

Oral History Interview
Interviewee: Rosemarie Schelling
Interviewer: Margaret Shutler
Tuesday, May 3, 2005

MARGARET SHUTLER (MARGARET): This is May the 3rd, '05. We are at Sharon Bulova's office. I am interviewing Rosemarie Schelling, who lives on Braeburn Drive in Annandale, part of the Braddock District. And I am the MARGARET, Margaret Shutler. And we will begin. First of all, what made you come to this area?

ROSEMARIE SCHELLING (ROSEMARIE): Well, my husband was stationed at the Pentagon, and we came up to look for housing. And it took us several weeks to decide that we really could buy a house here. At that time, it was very expensive for us. But anyway, we had to do it, so we did it. And the kids lived literally in the back of the car everyday for two weeks while we house hunted all over. And we happened into Springbrook Forest, having seen the ad. And so we came over here, and we really liked the house and decided to order one. And so we did, but it wouldn't be ready until a year later.

MARGARET: A year later?

ROSEMARIE: Uh-huh. So on the way out, we saw this sign, house for sale by owner. So we went in, and we both decided, that lady and we, that we came as the answer to the each other's prayer. She was a newly, what would I say, a brand new widow with four teenage sons, and she had to sell her house and leave, and we needed a house. So we were able to get in in almost within a week, which was wonderful. And we love it. And it's in Springbrook Forest. And we've had that house for 42 years.

MARGARET: Do you mind telling us how much it cost?

ROSEMARIE: Not at all. It cost \$26,000, and we bought it.

MARGARET: And you could barely afford.

ROSEMARIE: Yeah. We thought, I hope we can buy fertilizer for the yard. And now I realize again, we probably couldn't buy it today at, what, \$540,000 or something. But anyway, it's a great house. And it's on the creek with all the woods in back, and that was really, that's what Frank bought. I bought the kitchen because it was a large eat-in kitchen. And so we all enjoyed it. It's really been a wonderful home.

MARGARET: And how many children do you have?

ROSEMARIE: Five.

MARGARET: So they all fit in that house.

ROSEMARIE: Yes, they did. And I was thinking that at that time, there were like three four children in every family, and some had five, six, and even seven next door to me. And there

were trikes and bicycles and everything, swing sets, everything you could see from the road. And then we had to leave for five years and lived in Europe and came back. And in 1975, we couldn't find enough kids under six years old to have Santa Claus visit our neighborhood on the back of his station wagon, which he had been doing for years. Now I think we could have him again, which is wonderful. We've got a lot of young families now. And Guinea Road was just a gravel road when we moved in. And Rolling Road, where it goes over the railroad, was a one lane bridge. You had to stop and wait for the other cars to go by. And we were about the only subdivision in that particular part off of Guinea Road down the road. And then behind Star Garden that, I guess they called the Woods of Ilda. That was probably the first subdivision in our area of the Braddock District. And then we moved in, and Braeburn Drive only went to Willett. There was no Willow Woods, no Canterbury Woods, nothing between us and Red Fox Forest, which was also a new subdivision. And those woods and creek have been wonderful and still are for all the kids. And now with what I call the new Sharon Bulova trail behind our homes, it is wonderful. And that trail is used very much by many people. It's a real pleasure. Anyway, Margaret, you've got some more questions?

MARGARET: Well, you mentioned your children. How about schools?

ROSEMARIE: Schools were a wonderful thing. First, well, we had five children, and they were first in the Wakefield, is it Wakefield Forest --

MARGARET: Wakefield Forest.

ROSEMARIE: -- Elementary School. And that was great, and that's probably about a mile and a half from us. And then they had to go, because so many more homes were built, more families moving in, they were transferred to Little Run School over on Olley Lane, where they had half day classes, and the children from Kings Park came for the other half of the day. And they did that for a year. And then they built Canterbury Wood School, which was wonderful. And we had two children in there, one in the sixth grade and one in the first, and the others were in junior high school. And our first principal, John Carroll, we all loved Mr. Carroll. I think his name is John because we all called him Mr. Carroll, a young man. And he lived on Braeburn Drive, and in the winter he built huge snow sculptures. And I remember one year it was a dinosaur, and I mean like life size dinosaur, and a life size convertible another year. And so that was delightful. We loved him. He was there a long time. And then the kids went to different junior schools, too, while they were building new ones around the world, around the place.

MARGARET: Which ones did they go to? Did you say Lanier?

ROSEMARIE: The older ones, they started out in Lanier Middle School out in Fairfax, and then they transferred, well, Jan went to Woodson. The oldest one went to Woodson. The next one was transferred from Lanier to Robert Frost because they had built that school. And he also started into Woodson. Well, then we were gone for four or five years, and then when we came back, two of the younger, well, the three younger kids, one went to Robinson from the same home and one went to, and one graduated, I'm sorry, in Germany, and one started first grade in Canterbury Woods, and one was in the sixth grade. And all the schools were great, and they still are I think, yeah. But now they don't have to go far for everything.

MARGARET: Where was Frank stationed, your husband?

ROSEMARIE: Here? In the Pentagon.

MARGARET: And so how long was his commute?

ROSEMARIE: It was 20 minutes on Sunday, and I think it was about an hour to an hour and a half through the year.

MARGARET: It was? Where did they have to go?

ROSEMARIE: Just to the Pentagon.

MARGARET: To get down there, how did he travel?

ROSEMARIE: It was a car pool, and they tried different routes all the time to try to find the best route. Probably most of the times it was about an hour, but once in a while it was longer than that.

MARGARET: For Phil, it only took 20 minutes to get down there.

ROSEMARIE: Really?

MARGARET: Yeah.

ROSEMARIE: Maybe they went different times.

MARGARET: Well, carpool you'd have to pick up other people.

ROSEMARIE: Well, that's true.

MARGARET: But was the Beltway built?

ROSEMARIE: No. And Shirley Highway was just completed while we lived here. There was no Beltway. So anyway --

MARGARET: So that's the way he would have gone on that. What did you do during holidays, like 4th of July and Christmas and all that kind of holiday?

ROSEMARIE: Well, one thing I was going to say, while we had so many kids in the neighborhood, Halloween was the busiest night in the year in our neighborhood because we had so many kids. Now we're lucky if about 15 kids come by. But also children now go more to programs at school and at their churches and stuff for just safety of it, I guess. What did you ask me? I'm sorry.

MARGARET: Holidays.

ROSEMARIE: Oh, yeah, holidays.

MARGARET: 4th of July? Did they have the fireworks?

ROSEMARIE: Well, 4th of July, well, we went down to D.C. for the fireworks I think a few times, and at one time with you and Phil.

MARGARET: Yeah. They had those earlier on.

ROSEMARIE: Yeah. Oh yeah, I think so. And maybe we saw them in Fairfax City once. Usually we didn't go out to see fireworks. We'd have a few at home, but not enough to talk about.

MARGARET: Did you ever go when we had the fireworks down at the school?

ROSEMARIE: Oh, the school. Oh yeah, when our community association had our fireworks behind the school. And then the school built the gym, and we obviously couldn't get entrance anymore. It got so expensive because the space got narrower. They had to stop. So a lot of people do go to Fairfax High School for the wonderful fireworks there. And Christmas, frequently we went to Illinois to visit our families, and sometimes they came this way. But most of the time I think we just stayed home, and when everybody got a little older, when we were in Europe we all learned how to ski. So when we came back, I mean, there could be snow almost anywhere and we'd be trying to ski on it. And we went to Vermont with Shutlers one year, which was our whole families together, the Shutler six and our five, and that was wonderful. And we skied maybe in Pennsylvania, real close by places. And I don't know then.

MARGARET: Do you think we had more snow then than we do now?

ROSEMARIE: Well, it seems like we did, doesn't it?

MARGARET: It does to me.

ROSEMARIE: And you and I used to do cross-country skiing in the woods behind the house and down the street.

MARGARET: But that's it.

ROSEMARIE: And the kids sledded also, Great Hill.

MARGARET: That really good hill on the street.

ROSEMARIE: I guess we feel like we did have more frequent snows. One really, really big storm some time in the 60s where the kids had to dig a trench for our dog so he could out in the snow. It was like four and five feet deep. That was fun. That's when Mr. Carroll built one of his sculptures, probably the dinosaur. But Easter we were usually at home.

MARGARET: How about things like inaugurations and things. Did you do many of those? You know, things --

ROSEMARIE: We didn't go for inaugurations, no. We didn't do that. We went down for parades, maybe the Cherry Blossom parade, something like that, a couple of times. We went down frequently to the museums, and the National Art Gallery, and the Corcoran Art Gallery, which we loved. And then I don't know. We joined the Smithsonian Residents Association and went to some of those things and one of their trips on a sailboat just for the weekend. And that was delightful, called the Mystic Clipper. I don't know what we did. The theater. We went to the theater in Washington occasionally with the kids. I guess that's about it.

MARGARET: Did you do any birding trips?

ROSEMARIE: Yes, we did, but we really didn't bird a lot when our children were here, but we did start birding. And birded first in our backyard, and in 1965 on May the 1st, we had about 63 different species of birds come into our backyard. It was just wonderful. And one day we had a party, somebody was leaving for Vietnam, and we had the neighbors in, and very few of them were very interested in birds. But out our dining room windows, we saw the pileated woodpecker come and feed, drink at the bird bath. We saw a rose-breasted grosbeak cardinal, more than we had ever seen at one time. So everybody went home and started dripping hoses in their bird baths to attract the birds. And birding trips we went on, we hadn't gone with groups any place until about 1985, and went to places like Pennsylvania and, I don't know, maybe different places in Virginia. And then we did some tropical birding. Our first tropic birding was in Trinidad, and the next time we were in Belize, and those were the only two tropical birding trips we've had. Then we joined the Northern Virginia Bird Club and went on outings all the time, a couple times a year to Chincoteague, and then there's an annual meeting in Virginia, all over Virginia, different place every time. And we have about 600 members in the Northern Virginia Bird Club, and it's a very active club, and they have walks almost, well, I'd say at least five times a week in the general vicinity of Arlington and Fairfax County. And that's about it for that. I'll think of something wonderful later, but I can't now.

MARGARET: Yeah. I got home from my interview and thought, oh, I forgot to tell them this and I forgot to tell them that. How about feeding those five kids? Grocery stores or any place to go?

ROSEMARIE: Well, we talked about that, and Frank is my husband, said last night, you know, the only place we had to shop was Landmark, and they were like building that when we came. We didn't really have a place like that to shop. And I know Kings Park was built, but I thought there was a grocery store in Kings Park, but there may not have even been a shopping center in Kings Park. I don't know. I don't know where we went to the grocery store, I guess in Annandale.

MARGARET: No, because you and I are both military. We went to the commissary.

ROSEMARIE: Oh yeah, but didn't you have to go in between and stuff?

MARGARET: Well, not very often. We went to the commissary in Cameron, remember?

ROSEMARIE: Oh yeah, just 10 miles away, maybe. Cameron Station had a big commissary.

MARGARET: And what happened to that?

ROSEMARIE: Well, they built a bunch of homes there. It's gone.

MARGARET: It's gone.

ROSEMARIE: It's gone. Maybe mostly condominiums, I think. And some businesses are in there. It was supposed to be a community of businesses and residences, I think. Church, our church, Holy Spirit Church started out in Woodson High School's gym on Sunday mornings, where a lot of churches started. Holy Spirit Church was built, I think, in 1967, and St. Matthews Methodist Church was there, and that's where a lot of the boys went to Boy Scouts, over there. And there was no Bethlehem Lutheran Church and no, is that St. Paul's Episcopal on Braddock Road, and no Parkwood Baptist on Braddock Road. None of those churches were here. And what else?

MARGARET: Well, what about if you were to have community activities? Did we have things that our civic association sponsored?

ROSEMARIE: Well, mainly we spent a long time trying to get the swimming pool built and tennis courts, which we never got.

MARGARET: (Indiscernible) the tennis courts.

ROSEMARIE: Not enough money, or maybe not enough people wanted them.

MARGARET: Well, I heard that the county had a number of spaces you had to have in your parking lot for the number you were swimming. And they took our tennis court --

ROSEMARIE: For the parking lot.

MARGARET: -- for the parking lot, so we never got the swimming pool.

ROSEMARIE: Too bad, but anyway. What did our community do together? Our neighbors did. We would have a block party once in a while, everybody had pot luck, which was fun, and get to know our neighbors a little bit. I don't remember.

MARGARET: Do you remember the 4th of July parade?

ROSEMARIE: Yeah, but I don't know when that started.

MARGARET: Were your kids in it at all?

ROSEMARIE: I don't think so.

MARGARET: Because our kids were.

ROSEMARIE: Well, that's funny then.

MARGARET: Because Phil was in the band.

ROSEMARIE: Oh yeah, that's nice. Maybe they rode their bikes with the wheels all decorated with crepe paper. I kind of remember decorating the bikes for July.

MARGARET: Yeah.

ROSEMARIE: I don't know. But a lot of kids were, and we always went to the parade. Frank and I still go to the parade, and I know Margaret and Phil still work on the parade every year. And that's fun. And the little kids all dressed up and riding their, what did they call them, big wheels. Yeah, I forget. Braddock District didn't stop when our kids stopped growing up. We still got a wonderful Braddock District. We had concerts. Is that Braddock District, the concerts, or is that Fairfax County? Yeah, ours is Braddock District.

MARGARET: The thing called Braddock Nights, you mean?

ROSEMARIE: Yeah.

MARGARET: Yeah. Didn't have those then.

ROSEMARIE: No. We didn't have those until fairly recently. We've got about the best supervisor of any district, I'm going to say now, and if they don't put it on the tape, it's okay. Sharon Bulova is just magnificent. She listens to us, and she acts. And she's great about keeping a meeting going and everybody pleasant.

MARGARET: She is. This, of course, "Looking Back at Braddock" is her idea. I think it's great. When you moved in, did you feel like you were in the country or in the city?

ROSEMARIE: You know, I didn't think about that that I remember. We must have thought we were in the country because we loved the woods and the creek. And there wasn't much around us. No library either did we have, Kings Park Library. But you know that's funny. I don't even remember thinking that. I know that Rutherford subdivision was a huge Rutherford farm with a beautiful big farmhouse up on it right behind where their swimming pool. That all was their homestead and stuff up there. I don't know how much of Rutherford was the farm, but it was nothing built there in Rutherford either. Oak Hill was about the closest thing to us that was here, the house up there. We always went every weekend with our kids either to the Shenandoah mountains or someplace to just hike and have a roast, and we always did that. We did it before in Colorado. And one of the kids was just like two months old and we hiked up that mountain. But anyway, we loved hiking and rock collecting.

MARGARET: What about dinner time? Compare dinner time then and dinner time --

ROSEMARIE: These days.

MARGARET: -- before the kids all left.

ROSEMARIE: Well, first of all, we were all at dinner. Dad was home for dinner. And we had a chart on the wall whose turn it was to help cook, whose turn to clean, and whose turn to

clear the table. And the kids kept charge of that whole chart. And we always had a full meal. I feel today I must have started dinner around 3 o'clock in the afternoon, started cooking and making a salad and stuff. And it was wonderful. We enjoyed it. And once in a while finally it became a habit to go to Three Chefs restaurant on Sunday morning for breakfast. That was a big treat.

MARGARET: Where's Three Chefs?

ROSEMARIE: It was on Annandale where the Fuddruckers is. Didn't you go to Three Chefs? Oh, my goodness. It was great. And we had a lot of picnics. Now I think you're lucky to find many families where even half the family can gather for dinner, which is unfortunate. I do have to say most of our moms had the pleasure of being at home with their families in those days. And I'm glad to see that we still have some mommies at home, but I think it's wonderful that women can also work it out where they can work away from home and still have a family life. And they seem to keep very busy.

MARGARET: I think they do.

ROSEMARIE: You know, they still have the same car pools. We had car pools everywhere. And it seems like all the families still belong to car pools.

MARGARET: Do you think that they have as many, the kids have as many opportunities now for sports and stuff?

ROSEMARIE: Oh, I think so. I feel definitely so.

MARGARET: More than then?

ROSEMARIE: Well, I think it's about the same as far as opportunities. Now as far as traveling teams and stuff like that, we didn't have much of that. But you had gymnastics, and our older girls had field hockey at Woodson. And you had swimmers and gymnasts.

MARGARET: Those things were all at the school, the gymnastics at the school and the swimming right up there. They had little league, but do you think they had like Braddock Road whatever they've got now?

ROSEMARIE: Boy Scout and stuff, not that I remember. I don't know. No, I don't remember that. And the Scouts, their big deal was Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. They were in that, and we were all busy with that for years.

MARGARET: What did the Scouts do?

ROSEMARIE: Well, they did their good deeds all the time, and they went on hikes, local hikes and hikes in the mountains and overnight. Let's see. And they all worked on badges, you know, the girls on the sewing and the cooking and the gardening, and goodness knows what all. And the boys on science. I can't remember, you know, but they all had sashes full of badges, and everybody in the troop did it seems like.

MARGARET: Did you get Eagle Scouts?

ROSEMARIE: Yes. Joe, our one son, was an Eagle Scout. And he still is a good scout.

MARGARET: Does he work with --

ROSEMARIE: Our kids were in the older scouting when they went to Europe, and they went on the international things in Europe, to Britain and Sweden and Switzerland, the girls. Well, the boys went places, too. But anyway, we're talking about Braddock District. And our youngest daughter was never in the Scouts, and the other kids just lived Scouts. And now Scouts I kind of see again, but for a while they were sort of out of favor, I think. We just didn't see Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts around too much. Well, maybe it was because we didn't have many kids in our neighborhood.

MARGARET: And maybe I haven't seen many Girl Scouts. The only time you see Girl Scouts is when they're selling cookies.

ROSEMARIE: Well, maybe so.

MARGARET: Then they come to the door.

ROSEMARIE: And we see them on Girl Scout Sunday. Yeah. Now they wear their uniforms all the time.

MARGARET: How about transportation? How did you get around?

ROSEMARIE: Well, we had one station wagon. That's probably why Frank was in the car pool. Most of the guys had one car, and so that's how we got around.

MARGARET: Your family had one car.

ROSEMARIE: Mm hm, ours did. And it was great. And pretty soon it just didn't seem like enough, but while we lived here, which was from '63 to, well, we only lived here four years. We had one car during that time. Then we were gone for four or five, came back in '74, then we had to have two cars. And that's what we have today. With only two of us now, we have to have two cars and thank the Lord we do.

MARGARET: How about buses? Buses?

ROSEMARIE: We didn't use buses. We do have a bus goes through Springbrook Forest, which is nice, and Willow Woods.

MARGARET: Did we have that then?

ROSEMARIE: I remember going to Landmark on that like once or twice. I don't know that we had it in the 60s, but I know we had it in the 70s. I don't know. I know that you didn't have to haul your trash to the street in those days. You just left it behind your house, and the trash man came and got it and emptied it and took it back. And that was until fairly recently.

That was wonderful. And we weren't recycling then so we didn't have that situation. And it's amazing to see how much recycling we have just my husband and me. We fill that great big green box every time it's due, twice a week, once a week, full of bottles and hardly any cans anymore, but a lot of bottles, and jars, and --

MARGARET: And plastic.

ROSEMARIE: -- plastic bottles, yeah. It's interesting.

MARGARET: So I'm interested. Was that a private company that went to the back of your house?

ROSEMARIE: Yes. We never had county or district or anything like that. In fact, the one that we all have today, that was originally one company that was sold and another company bought it, and then another company, and it finally became, most of us have Triple A trash pick up. I think there's a trash pick up or something like that. But nope.

MARGARET: How about your mail?

ROSEMARIE: Mail came right to the door and still does in Springbrook Forest.

MARGARET: Yes. I guess once it gets started that way, they can't change it.

ROSEMARIE: I guess not.

MARGARET: But the new houses I noticed all have mailboxes.

ROSEMARIE: Yeah, out on the street.

MARGARET: Out on the street.

ROSEMARIE: I think about that on rainy days and snowy days how blessed we are to have that. We have an active, the garden club, Willow Brook Garden Club, is celebrating its 40th year this year, and they're a very active club. And they do what they can to help beautify the neighborhood, and encourage us to plant flowers, and use flowers in our home, and to share our plants and flowers. And I enjoy gardening very much. And I know my good friend, Margaret Shutler, does, too.

MARGARET: We have a great time gardening up and down the street. We have other friends, and we all trade.

ROSEMARIE: My husband was military, and a lot of our neighbors were also military. But very few today in our neighborhood are military. And we have a few Vietnamese born people on our street, and several from Korea, and one that I know of from India, and a family from Afghanistan, and I don't know any other countries in our neighborhood, do you?

MARGARET: We have one across the street from us that's from Nepal.

ROSEMARIE: Nepal?

MARGARET: He is from Nepal.

ROSEMARIE: That's great, and I love it. We have a really nice relationship with our newer neighbors, and they seem to enjoy living here. And we get a nice basket of tomatoes.

MARGARET: And Japanese, too.

ROSEMARIE: Oh, Japanese, yes. She was here almost when, not quite, she's up in Willow Woods. But, yeah, Kioko Yoata. A wonderful icibada, Japanese flower arranger, who gives lessons and all that. She's great. What other great people have we had in our neighborhood?

MARGARET: Everybody.

ROSEMARIE: Everybody, that's right. We have had good neighbors, good people, good kids.

MARGARET: I wonder why it is that we don't have many military anymore when really what you say, when we were all, everybody was military, all sides of us were military.

ROSEMARIE: Well, half of them had been in World War II and Vietnam, and we had larger forces, I don't know. But we still have a few military around.

MARGARET: Yeah, there's a few, but not maybe. But the commute compared to where they have to go now, it's an easy commute to the Pentagon.

ROSEMARIE: Oh yeah. Now they go to Dale City and places like that, they started to have to, I guess because of the expenses in Fairfax County unfortunately. It's a great place to live, but it's very expensive.

MARGARET: That must be it because they're all going, especially down in Dale City, Stafford County, all that.

ROSEMARIE: And out west. I know somebody who lives in Winchester that commutes to Fairfax City everyday, and there's another person that lives in Pennsylvania -- I'm sure it's on the border -- that commutes to Fairfax County everyday. And I think that's where the salaries.

MARGARET: That's a long --

ROSEMARIE: And they don't want to live here because they don't feel that's where they want to put their money. I think we've about run out.

MARGARET: I think we've kind of covered our territory, haven't we?

ROSEMARIE: Yeah.

MARGARET: We didn't say much how the kids liked all their schools, but I don't --

ROSEMARIE: Well, my kids always liked school, and we thought they had great teachers.

MARGARET: And we've always thought it was a good school system here.

ROSEMARIE: Definitely.

MARGARET: Never thought about sending them to private school?

ROSEMARIE: No. No. That's funny, isn't it? We just have good schools. But people in other states know we have good schools in Fairfax County. And our own Canterbury Wood School that's in Braddock District, and Lake Braddock that's in Braddock District, they're great schools. And there's other ones, Little Run in Kings Park. I guess they're all in this district.

MARGARET: So I thank you very much for being willing to come and give us an oral history of how it was 40, 50 years ago in Braddock District. I think you'll enjoy our product when we finish it in the fall.

ROSEMARIE: I hope so.

MARGARET: There will be written thing and maps and all kinds of things. So thank you, Mrs. Schelling.

ROSEMARIE: Thank you, Margaret. Thank you, Mary.

(END OF INTERVIEW)