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Oral History

Alexander Adduci

July 18, 2014
Interviewed by Marie Scatena

Q: Today is July 18, 2014. My name is Marie Scatena, and I'm talking with Alexander Adduci in his home. It's about 12:15 p.m., and we are in Oak Lawn, Illinois.

Adduci: No, Chicago.

Q: Chicago. Oh, dear. Chicago, Illinois.

Adduci: Yeah, we're in Chicago, Illinois—Mount Greenwood.

Q: Mount Greenwood. Thank you very much. That's going to be important in our interview. And we're going to be talking about Mr. Adduci's life as a politician and politics and his work with the Democratic Party and Richard J. Daley. So Mr. Adduci, could you tell us when and where you were born, and—

Adduci: I was born April 27, 1929.

Q: And where was that?

Adduci: In Roseland, in Chicago, Illinois. Was born on 117th Street, 308 E. 117th Street, delivered by a midwife. And my mother had nine children. Twins died at childbirth. Three are alive right now. My sister Rosie is 89, I'm 85 and my brother Bobby is 81. I lived on a street that was named Nanny

Goat Boulevard. Our street was mostly populated by Italians that came from the southern part of Italy, in Calabria.

When they came through Ellis Island and were able to establish residency here, when they got on their feet, they sent for relatives, people related to them, to have them come into the United States so they could help them get settled, if they came in legally through Ellis Island.

Most people, they took the time, and it was a tough decision for them to make to come from their hometown in Italy and come to the United States and try to establish themselves here and become a family, and citizens, and speak English, and be good citizens of the United States. And many of them had big families. On 117th Street, almost every Italian family had six to eight to ten children.

You could go out any day or any evening and play on the street with many of your friends, and it was customary for all of the people in the block living on both sides of 117th Street between Prairie and Front, they all sat on the front porch and they watched all the kids playing in front of them. They knew everybody's kid on the street, who they belonged to. There were no fights or anything, but we had a lot of fun and you had a lot of friends.

And that area of Kensington was known as Bumtown because the Illinois Central tracks at that time, at 115th and Front Street, which was just west of Cottage Grove, the tracks were at ground level, and the bums that were coming in on the freight trains would get off at Kensington because it was a major stop, but it was called Bum Town.

On Kensington Avenue we had a business district that ran from Front Street to Michigan Avenue. There were 11 taverns in that area. Oftentimes people would congregate and every night and every weekend it was like a

town square. They would congregate at Kensington and Prairie. They'd be smoking their cigars and their cigarettes, and they'd be talking about politics, about things, about the professional fights, and they would have an occasional drink, but no problem. No problem whatsoever.

And all of us were lucky because if our mother asked us, 'Where are you going?' You would say, 'I'm going to the corner.' She knew you were going to Kensington and Prairie. It was safe. The police station was located a block away at 115th and Indiana.

St. Anthony Church owned the block between Prairie and Indiana, from Kensington all the way back to the alley. The church was founded on 1903 by Italian immigrants. It was named St. Anthony of Padua Italian National Parish. At one time the church in Kensington had between 2,500 to 3,000 Italian families belonged to the church.

We had our own grammar school, and we had two classes in every grade. Mostly nuns, Sisters of St. Joseph, taught there in 1960.

In the 1950's the church was growing so rapidly that the school and church were overcrowded. The Fire Department said it was dangerous.

In the 1950's the church built a bigger and new grammar school, convent and rectory. In the 1960's it was decided to build a new and bigger church on the same site and demolish the old church. They imported all of the marble from Italy and it came to the Calumet Harbor at 130th and Doty Avenue. It is now called the Bishop Ford.

In the late 1970's the Roseland are was undergoing a big demographic change which also greatly affected St. Anthony's Parish.

St. Anthony School closed in June 1998. St. Anthony School no longer exists. A charter school took over the school building in September 1998.

It is majority Hispanic and Black. Students are bussed into the school. The Church remains open but it does not have the number of parishioners it once had.

And it played a very important part in everybody's life because the church at that time, getting married in a church, and the weddings that they had, and the customs that they carried with them, they were something that kept the Italian community growing, and we never had any problems. Never.

In the 9th Ward, where we lived, my brother was the precinct captain of the 50th Precinct. When my father died—he worked for the city as a laborer—they gave my brother Tony, who was the oldest boy in the family, his job as a laborer in the Department of Water. And the precinct was almost 100% Italian. People had relatives that were living there. I had both my grandmothers living on the street, I had my cousins there. It was just a family affair.

And the 9th Ward, if you were a policeman or a fireman, you wanted to be stationed in the 9th Ward because there were no crimes, no fires, no drugs, no gangs, no prostitution, no syndicated gambling. It was an ideal place to live. In fact in Kensington, on the corner, we had our own theater called the Verdi Theater, and we used to go to the show for five cents and see all the cowboy movies and all the Shirley Temple movies and all the others.

And also at the corner of Kensington and Prairie were two confectionaries, ice cream parlors, *Pat and Mat's* and *The Penquin.* You could go in there and get a banana split for 15 cents, or 10 cents, or a milkshake. And they also had a bar in the back of the location. There was conversation all the time.

Everybody knew everybody. And everybody in town had a nickname because… For instance, my nickname is Mucklehead or Muck. And there were eight or nine Alexander Adducis living in the Roseland and Kensington area, so if you called somebody's name out, you couldn't tell who they were talking about unless you knew their nickname.

The Central and Eastern Illinois Railroad was elevated above street level at 117th and Prairie. And when the coal train came through, these trains loaded with coal, sometimes some of the young men would go onto the tracks, get on the coal train and throw coal off onto the side of the right of way. It was wrong, but they did it. It was something that they did. And also the railroad ties, when they repaired the tracks the old railroad ties, they would throw them along the right of way and people would collect them. And I don't think they even realized that they were dangerous at that time because the railroad ties were covered with creosote or tar.

I still have the saw in my garage, the hand saw where two men would operate it. They would cut the railroad ties in smaller pieces so that people could use them in their coal furnace. We had no air conditioning, we had no hot water tanks, we had no dishwashers, we had no vacuum cleaners, no cell phones, no computers.

Washers and dryers, they didn't have them. The women had to wash their clothes by hand, and they had to wring them out. In fact my mother was lucky enough, after a while they got her a washing machine with a wringer, and she actually got her hand stuck in the wringer. It didn't hurt her, but nevertheless it was things that they had to do.

I can recall at 308 East 117th Street my mother would be doing laundry in a big copper pan that was maybe two feet deep and maybe three feet in an oval. And they would boil their clothes and everybody used Linco. You even had a Linco guy coming from house to house where you would buy

Linco. No refrigerators. We had a sign in the window, if you want five or ten cents' worth of ice, the LeRose Coal Co. & Ice Co., they'd bring it in and put it in your ice box. No electric refrigerators.

So all these things, it made life very hard for married women with a family, because you had to wash the clothes, you had to dry the clothes. They hung them out on lines in the backyard with clothespins. And oftentimes…I'm trying to remember some…oh. My mother, we started out with a coal furnace that heated the two flat building we were in. My grandmother owned the building. She was living up upstairs with her single son Dominick. And my mother was on the first floor. She had all the children.

And we used to order a half a ton of Pocahontas mine run coal, from the LeRose Coal Co. and they would dump it on the street in front of your house, and we bought it in the basement. He would put it on a book and he would come by and maybe you'd pay 50 cents or a dollar, or 25 cents. They did business with books at that time.

And my mother never let any of us touch the furnace because my brother Reynold went one time and did the furnace to bank it to where we can sleep overnight, you know, in the morning you would have a warm house. Well, he overloaded it and my mother was afraid that the house would catch on fire.

But my mother took care of that furnace. She used to put the coal in there wet or damp and bank it over the hot coals so that eventually, in the morning, it would be warm enough for us to have a warm house. And then she would go with a handle and shake the clinkers out that went below the fire and pull them out with a rake and put them in a metal container. We would carry these ashes, me and my brother out, or clinkers, bring them out to the alley and throw them in the alley.

And at that time, people didn't have garbage cans. They actually threw their garbage on the ground. And the Bureau of Sanitation, who picked up the garbage, they didn't have the trucks today that had automatic lifters for the containers. The laborers had to go into the alley and use scoop shovels to clean the garbage and throw it over their head on an open truck and all of the cinders. That was hard work, but they did it.

And then eventually they decided that they were going to use 55 gallon drums. Well, we were very fortunate because Sherwin Williams paint Company had 55 gallon drums and we would cut the top off of them. We had to store them in the ward yard, 15 or 20 a time or give them out, and when people requested a garbage can, we would have the captain pick it up and deliver it to their house.

So those were hard times, but they were memorable times. I don't know if I said this, but we had no gangs in the ward, no prostitution, no syndicated gambling, no drugs. The Kensington Station, the 5th District rarely went out on any calls. And even the Fire department rarely went out on a fire.

And there was an Italian custom that the grandmother, my father's mother, Carmella, named all of the children. The parents did not name the children. She named everybody in the family after one of the relatives to propagate the family name.

I was named after my Uncle Alexander. My young brother Bobby—my father liked Robert E. Lee. He named the last boy Robert L. Adduci. My grandmother did not talk to my father for almost six months, and she lived upstairs from him, because he named somebody that wouldn't propagate the name of the family.

And if you saw the backyards, there were always clotheslines out there. Every backyard in the Kensington area didn't have grass. They all had

gardens. They raised their own gardens. They had carrots, onions, celery, hot peppers and tomatoes. And most of the people survived on that. Now, I could remember my mother sending me to the store at 116th Street—was a butcher—and I would buy a bone, a soup bone. So she would take that soup bone that cost ten or 15 cents and put it in a big pan and make soup out of it. But that's how people survived.

And I'm not ashamed to say it. We did not have a lavatory in our bathroom. We had a bathtub without a shower and we had a toilet bowl, but no lavatory. We washed our hands and face in the kitchen sink. It was not until later on that we had a lavatory put in because we could afford to have a plumber do it. So those were things that you had to live through.

I slept with my oldest brother Tony. My brother Bobby and Joey had bunk beds. My sister Minnie got married and my brother Reynold got married. And Rosie would sleep with my mother. So it was pretty crowded. No air conditioning. So we used to sleep with all the windows open, and if you were lucky enough, you owned a fan, especially an oscillating fan. But we lived through it, didn't complain.

There were times when I actually wore shoes with holes in them, but I didn't complain. All I did was stick a piece of cardboard in there. I never owned a bike. I owned roller skates. We used to even repair the wheels on the roller skates when they got worn out, because you couldn't afford anything else. But everybody did it. And everybody got along. It was a great community to live in. I was so proud to represent Roseland.

Then Roseland was known as a community of churches.

But the whole community got along. And as things worked out, the ward got smaller in size because of a Supreme Court ruling on equal representation, that each ward and representative district, they should have

the same or approximately the same population in every one of them. When I was alderman, there were approximately 60,000 people in a ward and approximately 30,000 voters, more or less. An average precinct was between four and five or 500 voters.

And politics played a very important part in the life of the community. They used to have two aldermen in every ward. Then they reduced it to only 50 aldermen.

But then when Dominic Lupo ran against Reginald DuBois, who had four terms, he beat DuBois. And because of demographics, because more of the Polish, Lithuanian, Italian population, their children grew up to be citizens and they were able to vote. Lupo had a good reputation. He was a businessman. He was honest.

And our business district, if you wanted a job, you should live in Roseland because we had a business district and we had major industry. The business district on Michigan Avenue went from approximately 103rd to 119th, and then west on 119th from Michigan to Halsted, but there were very few stores in there. In the business district we had the State Theater, the Parkway Theater, the Roseland Theater, the Normal Theater in West Pullman, and the Verdi Theater in Kensington.

On any given night in the spring, summer or fall, you could go down Michigan Avenue and you knew all the people that were there are your friends. They would walk and go shopping. We had a Kresge's, we had a five and dime, we had Three Sisters, and many more stores to serve the community.

But the biggest store on Michigan Avenue was owned by James Gately, who lived in the 19th Ward, and he had a department store that had a basement, first floor, second floor. He even had such a successful business

that he was able to build a parking lot attached to the building that he had so people could park in there and park and shop.

And James Gately was a member of the Chicago Park District. Gately Field at 103rd and Cottage is named Gately Stadium, and that's where most of the high school football games are played because they have artificial turf.

With industry, Pullman Tech High School was named after George Pullman, was located between Indiana and South Park or King Drive, from 108th to 111th, they had all that property. They had a football field there.

It was a technical training school, Pullman Tech. You went to Pullman Tech if you wanted to be an electrician, body and fender work, any of the trades. It was there because the Pullman shops were located on 111th Street from Cottage Grove over to the Lake Calumet and north all the way to 103rd. They owned all that property, with the exception of the North Pullman Homes.

And we had International Harvester located at 123rd and Halsted. We had Ingersoll Steel in that area. We had Bethlehem Steel, which was located in the city. There was Acme Steel Co. located in Riverdale, just outside the city limits. Oh, the Ford plant at 130th and Torrence. Everybody in the community worked at one of those locations.

Now, when the laws came out that restricted, that they were outlawing lead-based paint, because at Sherwin Williams Paint Company they had a laboratory there, and they owned all that land, and they had turpentine, varnish, lead-based paint, no water-based. They finally discovered that it was dangerous because if a baby or someone ate those chips of paint they could get very sick and very well die.

So Sherwin Williams was restricted on what they could do. They couldn't put any of that waste into the Sanitary District sewers. They were even using Lake Calumet up to a certain time, and then they stopped it. Eventually Sherwin Williams Paint Company who was the biggest employer in the area, built a water-based paint plant because they had an ample supply of water south of their present plant. It's still exists today. And they still have the laboratory there. All other operations were closed at the Kensington plant.

But Acme Steel, Sherwin Williams, Harvester, Ford Motor Co., they were all employers of people that lived in the area. My sister Rosie worked for International Harvester. My brother-in-law Mike worked at the Ford plant. But almost everybody in the Kensington area was employed by Sherwin Williams Paint Company.

The Dan Ryan Expressway was a great project. Cook County bought the right of way all the way to the Loop, and their main train station was at 95th Street, and it went all the way downtown. And they completed that whole project, and I was there with Mayor Richard J. Daley, with Alderman Lupo and Committeeman Beck, who was also the Clerk of the Appellate Court. Dan Ryan cut the ribbon because he was President of the county board and they named it Ryan, named it after him. You could go downtown at 95th Street and go right into the Loop.

But the town was able to exist, Roseland, because of all the industry and all the things that were going on. The 9th Ward finally ended up, the area was from 103rd to 138th, from Halsted Street to Lake Calumet. In 1960 we had to give precincts to the new 21st Ward, and the new 34th.

Let's see, I served as alderman '71 to '79. My last term as alderman in '79, the ward was almost completely African American. At the time this problem existed in the city of Chicago, there were several aldermen, ward

committeemen and state representatives and state senators that we had in our district.

We were trying to outlaw blockbusting by the real estate men from coming in and trying to go through a whole neighborhood. At that time, my understanding was you could buy any home in Roseland, you didn't have to have a credit rating, you did not have to have a down payment, all you needed was closing costs. If you came up with closing costs, $250 to $350, that home was sold anywhere from 18 to 20, to 25 to $30,000 in the greater Roseland area, and West Pullman.

So as I say, when I ran for my first term I had five African American precincts in Altgeld Murray, and the other one was Golden Gate Homes, which was privately owned. They were townhouses. Those were the only precincts that I had when I ran. And when I lost in '79, I only had, in the Roseland area, 2,100 registered Caucasians or whites, and I had 28,000 registered African Americans.

I stayed in the ward until the very end, when I moved out in 1985. I moved up to Mount Greenwood and bought the house that I am in here at 10330 South Drake.

At that time, when I lost for alderman, I went to George Dunn, and he talked to Mayor Byrne, who I knew, because she was a Commissioner of Consumer Sales. And she gave me a position of Assistant Superintendent of Water Collection in the City of Chicago on the first floor of City Hall and in the basement. And my job was to draw up the budget for the Water Collection Division and submit it to the Commissioner of Water.

And I was there for five years, and Harold Washington was elected the mayor. He beat Jane Byrne. And Harold Washington was the mayor. He was a friend of mine when he was in the Young Democrats and he

belonged to Alderman Metcalf's ward. But his advisors told him that I was in the Water Collection Division and that I was a Daley supporter, which probably was true. But I didn't do any politics in the City Hall. And they advised him—they couldn't lay me off because…they couldn't fire me. I had a civil service title. All they did was take my title out of the budget.

So I didn't argue with anybody. I didn't go see Harold Washington. I said good-bye to everybody in the office. I went and filed for my city pension. I started to collect it 60 days later. And then I was still young at the time, and my kids were home and were going to school.

And I went to see George Dunn because Mayor Bilandic lost the election. I went to work for the county for ten years as an investigator for the County Highway Department. And then I retired from the county. So it's been a real good time for me and my family. I enjoyed politics. It was a lot of fun.

And the only contact I had with the mayor is when I first got elected in 1971 I had a metal sculpture of Daley's name made by a friend of mine. I brought it up to the Mayor's office. There was a plaque on it, "To Chicago's greatest mayor, Richard J. Daley, Alderman of the 9th Ward." And when Daley looked at it, he said, "Did he spell my name right?" I can still remember him saying that. So that was my first encounter on 1971 with Daley when he was mayor.

But I have to go back. I graduated from Mount Carmel High School in 1947. In 1948, Harry Truman was up for reelection. And they didn't think that Harry Truman could get elected because at that time the Dixiecrats pulled out of the Democratic Party. They were led by Senator Strom Thurmond, and they formed their own party, the Dixiecrats. They were not part of the regular Democratic Party. And people thought that Truman

could not win because those southern states pulled out of the Democratic Party.

So the story was out that two or three months before the election the Gallup Poll stopped taking polls of the presidential election because they thought that Dewey was a sure winner with the Dixiecrats out of the party.

Well, I think I remember reading that Bess, Truman's wife, she talked to one of Truman's advisors. And Mrs. Truman asked him, "Do you think that Harry has a chance to win?" And his response was, "Well, his name is on the ballot, and he does have a chance to win."

But then Truman did something that nobody else did. He got on a train and he traveled around the country to train stops, one after another. Wherever he went, crowds would go there and listen to him. When they would stop at the depots, he would speak to them and he would draw a pretty good crowd, and then he'd go on to the next thing. He did that all before election for months.

Well, in 1948 I was a precinct captain. I wasn't old enough to vote. And I canvased a Republican precinct in north Roseland. People were nice to me, but they were a little shocked to see a Democrat there, especially an 18-year-old kid. So the results that I got, the committeeman said you've got more votes in that precinct than any other time that we had an election. So it did make a difference talking to people.

I still remember after midnight on election night the streets and on 117th Street on Kensington they had paperboys out selling papers, "Extra, extra, read all about it. Dewey wins." That headline was in a frame in the 9th Ward Democratic office where everybody could see it. I didn't own it, Les Beck owned it, so I had to give it back to him. I'm sorry I didn't keep one of those headlines for myself. So at 8:00 in the morning, I think that Bess

went in and woke Harry up and told him, "You're still President of the United States." That's fantastic, isn't it?

Q: It's a great story.

Adduci: Fantastic. And then just think of what happened in 1972, when McGovern ran against Nixon. He was against the Vietnam War. The Democrats were really in a tough position because our men were coming home in body bags. And President Johnson, he knew what was happening there. Our casualties were in the thousands.

In 1972, McGovern had control of the Democratic Credentials Committee. And what he did, he changed all of the rules to suit the left wing of the party. For instance, you should pick delegates by young, old, men, women, black, Hispanic, and he wanted a quota system. And each ward organization, Daley had us there with lawyers, and he explained it to the Democratic committeemen, that 50 ward organizations and 30 township organizations, and we also hired our own lawyers so that we could follow the rules.

So we had to have an election in the ward. It had to have publications to be put in a metropolitan paper if you didn't have any local papers. We had the *Calumet Index* and the *South End Reporter*. It had to be reported so many times. We had to have a place that was available for everybody. In other words, he made it very difficult for us, which we could do, to try to nominate—he didn't want regular organization people in there. But still and all, it was…they could still do it because we thought we were doing the right thing.

I was elected in 1972 Democratic National Convention as a delegate. The Democratic Convention was being held in Florida. I sent my wife and two children to Florida before the convention, and they stayed at the

Fontainebleau, because I was going to stay in Chicago until the very end and take a plane in later.

Tom Donovan, who was the mayor's administrative assistant, very, very good—he could get everything done. You didn't even have to see the mayor. If you talked to Tom and you had a problem, he could solve it, because they knew that he was speaking for the mayor of the city of Chicago.

So what happened was Tom said, 'Don't go to Florida. Stay home and look at the television tonight.' After midnight the Credentials Committee is going to have a meeting on an objection to have the delegates unseated from the Cook County Democratic organization because they didn't follow the rules of the Democratic Party.

And the two people sponsoring that objections were Reverend Jesse Jackson, Jr., and Alderman Bill Singer. The Credentials Committee heard the argument on both sides. They shut out the regular Democratic Party of Cook County. We were not allowed to go to the 1972 convention. And they put in place the delegates of Jesse Jackson and Bill Singer. That was really a blow to the Democratic Party, at least in Chicago.

Now here's the ironic thing about it. Daley was always loyal to the Democratic Party, and he believed in getting people on the ticket that represented every ethnic group, every racial group. He really believed that. He brought everybody under the tent. Daley carried Cook County for McGovern. He lost in Illinois.

Well, McGovern lost 49 states to Richard Nixon. You hear me? And he only carried his own state of South Dakota. So that was the ultra liberal people in the Democratic Party took over the Democratic convention of 1972. They practically wrecked the party.

When Jimmy Carter ran in 1976, Jimmy was more of a centrist. Plus I think that the Carter family was much respected by African Americans.

And I was a delegate to that 1976 convention. It was in 1976 in New York. And at that time I think I got one of the highest totals in a primary for a candidate because the ward was African American. He got 18,000 votes in the 9th Ward, I think, if my memory is right. That was a big vote total to come out. So Carter won the election in 1976.

But then the poor guy got stuck with what happened with Iran, and they had the hostages in there for what, over a year, right? And then Reagan used that as an excuse and everything changed in the last minute, and we had a new president. But that was a tough thing. But he was a decent guy. And he was a good president, but I don't think that history is rating him so high because every poll you see, they try to rate you as the worst president or how fast you come to the bottom of the list.

Now, an alderman's secretary. What does an alderman's secretary do? City services are so important to people that live in a ward. When I ran for alderman, I made it a point on all my literature, that I was going to be a full-time alderman. Well, I said I was going to be a full-time alderman, that's all I was going to do, no other outside job. That was my job.

The Democratic Committeeman, Les Beck, and the alderman Lupo, the had same office at 111th and Indiana. Office hours were held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 8:00pm. All the requests that the alderman got, he heard them himself. I would merely put the name, address, telephone number and precinct on a form, and I would introduce them to the alderman and put the slip in front of him. We covered everything.

I understood the job well enough. If you wanted to put a new driveway at your house, I filled out the application and made the sketch of the

driveway and got you the permit. If you wanted a picnic permit, you came in and saw me. I went to the county. I got all the picnic permits that were brought into the office for groups that wanted to go to a picnic in the forest preserves.

Traffic Court. You had to be very careful in traffic because you could get into trouble. I was not a lawyer I could go there and represent the people and not even violate the law. You had a broken windshield, or you had a bad muffler a headlight out, you had to bring the repair bill in court. And show it to the Corporation Counsel.

If you had an accident without any personal injury, the insurance company would give you a release. So we knew that there would be no complaining witnesses on accidents. But speeding was out because the person had to be there, in court.

And it was very difficult for a lot of people to travel all the way downtown, pay for parking, or take the train down, miss a day's

If you had a minor accident, you went to your insurance company to get a release you knew there was not going to be a complaining witness there. If you showed the release to the corporation counsel, the judge would dismiss it.

We tried to reach out to everybody to come to the office. At that time people came to the office for services. If they had a problem with bulk pickup…the ward office was located in my precinct, the 50th Precinct at 116th and Indiana. The superintendent, I could get on the phone and tell him. They tore down a small shed or they tore down a fence or something like that, get that debris off the road or out of the alley.

Things were done immediately. If you had a tree fall down, I had a contact in the forestry. If your catch basin was bad, I usually went to see

Commissioner Quigley. They did it. They tried to get it done as quick as possible because it reflected on the mayor, on the alderman. The only thing that was really difficult to handle, and it cost Bilandic his election and possibly mine, snowstorms.

In the snowstorm of 1967, everything stopped. I remember going out with Alderman Lupo. I was on an end loader for a week with a driver, working in areas so they would see me doing things and they would say the alderman's office is trying to do the right thing. The alderman even went on an end loader, which was something you can do, right?

But at that time we tried to take care of everybody's needs. It really was a pleasure. It was a lot of work, but it was a lot of fun. I was a Democratic Committeeman from 1973 to 1985.

The Democratic Party of Cook County, with all of our affairs that we had downtown—and they were all successful—the tickets were expensive. They were $100 a ticket. And nobody was forced to buy a ticket. People in the organization that had a big job would buy a ticket.

And then we would have maybe one or two extra tables, because… I called a meeting of the organization at the American Legion hall, and everybody that attended, we gave them a ticket and they gave us $10 in cash. So what we did, we had a raffle and had somebody come up and pull out 10 or 20 or 30 tickets. It was a fair thing to do because they didn't have to pay 100 bucks, they were paying 10 bucks to possibly go to a dinner. And it was good to do.

At election time, candidates would speak at meetings of our entire organization. We always had several hundred members of our organization attend these meetings. They were important.

I personally went out with Senator Paul Douglas, who was running for re-election. I was the alderman's secretary. And I brought him into the business district, and we started walking at 103rd and Michigan and walked all the way down to 119th Street and then crossed over to the other side of the street and walked all the way north to 103rd.

And I would precede him and say, "Would you like to meet Senator Paul Douglas?", and most people wanted to meet the senator, and they shook hands with him, and they would tell their friends, hey, I shook hands with—I even took him to the Roseland Chamber of Commerce Office to meet with their officers.

And Paul Douglas appreciated that, he really did. And it did him a lot of good, and it did the public a lot of good to see a United States senator walking down the street instead of being in an office. Am I right?

So those were great times, and I was lucky enough to live through them. I enjoyed them. It was like taking care of my five grandchildren with my wife. My daughters both worked and my son-in-laws worked, and we would take the kids to school early in the morning and then pick them up after school and we would take care of them until their parents can home from work.

And my friends would say, well gee, you paid your dues, why are you doing all the…? I said listen, I'm with five of the most important people in my life. I love them, they love me, there is nothing better than that, I said. I want to do it. If you didn't want to take care of kids when they were born all the way up, it was like pulling teeth, because it was a lot of work. You had to watch every one of them. They could get hurt, you know. It was the toughest job I ever had, but the best job I ever had in my lifetime.

And I do this right now and I've been doing it for years because God willing, I don't know how long I'm going to be here. I'm 85 years old. So every time I'm with my grandchildren, I make it a point to kiss them and tell them how much I love them, when I see them and when I leave. I still do that. And that's been the thing that really keeps me going. And I think they really appreciate it.

I even took the kids out to Holy Sepulchre Cemetery when they were in driver improvement school to drive through the cemetery, and I would teach them this is a stop sign, that's a red light, watch your speed, consult your rearview and side view mirrors, don't follow too closely, don't speed. But those were great times.

And all the times that we went to Springfield for the State Convention, we were lucky because it was a day in Springfield where you met the rest of the politicians in the state and you heard the governor, Otto Kerner, and all that. We would get on the train at Matteson, Illinois. That's in the south suburbs—Homewood, Matteson—and we'd get on a train that was going right to Springfield. Some of the committeemen downtown also went on the train.

It was actually an Illinois Central train. Maybe two or three trains would go, Illinois Central, go to Springfield and bring all these ward organizations there. You didn't have to drive. And then we used to form a parade line and go on a parade into the fair grounds, and then we would listen to who the speaker was, if it was Otto Kerner, or if it was Daley or anybody else. But it was a lot of fun.

And as I said, politics was not easy at that time, it was tough. But you enjoyed the wins and you accepted the losses. And if you won you would hope that who you elected did the right thing. Many of the aldermen went to jail because they used the office in order to make money. But in the 9th

Ward Democratic organization nobody ever paid for a job. Nobody was ever forced to do anything. It was like a family. And you saw I had my organization…on three by five cards in this box over here, there are 488 names in there, so I had to know all those people at one time or another.

Q: And that was between 1970 and 1979?

Adduci: Yes, between ’70 and ’79. And I was always honest with people. I went to every parade in the community. I went to… I visited more black families, more African American families because they were forming block clubs because of Saul Alinsky activity at the University of Chicago. The areas that were changing, he had an influence on the leadership in there to have them form block clubs so that they could be united at the polling place and elect the officials that best represented them. It wasn’t wrong, but that was the way they organized.

I was out almost every night of the week at a block party. And weddings, baptisms, wakes, everywhere. No matter what you did, you tried to represent yourself and the ward. And most of these people I knew personally, and even…I couldn’t believe the number of people that I really knew. I probably walked on every street in the 9th Ward in 20 years. But it was a good job. I liked it. I liked it very much.

And hopefully the city of Chicago will move on and be the great city that it is. But I’d like to say that Richard J.—oh, I forgot one spot where I met the mayor when he wasn’t the mayor. I got out of the Army in 1953 in March. I came home from Germany

So when I came home from the Army in March 1953, I went to work for the County Clerk, who was Richard J. Daley. So as a new employee, I went in to talk to him and he knew Beck, he knew Lupo, he knew the 9th Ward, and he said, ‘Well, what do you intend to do?’ I said, ‘Well, I’m

going to use the GI Bill of Rights to go to school, I'm going to go to Loyola and get a degree, and I'm going to be involved in politics with my brother, who's top precinct captain in the 9th Ward.'

And he knew my brother. My brother was one of the people who was being selected for outstanding municipal employee service record. And I said, I am going to get an education and I would like to be an alderman. And he laughed. He said you think that's a lot of fun? I says, I think it could be a lot of fun.

When I went to Mount Carmel, my brother gave me permission—I didn't tell the priest this—to miss school so that I could take the train downtown and go to the council meetings. I went to a number of council meetings. I used to hear the Aldermen debate. They were really good council meetings. So I always wanted to do that, and I succeeded in that. I saw that it was a lot of fun.

It was something that I wanted to do and I enjoyed, and I'm really living on memories right now of raising my grandchildren and also with my friends. I buried most of my friends. We used to have a family picnic, and we had it in the forest preserves. We had the family picnic, but we never took any picture of everybody. So in 1988, I was living in Mount Greenwood, and we organized a family picnic. And we had a photographer come in from Indiana and take a picture of our family.

Q: Wow.

Adduci: There's nearly 100 people that are related in the picture.

And my mother's name was Cinderella. Nobody ever believed that. She was named after my Grandfather Rossi's sister. His sister was named Cinderella.

Q: So you were very young when you started in politics.

Adduci: Yeah. High school, you know. And then after being with Daley in the clerk's office, I held a lot of positions. I picked papers up on the beach at 75th Street for the Park District during the summertime. I worked summer vacation driving a hydrant truck for the Water Department out of 76th and Western. I worked for the county clerk when Daley was county clerk writing marriage licenses. I worked for the county Highway Department. I had ten years with the Highway Department.

I worked for the Attorney General for the State of Illinois called Ivan Elliott. He was a military man. I think he was a general in the Army. He was elected the Attorney General for the State of Illinois. And I got a letter to go to his office and introduced myself to him. He came in one or two days a week from Carmi, Illinois, and the rest of the time was in Springfield.

So I still remember going into his office, and on his desk was the *Sun-Times* newspaper. I'll tell you what the headline was. So he said to me, he said, Mr. Adduci, I am the highest law enforcement agency in the state of Illinois. I have records in this office of people's inheritance, estates that are filed, very personal records here, and you're going to be a law clerk, so you'll be handling a lot of them, he says. I have to ask you a question. Your name is Alexander Adduci, A-D-D-U-C-I. Are you related to James Adduci, the Republican representative from the West Side? And I said no. Well, General, my brother married a nurse that was named Georgiana Kelly, and she was not related to Machine Gun Kelly, and he laughed like hell. He used to come in every time and see me. He was a hell of a nice guy.

Q: What was the headline on the paper?

Adduci: Oh, excuse me. The headline on the *Sun-Times,* with a big picture, was Republican State Representative Jimmy Adduci from the West Side, his picture, "Adduci Indicted for Boodling." That was being a middleman between a state contract and a private contractor. But Jimmy Adduci was smart enough he didn't go to jail. He said if I'm going to jail, most of the guys that are in the state legislature are going to jail with me. He beat it. But that headline was print like that. You couldn't believe it.

There was one other incident that I should not forget. When I ran and lost the election in '79, there was Robert Shaw of the Shaw family and Perry Hutchinson on the ballot with me. Remember now, you had to get 50% plus one in order to get elected. Shaw and his people—and I told you that the community changed. It was majority African American.

A precinct captain came in and told me that they're talking to the people in the precinct, telling them you've got to come out and vote for Shaw. Hutchinson wasn't bad. He didn't play the race card. But Adduci is a racist. But they used the vulgarity with their friends—Adduci was a "M-F black racist." Ten days before the election—I don't have that headline, I should get it because it's available—the *Chicago Defender*, the newspaper that was in the black community, had a headline on the front page three inches high, "Adduci is a Racist."

I sent a letter to—maybe it was the wrong thing to do—I sent a letter to…almost 2,000 letters out to people I knew personally living in the ward. Shaw got a copy of the letter. It had my letterhead and my signature. They took out the middle of my letter and they put in there that I was trying to keep blacks out of the community, I'm trying to prevent kids to go to West Pullman School and Palmer Park and all the other grammar schools. Everything was the race card.

That happened on, I think, Monday night because one of the captains came in who was African American and he said he took this out of their hands and he showed it to me. And on Saturday I had over 100 African Americans from my ward, precinct captains and workers that went with me to the *Chicago Defender's* office and asked them why they printed that. And they said they were not involved, it was the political editor that made the decision to do that. They retracted it three or four days later in an article that was buried on the fifth or sixth page on the bottom of the page.

And then I had one other incident that I had no control over. I was in my ward office. I told you I keep my doors open. Sam Carter was African American, good precinct captain. He drove a tow truck. He lived in the precinct around 111th and Vernon and King Drive. He was sitting out in the office and one of my constituents came in. He was a retired postman. He was a gentleman, but he always complained about the Illinois Central because the Illinois Central in that area, and it was fenced in. He always complained that the Illinois Central would not cut those weeds or clean that, so I had to contact them all the time.

But he said something derogatory about the Precinct Captain Sam Carter, who overheard him, claiming that he's not a good precinct captain, he should be doing this and not me, and that…everything he said was… And Sam heard all of this. So when this man left the office, Sam went right out behind him, they had an argument—he was a senior citizen—and Sam hit him and coldcocked him. It appeared in the Chicago Defender newspaper that hoodlums that were representing Alderman Adduci were harming a black senior citizen.

I didn't even know what happened. I was in the office. He must have gone to the police station and made a complaint. But nothing happened about it, you know. But I should get that headline. It's part of the record of the *Chicago Defender*. But those were the only two complaints that I had.

I used to go to Altgeld Gardens. I wanted to see things for myself, because they had problems with a grocery store and things like that. And the captains used to say, well, Alderman, we should go with you. And I said listen, when the time comes that an alderman can't walk in a neighborhood that he represents, he shouldn't be the alderman. I don't need anybody to protect me. I didn't do anything wrong. I'm there to help them and see what I can do to help them out.

If there's a complaint and I can't understand it…because I often went there because I was concerned about the overcrowding at the high school. And eventually with the help of Mayor Richard J. Daley I did get the Board of Education to build a new high school in Altgeld.

The housing project was really not built to have it become 100% African American. They were building it for people in the area that wanted to settle and work in the area. But it didn't work out that way. Golden Gate Homes. They were townhouses that they bought and paid a mortgage.

But in the African American community living in the Altgeld-Murray Housing Project, the overwhelming number of people living in the community were black women, no husband, and children that they had from a previous husband or even out of wedlock. I had to have somebody in welfare as a contact to try to help some of the people that needed help that couldn't even have a phone to call welfare.

And one other thing. Shows you how things go. I was sitting in my office in the afternoon. I was going to stay there until 5:00. And about 1:00 a little old Polish lady came in dressed in black with a black babushka and gym shoes on. And she came in and I had trouble understanding her. She said that she's having trouble, she doesn't have enough to eat and things like that.

So I got on the phone and I talked to a supervisor and said is there anyone that speaks Polish that could go out there and talk to her and try to get her some aid, which they did, and she got on aid. About two months later she came in dressed the same way, with a shopping bag. And she pulled out five or six bank books. They were from different addresses because the original address was on Michigan Avenue, was a savings and loan. They moved off of Michigan and went to Cottage Grove about 85th Street, in that area. I can't think of the name of the savings and loan.

So I looked at them, and her husband worked at Pullman Standard. Fifty cents, a dollar, seventy-five cents, a dollar. All these entries, you know, were printed by a machine. The books were not perforated, you know what I mean? If a book is not good or not valid, they perforate it with holes so you know the book is not valid, because that book could be passed to anybody. None of them were perforated.

I called the office of the savings and loan and I got—I forget who it was. He was one of the officers. And I explained to him I had a woman in my office who has trouble speaking English, she has six bank books here with your organization, your savings and loan. He said, well, I can't tell you anything because you don't own the books. If you bring her to my office and you bring those books, then I can talk to you.

So I put her in the car, I brought all the books with me. They looked at them, were there for over an hour and a half. And the guy came out and he said all these books are valid. She has $32,000 in the bank. [*Laughs.*] She didn't understand that, so I had to go get somebody to help me to find out who, does she have a relation. She had a niece. I called the niece in and said listen, she has all this money in the bank. She doesn't know how to get the money out. Somebody could take advantage of her. You better get her power of attorney and help her because $32,000 was a lot of money.

She owned the building in Pullman. You ever been to Pullman? You had to like your neighbor. He was right next door to you.

The Pullman Civic Organization asked me to introduce the ordinance to make it a City of Chicago landmark, which I did. And it passed the City Council on October 16, 1972, and was signed by Mayor Richard J. Daley. In 1975 they put a new roof on the hotel from $100,000 federal funds that they were able to apply for. And they did everything that they could to keep the hotel in good shape. This work was done because of Mayor Richard J. Daley.

And I held meetings in the Greenstone Church, where people talked about Pullman and said why they wanted to make it a landmark. Now Pullman has landmark status from the city, which means you cannot change the façade of the buildings unless you go to the city to change it. You can't tear something down and put something new in there unless you do it. They have state landmark status. And just recently, about two months ago, they have National Monument status. They're eligible for millions of dollars of aid.

But I haven't been to the community. I don't know what the makeup is of it, you understand? I can't tell you that because I haven't been there. But there's a lot of people in there, they're professionals that want to live in Pullman because of its historical importance.

Q: Well, there were so many changes when you were—I mean that was—

Adduci: Yeah. I can't remember. I'm trying to remember another thing that was interesting. There was a popular television program in the 70's named "The Untouchables." You remember that?

Q: Mm-hmm.

Adduci: It was about Eliot Ness. Now, just a year ago the federal government wanted to name a federal building after Eliot Ness. Alderman Burke, who you're going to talk to, opposed it because research had it that Eliot Ness didn't go in with a sledgehammer or an ax in order to break those barrels and spill that moonshine and things like that, he was more of an accountant. He never even carried a gun. So Burke objected to that, see?

The Ness family lived in my precinct his father owned a bakery on Kensington Avenue. I got a notice that the building was going to be demolished because it fell into disrepair. I got there too late. They tore the building down. His name was in stone about six feet by two feet, Peter Ness. And that's Eliot Ness's father. So Eliot Ness lived in the 9th Ward at one time, but before I was alderman.

When you got a job with the City of Chicago, if you were an elected official that was endorsed by the Democratic Party—treasurer, city treasurer, city clerk, all the other offices—you did not go to the people that were elected to the office. In The Morrison Hotel across the street from City Hall in Room 308 they had a book in there that had all the vacancies in the City of Chicago. If you got an appointment from your ward committeeman, you didn't go see the office holder, you went to the Morrison Hotel to get a letter to go to work at that office. The Shakman Court decision made patronage illegal. This was the beginning of the end of the patronage system as we knew it.

Now Daley, he assumed leadership of the party after he was County Clerk. Richard J. Daley was elected Chairman of the Democratic Party of Cook County. He chose Martin J. Kennelly to run for mayor. And city treasurer was Morris B. Sachs, who had a talent show every Sunday on television. So Kennelly was an independent, but he was a Democrat. And Morris B. Sachs was the city treasurer. Well, Richard J. Daley ran in the next election and was elected mayor.

Q: We have. I just have one question for you, and that's about your neighborhood that you know so well, and your ward that you know so well, and all the precincts.

Adduci: The Kensington neighborhood, okay.

Q: The Kensington neighborhood. What do you think Richard J. Daley did that was maybe the most important thing that he did for that neighborhood and for the people of the 9th Ward.

Adduci: What he did for that neighborhood, and for the people of the 9th Ward?

Q: I was Alderman of the 9th Ward from 1971 to 1979—8 years. The 9th Ward, under the leadership of Mayor Richard J. Daley received many important improvements including: a new library in West Pullman, a new grammar school in West Pullman, a new high school in Altgeld-Murray Homes, addition to Curtis Junior High School at 115th Street and State Street, building Chicago Police Department Area 2 Headquarters at 111th and the Calumet Expressway with a City of Chicago Court, City of Chicago Landmark status for Pullman in 1972, and a new roof for Hotel Florence in 1975.

Adduci: Here's how people judge Daley in the ward. A family man, a devout Catholic. His sons are not in any trouble. He spends dinner with his wife and family every night. He doesn't go out on weekends for politics. Did you know that? He didn't go out. Unless it was something exceptional, I mean, something where he had to do.

And he respected everyone in the organization. Here I'm a young kid from Kensington that wanted to be an alderman, and I finally wind up as one. There's no doubt that he was the greatest political organizer in the United States. Am I right? He knew everything going on. He really didn't get us

into a lot of debt. Plus I think what he did for the people of Chicago is he didn't raise their real estate taxes.

He gave all hospitals, charitable organizations and churches free water. Not happening today. They have to pay for their water. But they never found him in any scandal, that's the thing.

Plus he knew the importance of people seeing a sample ballot and seeing a pamphlet. He had Progress Printers in the 11th Ward, big printing company, print all of our ballots, all of our sample ballots, all of the pamphlets, so when you went to somebody's house, you showed them a ballot and they also got a four page pamphlet or a three page pamphlet, "Know Your Candidate." He showed your picture and your office.

And if you went through every one of the ballots, you found diversity, including everybody. Everybody was represented on that ballot—Polish, Black, Italian, Jewish, Irish, Greek, right? And you saw a picture of them. Now any captain that's going to canvas and has got a picture of a—got a ballot. Because you know the old people and even young, they were afraid to go there, and afraid to make a mistake, and they didn't want to be embarrassed.

So if you showed them a ballot and you left it with them, many voted the straight Democratic ticket. And then if they had somebody on the other side, they may have marked a Republican. But you had a ballot and you had a picture of the candidates, "Know Your Candidate."

And it was very important because people see pictures. Sometimes they know somebody running an office, they never saw him. They heard their name. They didn't know who the hell they were. But he believed that people should be well informed. And people appreciated you taking the time out to go to their house.

There's another thing. We had the hard cards. They marked your name off if you were blue Republican, red Democrat. And then toward afternoon, 1:00, you would look at the list, say hey, we got so-and-so. We got in our cars. We went to their house, knocked on the door. I'll drive you to the polling place. We drove them to the polling place, they voted. We did that until the polls were closed, because we knew them. They were friends of ours. They went to the same church. The kids went to the same school. You weren't talking to a stranger. Only judges of elections could touch ballots. Are we done now?

Q: No, no. We can be done or we can continue. Would you like to end?

Adduci: I would like to end this interview with the last time I spoke to Mayor Richard J. Daley before he died on December 20, 1976. At the last City Council meeting before he died he called me up to the podium and said he wants to see me in his office after the meeting. I went to his office on the 5th floor and we spoke to each other for about 20 minutes. We discussed the big demographic change of population in the 9th Ward. He said to me, "It's time for you to make a change. I will make an appointment for you to be interview by Justice McGloon at the Appellate for the 1st District of Illinois."

I went to the Appellate Court and was interviewed by 3 Justices. Justice Francis Lorenz, Justice Johnson and Justice—I can't remember his name, but I knew him when he served in the City Council as an Alderman from a north side ward.

The interview lasted about 45 minutes and Justice Lorenz said he would get back to me.

Mayorvvvg Richard J. Daley died on December 20, 1976.

In March of 1977, Justice Francis Lorenz called me and said, "Come downtown at 1pm this afternoon and we will swear you in to be the Clerk of the Appellate Court of the 1st District of Illinois." I told Justice Lorenz that I'm still an Alderman, so I will have to talk to Mayor Bilandic and I'm still a Democratic Committeeman and I will have to talk to George Dunne who is the Chairman of the Democratic Party Central Committee of Cook County. I told Justice Lorenz that I would get back to him as soon as possible. Both Mayor Bilandic and President George Dunne said that I should make a decision. Both also said that if I ran for re-election as Alderman and lost, that they would have a place for me in their administration. George Dunne, also told me that if I am appointed Clerk, that I will have to resign as Democratic Committeeman of the 9th Ward. He said the State Legislature changed the law and made the Clerks' Office an appointive office instead of an elective office, and that the Clerk of the Court would no longer participate in politics. I waited 2 days before I made a decision. I was going to run again for re-election for Alderman of the 9th Ward.

I called Justice Francis Lornez and informed him of my decision. He wanted me to send him a letter of my decision. The next day I received a call from Democratic Committeeman and County Commissioner John Stroger. He asked if I was going to take the appointment for Clerk of the Appellate Court. I told him I refused the appointment. I decided to run for re-election for Alderman of the 9th Ward. Shortly after I talked with John Stroger I was told that a member of his organization was given the appointment.

It showed me how Mayor Richard J. Daley thought of people who supported him and the Democratic Party. He remembered me. I ran for re-election in 1979 for Alderman of the 9th Ward and lost. I have no regrets and I still think I did make the right decision. I think I'd like to end and

say that I appreciate you giving me the honor of doing this oral presentation of my life and my association with Richard J. Daley.

Q: Well, it's a pleasure.

Adduci: It's been an honor to serve the people of Chicago and the people of the 9th Ward. I really enjoyed myself.

Q: Well, this is wonderful. I can't thank you enough.

[*End of interview*]