was adequate. And it was a very warm, loving neighborhood. You knew all the neighbors. They knew all- unfortunately, they knew you and when you got into trouble, your parents usually knew before you got home. And my, all my friends were basically neighborhood. Most mothers didn't drive then, so my mother did not pick me up and take me to a friend's house in Old Town or Georgetown or something like that. You just played with people you could walk to. And as I said, I have very fond memories of the time I've spent there.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:04:20] Could you maybe describe your parents, your mother and father to us?

Margaret Johnson [00:04:27] They were the only two people from their families that ever moved more than ten miles from their home. And they were both from Pennsylvania. My mother was in the western part, and my father was from Philadelphia. And I was an only child and much younger than any of my friends' children. So I basically was treated as an adult for, well, social events because you could take one child with you and, I joked, and I said, "I've slept in every bed in Alexandria," because they would take me to when they went out to dinner and they'd put me in the host's bed, and I would stay there until they went home. So it was a very, but my parents were, I can't remember any, truthfully, I cannot ever remember either one raising their voice.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:42] Why did they move to Alexandria?

Margaret Johnson [00:05:44] They moved.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:45] Why did they leave home?

Margaret Johnson [00:05:46] Oh, my father was an accountant and we used to have a trolley that ran from Mount Vernon to Barcroft. And the bus company, they were subjected to more transportation rules and regulations. And the busses did not have to adhere to a schedule, so they would run the busses 2 minutes ahead of the trolley. So needless to say, the trolleys went out of business and my father came down when the trolleys were in receivership and met many prominent people, political and social. And he was offered a job with a family where he was- did all the- it was a little bit of everything. He did the financial planning, he did the correspondence, he took care of the paying the help, that type of thing. And there he stayed until the day he died.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:07:05] Was your mother involved with the Board of Ladies [Board of Lady Managers]?

Margaret Johnson [00:07:11] She, my mother was a member of the Auxiliary [Hospital Auxiliary].

Francesco De Salvatore [00:07:16] Right.

Margaret Johnson [00:07:17] And the Twig, basically were the daughters of the mothers in the Auxiliary.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:07:26] Okay. Can you maybe describe her involvement with them? Do you have any memories of things she did with them?

Margaret Johnson [00:07:35] They did not have an extensive program. The one thing I remember, they always had a Silver Tea at Christmas, where you made a silver donation when you attended. And I cannot remember any other projects.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:03] Why didn't you get involved with the Board of Lady Managers. Or, sorry, the Auxiliary?

Margaret Johnson [00:08:12] I was never familiar with the Board of Lady Managers.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:17] Okay.

Margaret Johnson [00:08:18] And I think, as I recall, the Board of Lady Managers basically had church representatives. I may be wrong on that. And the, you know, the churches, each church that was interested would send a delegate or member for their organization. The Auxiliary was just basically to serve the- it was- the membership was more open.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:51] Why do you think she got involved?

Margaret Johnson [00:08:56] Why did I?

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:57] No, sorry, your mother. Why, was her family involved in her work?

Margaret Johnson [00:09:06] Her friends were basically members of The Auxiliary and she was asked to join them, and she did.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:09:16] Great. And so you mentioned that one of your earliest memories was being hit by a car, unfortunately, and going to the Old Alexandria Hospital, right?

Margaret Johnson [00:09:27] Yes

Francesco De Salvatore [00:09:27] So how old were you when that happened?

Margaret Johnson [00:09:34] It was interesting. Fannie Lee Carter was the Supervisor of Nurses. And I was a lovely child, I wouldn't eat. And so, she asked my mother to bring dishes from home. And they put the hospital food on my dishes from home. So, I would think my mother had prepared dinner for me. If you can, can you imagine that now?

Francesco De Salvatore [00:10:08] That's sweet. What would she make you?

Margaret Johnson [00:10:11] Anything my little heart desired.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:10:15] Do you remember what the hospital at that time looked like? Can you maybe describe it for us?

Margaret Johnson [00:10:24] It was very cold, not cheery. The one thing I can remember, as you walked in they had a open staircase with a picture window behind it. And the people of color were on the left side as you walked in, totally isolated from the white population in the city. And it was very, very gloomy.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:11:07] Why was it gloomy?

Margaret Johnson [00:11:10] There was nothing except gray and white that I can remember in the decor.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:11:19] Do you remember any of the doctors or nurses that were there?

Margaret Johnson [00:11:25] Doctor Ryder [Dr. Oliver "Ollie" Ryder 1887-1937] Was the doctor of all trades. And I can't remember any specialists. I mean, all of them were basically General Practitioners. And they made house calls. And the Fannie Lee Carter really did a wonderful job with- and that's when the nurses lived in the building on the corner of Columbus and Duke Street.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:12:11] So, you obviously got better at the hospital after you were hit. Right?

Margaret Johnson [00:12:18] What happened was a nice lady saw the accident, and picked me up, and took me to the hospital, which turned a simple fracture into a compound fracture and they had to put me in traction to pull the bone out. I don't understand it. Rather than overlapping the two broken parts of the bone, they wanted them to meet properly. And so, I was there almost two weeks.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:12:57] Do you have other memories growing up, going to the hospital, having to go?

Margaret Johnson [00:13:02] Yeah, I remember. I mean- first time- one of the biggest memories I had would have been going to the hospital and staying there for two weeks. And then, one of the nurses dropped a pin in the cast. This was the day of plaster paris casts. And so they had to make sure the pin didn't move in the cast. So they- I was too big to put in the back of the car. So an ambulance would come and pick me up and take me to the hospital and we'd get to a stop sign or a red light. "Do you want to go through it?" I said, "Yeah." So we'd turn on the siren and race through the red light to go to the hospital and they would x-ray it. And then, believe it or not, I had to relearn to walk after being in the cast. And then I started- but I was able to- this [the accident] was June, and I was able to start school in September.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:14:18] And this was all when you got hit by the car.

Margaret Johnson [00:14:20] Yup

Francesco De Salvatore [00:14:21] Wow. Do you have any other memories of having to go to the hospital? Did you ever get sick? Did you ever have to go- or did someone in your family ever have to go to the hospital? Do you have other memories.

Margaret Johnson [00:14:32] Oh, I think- I don't remember my mother ever being sick a day in her life. Oh, my husband was- in and out of the hospital his past last years. My father had surgery and I remember taking care of him in the hospital. I'll tell you a interesting story. He had- my father had surgery and the doctor came in and asked if my father drank. And I said, "Oh, he'd have a drink before dinner.". And he said, "He's not an alcoholic?" I said no. He said, "He keeps telling me he sees bugs walking up the wall. And we thought- you know, we wanted to check." And all of a sudden, a couple bugs came out of- they used to have wash stands in each room. A couple bugs walked out of the wash stand, so they realized my father was actually seeing the hospital bugs.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:15:49] That's great. So, you grew up in Rosemont. You unfortunately had this horrible car accident. And then you said that you moved, right? You moved out of Rosemont eventually right?

Margaret Johnson [00:16:00] Yeah, we moved up to King Street Hill which was not far- just a block or so away.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:16:07] And so how old were you when you moved to King Street?

Margaret Johnson [00:16:11] We moved up here about 55 years ago. So I've lived in three houses in my life.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:16:19] Ok, so you were much older when you moved the King Street?

Margaret Johnson [00:16:27] Yup.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:16:27] Okay, so you- okay I understand now. Great. Okay. Do you have any- I'm curious because you obviously grew up during the Great Depression. Do you have any memories of Alexandria during the Great Depression?

Margaret Johnson [00:16:43] I remember things were austere. But, I don't remember making any major adjustments. I don't think that my father's income changed so, you know, and he wasn't laid off. So the- actually the- other than hearing about it, I was not personally impacted.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:17:30] Yeah, this is not related to the Great Depression but you've mentioned your husband a little bit. Can you maybe describe who your husband was? Let's start there. Can you maybe describe who he was?

Margaret Johnson [00:17:46] Oh, he was- he was an economist. And I look back on how intelligent he was and I don't think I appreciated his- all his assets. When he finished school, he came up here and worked for the government for a short period of time and then he went with the US Chamber of Commerce. And then he- he and two other men founded a research organization, which he stayed with until he died. He did have a short term at- he was one of the Assistant Commissioners at Federal Housing. But other than that, he was in private industry.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:18:48] How did you two meet?

Margaret Johnson [00:18:52] I was a probation officer for the city and was making a house call and I met this woman who- I cannot remember why I went there, but she said, "I have a son that just graduated from college and he has a couple friends. Do you have a girlfriend? And maybe you all could go out together.". So we did, and I had a date with her son, and a friend of mine had a date with my husband. And the second date, I had it with my husband and never saw anybody from then on.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:19:33] Great. You both were really involved in the community too, right? I know your husband was on Boards and-

Margaret Johnson [00:19:42] Yes, he was President of the Hospital Board for two years and he was on the Board for, I think, six. And then he was on the School Board and he was on a couple commissions for the governor. And he was active in the church. But I was active in the school, I was PTA president for a couple years and so I was in and out of the school and knew- you know, knew the faculty personally, that type of thing.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:20:36] Yeah. Why were both of you like- why was it important for both of you to to be involved in Alexandria in that way?

Margaret Johnson [00:20:43] We are both public school graduates and we just believed in good schooling. It was very important. And, at that time, Alexandria attracted a great many families because of our good school system, which helped the economic base of Alexandria.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:21:17] What about, you know, because you mentioned that he was on the Board of the hospital. You know, you obviously- we'll get to you- what you've done with Twig. Like what- why was being involved with health care with the hospital so important to both of you?

Margaret Johnson [00:21:35] Again, I think that you would tend to move to a town that had good medical facilities and good doctors and- It's just part of your good economic base to run a fiscally responsible city.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:22:01] What were some of the issues that you saw with the Alexandria Hospital, that you and your husband saw?

Margaret Johnson [00:22:10] Well, one of the big problems was that, anything, I think probably Quantico, anything north of Quantico, accidents were brought to Alexandria Hospital. So, what the city paid the hospital per diem for people they took off the street was far less than the actual cost to the hospital for a patient. So they were, finances were always a consideration. And with the insurance paying so many days, and the person required ten days rather than five, the hospital had to pick up that extra tab. Which presented somewhat of a financial problem. And the staffing is always a problem with the hospital and we had a big- one of the first things that we had was they wanted to put in a doctor's village in this neighborhood. And so, through compromise and conversation, they were able to work out a solution to satisfy both people. And they have been able to maintain an excellent medical staff.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:24:01] Yeah. Right. So, yes, maybe walk us through. How did you start to become involved with Twig?

Margaret Johnson [00:24:12] Well, the original Twigs were basically legacies from The Auxiliary because the Twig, when you were 35, you had to get out of it and go into the Auxiliary. And now, as I was teasing Sara yesterday, there are not many "Twigs" that would be "Twigs" if 35 were still the age limit. And so, as I said, then through the members that were daughters of The Auxiliary, and their friends and it broadened their base. And I believe at one time we were limited to the number of active members we could have but I'm not sure on that point.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:25:19] So when did you first hear about Twig?

Margaret Johnson [00:25:25] Probably through one of the- my mother's friend's daughters who said, you know, you're out of college and you're not married. It's a nice group of people and a worthwhile volunteer organization.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:25:46] What year was it?

Margaret Johnson [00:25:48] I graduated in- it would've been sometime- I finished college in '47, so it would have been '48 or '49 in that range.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:26:01] Where did you go to college?

Margaret Johnson [00:26:02] I went to a college in North Carolina, Duke University.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:26:06] And so you came back from Durham, you came to Alexandria, and you met this- your mother's friend's daughter who mentioned it. Okay. So what are some of your earliest- so what's some of your earliest memories of becoming a part of Twig?

Margaret Johnson [00:26:28] I can remember the horrible facilities we had. We had a walk down shop on the side- on the west side of the 200 block of Columbus Street, and you had to duck your head to get in. Down the steps, you had to duck your head to get into the building. It was cold and dank. And then, I think we moved up to King- way up on King Street, and then back down near Henry, and then into the present facilities.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:27:12] Let's talk more about that first shop. So what else about it? Can you describe more about it?

Margaret Johnson [00:27:23] If you've ever seen an underground basement, that's probably- that's a good description. You know, poor lighting and just dank and dark and very uninviting. But somehow, the rent must surely have been right, that they went there. And one of the main concerns of where the location would be, most of the clientele did not have transportation, so it had to be in walking distance of where they lived. So it had to be centrally located in downtown Alexandria. And it was fairly- oh, you can say it, very unattractive. It would not cater to the clientele that TWIGs, now, are catering to.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:28:34] Right, so when you were first sponsored by your mom's friend's daughter. Who? What was her name? I don't think we got it.

Margaret Johnson [00:28:43] She was Evelyn Pickett Baker.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:28:46] Okay. Did you go to a meeting? What were some of the first things you did with Twigs? Did you go to a meeting? Did you first go to that shop? What were some of the...

Margaret Johnson [00:28:56] Well, we probably went to a meeting and were introduced to the rest of the membership. And then you- I was working then, so I probably worked in the shop on weekends.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:29:14] Okay. Do you have any memories of working in that first shop? Any clients that stood out, anything that were sold that stood out to you?

Margaret Johnson [00:29:25] We had one woman who frequented the shop till I became inactive. And she was this tall, slender woman when she came in. And when she left, she was quite hefty. And she had put- she stole the stuff and put it on underneath the clothes that she wore. And so we did have a great deal of theft.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:30:01] Did you ever stop the theft?

Margaret Johnson [00:30:03] No, we just kept an eye on her.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:30:07] And during that early period when you started with Twig and were starting to work in the shop, what were some of the- sort of, you know, were there events that Twig was putting on and what were some of the things that Twig was working with?

Margaret Johnson [00:30:26] They-

Francesco De Salvatore [00:30:27] or on with the hospital?

Margaret Johnson [00:30:28] They did ver- I can't remember. Other than the tea that they had at Christmas time, and I'm sure they had other activities, but they were not as physically involved in the hospital as now.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:30:52] Okay. Got it. So when did they become more involved with the hospital?

Margaret Johnson [00:30:59] Gradually. I think when some of the old "Twigs" got out, you got new blood. And I think one of the things that has really changed was the demographics of the membership. Because when we- when I was a Twig active, you always worked on the day your maid came to watch the children and you sort of scheduled your Twig time to when you had help to take care of your children. And the little children, I don't think any of the Twigs have little children now. Preschool age. And as, gradually, the membership grew and they had more time to devote to the hospital, they did. And it's, you know, increasing with the membership and more free time.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:32:27] When did you see it? Like when did you- so you started in the late 40's, and then when did you see Twig starting to do more with the hospital? Was it in the 50's? Was it in the 60's?

Margaret Johnson [00:32:42] The change was so gradual. You didn't- because we had the first shop and then we went in and helped with mail and flower delivery, which was a different venue to go in and actually be in the hospital. And then I- before I was a Twig, the big talking point was they had a dance. And Guy Lombardo, none of you have ever heard of him, was the guest band. And then we had the two. We had a spring and a fall activity, such as a dance or at some sort of a social event, which was our big money raising project.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:33:55] And when did this start? When did these dances start?

Margaret Johnson [00:33:59] Oh, probably in the 50's and 60's in that period timeframe.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:34:10] Do you have any memories, any specific memories from these dances when they first started?

Margaret Johnson [00:34:15] No, I remember we had a- in the spring we had a Daisy Dance. And then we had one, some sort of a holiday gala in the winter months. And we had great discussion. Whether we thought \$5 a couple, would preclude some people from attending. And they were our two big money making projects, because if we made \$100 a day at the thirft shop, that was a outstanding day.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:35:10] Were there any other things that you remember from these early 50's, you know, as you were getting started. Any other events that were hosted or any other- anything else about that period that

Margaret Johnson [00:35:23] I can't remember when we started the Home Tour. I was chairman of the tour one year, and I negotiated opening the Lee House. Because before that they had just gone to one of the downtown churches and had a reception for the tour, you know, coffee and cookies or something. And I was able to get the owner of the house to open it, which was- made a lovely setting for tea after the tour.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:36:14] What would you do? Like, what? Can you maybe describe what the tour was like? What would happen on the tour?

Margaret Johnson [00:36:25] They had the some sort of open house. So when you would walk in you'd stop by, pick up cookies and a cup of coffee or something like that. And the Lee House was on Oronoco Street, and it was a beautiful house and we were able to- it was very well accepted. The change. It was an upgrade.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:37:11] That's good. Great. Great. So I know. So maybe keep this right because I know eventually, right in the sixties, you you become the President of Twig, right?

Margaret Johnson [00:37:21] Yeah. I can't remember the years.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:37:24] I have 64 to 65.

Margaret Johnson [00:37:28] Yeah.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:37:28] Um, so did you have any roles before? So before you became the president? What were some of the roles? Or like what were some of the responsibilities that you took on as you sort of worked way up?

Margaret Johnson [00:37:39] You just to quote, the old expression, you sort of worked your way up. And I was coached with co-chairman for a year before I became chairman of the Thrift Shop. And then I was vice president a year and then was president. You sort of had a year in training as vice president.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:38:05] Uh, okay. Was it something, you know, did you immediately just really throw yourself into the work and really saw yourself maybe taking on more responsibility or was something that you gradually grew to really care about?

Margaret Johnson [00:38:21] You just sort of gradually. Oh, I don't think would other than making a move to a new facility, the change was unnoticed.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:38:36] Okay. Why did you grow to really, you know, really. I mean, really want to devote more time and energy to Twig? You know what? What kept bringing you back?

Margaret Johnson [00:38:58] Well, you felt you were contributing something, and the group of people were the type of people that I enjoyed being with.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:39:18] You want to get some water?

Margaret Johnson [00:39:19] Yeah.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:39:20] Yeah, yeah. You're welcome to this. [Pause] Yeah, so we were talking about, you know, what kept bringing you back and, you know, and making you care look, you know, bring you back to and, you know, putting more energy and time into it. What, what was it, what kept bringing you there?

Margaret Johnson [00:39:53] Well, I enjoyed it and I particularly enjoyed the rapport that you got working with another Twig on a one-to-one basis all day. You really got to know them and they got to know you and you became quite often became very close friends after that.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:40:19] Who were some of your close friends that were. What were some of the really close relationships that you developed?

Margaret Johnson [00:40:26] Well, one, my daughter's godfather was the person that designed the original Twig logo. So we did get the husbands involved, but not heavily. But most of my bridge club were Twigs and the people were my friends at church were some of them were Twigs. And so it was just they were the people that you wanted to be with and enjoy. Plus the contributions you were making to the hospital.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:41:20] So, you know, like you said, you became president in '64.

Margaret Johnson [00:41:25] Yeah.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:41:25] And if you want water, feel free. Yeah. Can you describe what it was like being the president for that year? And what were the things that were important to you to see happen?

Margaret Johnson [00:41:42] One of the more exciting things during Hospital Week, Harden and Weaver, they were on WMAL, were guests. And Frank Mann was Mayor and I had lunch with them to celebrate the hospital week. And then I worked with Patrick Hayes, who was the Washington Performing Arts Director, and we had the, he arranged to give us a night for money making evening, and we had Victor Borge one time and we had Ballet Folklorico of Mexico one time. We had over at the Kennedy Center and we had, you know, money making. It was a money making enterprise that we worked together.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:42:54] And so a lot of that was happening when you became president?

Margaret Johnson [00:42:58] Yeah.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:43:00] Where did you get the idea to, to start doing that? Like with?

Margaret Johnson [00:43:05] Oh, well, when you get new members, you get new ideas. That's good. And, you know, the would say, you know, I belong to this group and this is what we tried. Why don't we try it here? Type of thing. You know, people would come in with their ideas of money-making projects. And as I said, the money we made from the Thrift Shop was minimal, to the old Homes Tours or the dances.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:43:44] Are there any other memories from being president for that year? Anything that you worked on, anything that you brought that was new?

Margaret Johnson [00:43:53] Oh, well, as I said, I was included in a lot of the hospital activities and I enjoyed being in the limelight.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:44:11] What were some of those activities?

Margaret Johnson [00:44:12] Well, as I said, we had a luncheon with Harden and Weaver. And then one year we did, I can't remember why, but it was during hospital week, I believe, and we gave a silver baby cup to the first baby born the first day of the week or something like that. So we did try to get into, you know, different ways, but. And as I said, all their growth was not dramatic in any sense. We just sort of added as we went along. Other than the physical plant where the store was, the shop was located.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:45:18] Do you have any other memories from that period in the sixties? Were there other ways that the Twig interacted with the hospital? Were there any other events that were done or started that that come to mind?

Margaret Johnson [00:45:35] No, not in particular. Again, as I said, I think we tried things and if they worked, we kept them on. If they didn't work, we dropped them.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:45:54] Yeah. And so, like moving into the, you know, the seventies and eighties what were things that Twig was working on during that period. Do you have any memories from those years or from those decades?

Margaret Johnson [00:46:19] Now, I'm a firm believer like the Captain of the ship, when you leave, you don't go back. And when I was president, I didn't want to be a meddling ex-president. And I became very inactive then.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:46:42] Okay.

Margaret Johnson [00:46:43] And then I was on the Board at the hospital. Oh. When my husband was President, I was on and then he followed me by being on the Board and being president. And I sort of let him carry the family flag.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:47:04] Okay, so so really after 65, you weren't as active. Okay.

Margaret Johnson [00:47:08] Yeah.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:47:10] When did you join the Board then?

Margaret Johnson [00:47:12] Oh, it was during that time frame. Mm hmm. I stayed on the Board, and then.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:47:27] Do you have any memories that you want to tell us about, about serving on the Board? What were some of the some of the things that the Board dealt with during that period?

Margaret Johnson [00:47:36] Well, as I said, finances was one of the big ones. And the expansion of moving the hospital, the facilities actually up here. And I remember one time, we never found out why, but my daughter collapsed when she four or five and the ambulance came and took me and her to the emergency room. And my husband and my pediatrician were up here at Seminary and we had this two or three way conversation between the two facilities. And there was, that was a major change when they opened this facility up here.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:48:46] Can you describe sort of when the facility was opens, the you know, how, were there things that, discussions you were involved with on the Board and what was the community's reaction to it?

Margaret Johnson [00:48:59] Well, I think there was a lot of feeling of moving. People downtown didn't want the facility out here. It was too far to go. And you had arguments pro and con. The ambulance doesn't take that much longer to get there. So there was, there was not a 100% support from the city, the residents of the city to move the facility out here. But when I was growing up, Quaker Lane over was Fairfax County. So this was pretty rural as compared to now.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:49:56] Something I've rather asked was, you know, I think maybe also helpful for current and future Twig members right, is like, what are some of the issues? Do you recall some of the large issues that Twig had to deal with internally? Like what were the things that, what were some of the challenges of doing the work that Twig was trying to do?

Margaret Johnson [00:50:23] I think, time. I mean, as I said, being under 30. We all had young children, very few. The path we, most of us took, was graduated from college, work a couple of years, get married, have a couple of children. And you didn't have the free time the Twigs now have.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:51:11] And as you look back, what are some of the things you're most proud of from from your time being a part of Twig

Margaret Johnson [00:51:22] Well, the, I think the biggest thing was being the chairman of the Old Homes Tour, and that was a challenging thing to get the homes and to get staff in to sit, be at their houses and get the brochures printed. You know, it was successful. And I think that I have to feel like that was one of them. Particularly opening up the Lee house was one of my major accomplishments.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:52:04] What were some of the homes that were part of the tour?

Margaret Johnson [00:52:07] Hmm.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:52:08] Excuse me. What? What were some of the homes that were part of the tour?

Margaret Johnson [00:52:11] Oh, I can't remember. The only one I can remember was the couple of houses on Duke Street, and. Basically all were within walking distance of King and Washington streets.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:52:37] And as you look as you look back, how do you think Twig has changed the city of Alexandria? And also obviously the hospital and like that, what changes do you think Twig has brought overall?

Margaret Johnson [00:52:53] The only thing that I think the public is aware of probably is the Old Homes Tour and to some extent the Thrift Shop. They're getting an entirely different customers. I mean, we had people that would go you know, they would frequent Goodwill and Salvation Army and now where people are giving designer clothes and that type of thing. So you're, so another group of people are the customers now and that and the. Oh, the Old Homes Tour is probably the biggest thing that the public is aware of.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:53:59] What about for the hospital? How? Like what, what is the way that Twig has helped change the hospital for the better?

Margaret Johnson [00:54:07] Well, I don't think anything is more important in the hospital is compassion. And I think the Twigs, when they were delivering the flowers and things, just somebody to come in and say, "How are you today?" rather than with a hypodermic needle. Oh, that smile on somebody else's face goes a long way when you're sick.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:54:36] Yeah. Do you have any memories of when you went into the hospital and volunteered or brought flowers? Do you have any that come to mind?

Margaret Johnson [00:54:47] No, other than they were always glad to see you. And It just means a lot to them.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:55:05] Remember any of the specific patients that you deliver flowers to or?

Margaret Johnson [00:55:09] Not in particular.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:55:15] What's your hope for Twig going into the future? What do you hope to see happen with Twig and its members?

Margaret Johnson [00:55:27] Well, they're doing an awfully good job now. So don't mess with success.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:55:37] Don't mess with success. What do you think is going well right now?

Margaret Johnson [00:55:41] Well, I think the financial contributions are fantastic. And, and I think there. You're finding more people donating to the Thrift Shop and the Old Homes Tours, really is part of the city calendar of events.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:56:19] Are there any questions about Twig that we missed? Make sure we get those. One quick question. Margaret, can you remember what year you were in charge of the home tour?

Margaret Johnson [00:56:47] No. [Giggling] I'm trying to figure out, you know?

Francesco De Salvatore [00:56:57] I'm curious. How do you want to be remembered? Oh, sorry. We'll do one more. What's the other question?

Janet Hawkins [00:57:09] Just. Do you have any memories about working with Patsy Ticer and [Inaudible]? Oh, or anything else to say about her?

Margaret Johnson [00:57:17] No, Pat. I was a good friend of her mother's and very fond of Pat. And then I went to high school with Jack. So. So I have more of my memories are personal rather than through the Twig.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:57:48] Could you describe who Patsy is? Who is Patsy?

Margaret Johnson [00:57:58] Oh, was our Mayor and state Senator. And then, I think she was in the, started off working in the real estate business and Jack was an engineer. And then my, one of my children was a good friend of their son at T.C. Williams. But as I said, my contacts with Patsy definitely, they would be based on a personal friendship basis.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:58:46] And I'm just curious, how would you like to be remembered as as we close out here?

Margaret Johnson [00:58:52] Yeah. I would just hope that I contributed something to Twig. Non-controversial and could be remembered as a reasonably good leader.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:59:19] Right? Great. Well, thank you for talking with me today, Margaret. It's been, it's been really an honor and pleasure. Thank you.

Margaret Johnson [00:59:27] Oh, I hope I've been helpful.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:59:30] Thanks.