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Roseanne Bonoma
Oral History Interview

University of Illinois at Chicago
Richard J. Daley Library Special Collections

Final

Location: Chicago, Bridgeport neighborhood
Paul Bonoma, commentary during interview
Interviewed by Marie Scatena

October 3, 2014

Q: My name is Marie Scatena. It's October 3, 2014, and on a rainy Friday morning I am sitting with Rose Bonoma in her home in Bridgeport. Rose, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and sharing your memories of Richard J. Daley. So we'd like to get started. Rose, could you say your name and tell us when and where you were born and a little bit about your early life, your childhood?

Bonoma: Okay. My name is Roseanne Bonoma. I live at 3635 South Lowe Avenue in Bridgeport. I have lived in Bridgeport most of my life. Before that, until I was 7 or 8, we lived at 3515 S. Wells, where the Dan Ryan and Cellular Field is right now. Most of the homes there were torn down first for the Dan Ryan and then for Cellular Field. But we moved to 3519 S. Union when I was eight and I stayed there until I got married.

There were still some neighbors there when we moved, and the Old Comiskey Park was across the street. Eventually we moved to 35th and Union with our paternal grandparents. Our grandparents always lived with us—my three sisters, me and my mom and dad. Prior to moving I attended Catholic school at St. George's on 39th and Wentworth for first and second grade.

Q: So were you born in Chicago?

Bonoma: Yes, I was the only one in my family born in a hospital. I have three older sisters who were all born at home. I was the only one born at Lewis Memorial Hospital. I think it was on Wabash around 15th or 16th Street, in through there.

My husband and I both went to Nativity School. We met in school and I started going with him after graduation. We went together through high school as well. He joined the Marine Corps after high school, and I went to work, but we corresponded while he was in the service. When he came out of the Marines, we were married and rented an apartment in the neighborhood.

They were just starting to build new homes in the neighborhood.

Eventually we built a home here at 39th and Lowe. We've been here now about 43 years. Prior to that we bought a home on 38th and Emerald. Our

parents wanted us to stay in the neighborhood. So we lived at 38th and Emerald maybe six years, when we heard about this property on Lowe Avenue— there was an old house on the lot; an elderly man lived here alone, and he had passed away.

The McKeon family who lived on the corner of 35th and Lowe knew that we were looking for a place on a street with less traffic. Bus Huels, a friend of ours who worked for the McKeons heard that we were looking, and he called one day and said, “You know, old Freddie passed away; that would be a good spot for you.”

And so we talked about it, but nobody seemed to know where to reach Freddie’s family because he lived here alone for so many years. He was like a character in the neighborhood. It was rumored that he used to stand on the front porch in his underwear. We were interested in the property, but we didn’t know how to contact Fred’s family.

At the time I was working part-time for an attorney in the Loop and I mentioned it to him, and he said, “Well, maybe we can look up the records and find out where his family lived.” In the meantime, Bus came over and he said, “I know where the family can be reached. The house went to a sister or brother in Indiana, and I have an address, so maybe you can look into that.” Marie, is this relevant?

Q: Yeah, this is great.

Bonoma: That's how this neighborhood was back then. When someone moved, or passed away someone else they knew was looking and called them, so the property wasn't vacant very long; you almost knew everybody in every house on the block.

Q: Wow.

Bonoma: Bus gave us the address of this woman who was Fred's sister who had inherited the property. The attorney that I worked for wrote her a letter and said we would be interested in buying the property, would she like to sell it? And she called him back and said she didn't want to be bothered. She was in her 80's, and didn't want to have to go through probate and do all that. So she said she didn't really even claim it, so she wasn't planning to do anything with it. She lived on a farm, and I suppose maybe expenses were tight for her, and so she just wasn't interested in doing anything, because she didn't want to spend any money on lawyer's fee's, etc. So the attorney that I worked for—we had become good friends—wrote her back and offered to handle the whole thing for her pro bono, we had it appraised and made an offer. Actually, she was just going to let it go so she wouldn't get any money from it. And in order to

get the building, I guess she would have to file some papers with probate so it could go to her before she could sell it to anyone.

So anyway, he offered to do that for her if she would sell the property to us. And she was tickled pink because she figured she wasn't going to get anything, you know, it was just sitting here, and now she had somebody who was willing to pay for it. It wasn't livable, really. It was just a four room older home and had to be torn down. But anyway, he worked it out and he did all the paper work for her. We ended up buying it and building a home here. So that's how I came to be on 36th and Lowe.

Q: And that was in the '60s?

Bonoma: That was 1973. Construction started in October, 1972. It was Columbus Day. We came over here when they were breaking ground and we moved in February of '73. That's how fast our contractor built this house. He was an elderly Lithuanian man, who really knew his business. He was good at everything.

We did not have a lot of money and having three kids, were trying to keep the price down. But he wouldn't put anything here that wasn't really well built and the best material. Not anything fancy or anything that we couldn't afford, but he would always say, "Oh, no-no, we're going to use this, it'll be okay, don't worry!"

So that's how we ended up here, and we're still here. Our kids are all gone and married, and, unfortunately, not living in the neighborhood, which, in our generation, that rarely happened. You know, our grandparents lived here, and our parents, and then we lived here. But times were changing and some of the younger people went for different horizons. They met and married people from outside the neighborhood and sometimes moved out of the ward.

Most people of my generation married people that they grew up with, and were from the neighborhood. Things were different. Once our children grew up and went away to college, and met people from different neighborhoods and cities, it was like a new world for them. For my generation, we didn't really travel very much when we were young.

I remember going to California one time when Paul was in the service and stationed there. My grandpa's brother and his wife had settled there from Italy. They arrived in New York and then went to California, and my grandfather came to Chicago. And so I had family to go out to visit, and he was stationed in California, so I got to stay with them for a week or so and visit Paul. (I don't know how much more you want.)

Q: Well, I'm really curious about the fact that people stayed in the neighborhood and there were kind of colorful characters. Do you have

any more stories about what it was like to live here when you were growing up?

Bonoma: Paul would probably be better at that. He lived across the street from where we live now at 3614 S. Lowe.

Q: Well, maybe we could talk about the first time you met the Daley family. You were in the neighborhood, did you know them?

Bonoma: Yes, I knew them. My family lived across the alley from them at 3519 S. Union. They were at 3536 S. Lowe. We knew the kids. Pat and Mary Carol were actually our age—Pat was a year older, Mary's a year younger, and we all went to Nativity School.

On the corner of 35th and Lowe, which is where quite a few of the kids kind of gathered (there are three or four new homes there now), right across from the fire house. That used to be a prairie. We used to call it Walsh's Prairie because the Walshes lived in the end house before you came to the corner.

A lot of our time in the winter was spent there, which was where you met a lot of kids in the neighborhood, because the firemen would freeze it in the winter so we could ice skate, or you could go down on your sled. The

Daley kids were there sometimes; we were also there. Quite a few kids in the neighborhood hung out there during our elementary school years.

And then in the summertime, where Donovan Park is now— in back of Halsted around 36th to 37th Street about a block west of Halsted—there was another large vacant lot. We used to call it the Monkey Jungle before it became Donovan Park. It was just a prairie full of trees and everything else where kids just hung out or played in there because there was no real park to play in at the time.

Most of us didn't go far because very few families had cars back then, so we walked everywhere. For our kids' generation there was Donovan Park. Actually it was the Monkey Jungle cleaned up and turned into a park. The Mayor and some business people turned it into a ball park, and kids always had softball or football games or some kind of a sport that was always supported by the Mayor, the 11th Ward Office and neighborhood businesses, because he wanted families to spend time together and play together, and so they sponsored various teams. We had baseball and football teams and the home games were played at Donovan Park.

When our kids were little it wasn't formally a park, but we used to take them over there to go ice skating because they would freeze the ground

there. I remember bundling all of them up. They were so little. You know, you'd put on their leggings, a scarf, some gloves and the ice skates, and by the time you got them there, five minutes later they're all cold and they wanted to go home. It took you longer to dress them than it did for them to spend time skating or playing over there.

That was another place where you would see the Daley kids. I always remember that they were not any different than any other kids. I mean, considering what they were exposed to with their dad being the Mayor and knowing so many important people, presidents, even royalty, they were as normal as any kids there.

And even Mrs. Daley, I always admired her. She was a wonderful role model. She was active in the school when the kids were in school. I remember the Mayor one time dressing up like Santa at Nativity in the classrooms. In fact, I think we have a picture of it at the library in his collection.

We had mothers' meetings such as the mothers club, and the Altar & Rosary Society, which Mrs. Daley participated in with our parents. And one thing that always impressed me was if you didn't know what she looked like, you could never go down there and pick out Mrs. Daley

because she would look different or was wearing a mink coat. Mrs. Daley was dressed pretty much like every other mother who was down there.

You know some people would come down and put on airs; she never did that. You would never know that she was any different than any other woman, even though she was the wife of the Mayor. She always struck me as being really down to earth. The lady that lived next door to her was a beautician, and sometimes she would go there and have her hair done. I'm sure there were times when she went elsewhere, but I was impressed she would trust a neighbor with her appearance.

(Brief pause as Paul Bonoma asks Roseanne a question)

Bonoma: When our kids grew up this was always a political neighborhood, so anything that was going on even when we were kids, we went to the rallies and parades and picnics as families. Also, when the Ringling Bros. circus or the rodeo was in town, the Ward Office would buy out one performance so almost everyone in the neighborhood could attend.

They usually had the rallies in a hall in the neighborhood, and sometimes at election time, they used to have street parades. We were just teenagers, actually, in '55 when Richard J. Daley ran for Mayor for the first time. I was just graduating from high school. I remember taking part in a parade down Halsted Street. I believe it originated on 37th Street and

went down Halsted to 31st Street. And it was fun. It was a family event. Everybody marched, and there were different floats and music and a miniature fire truck and decorated cars, etc.

Q: Like floats or...?

Bonoma: Yes, different floats and bands.

Q: Did they have bands and music?

Bonoma: Yeah. And it was fun, actually. We grew up doing that kind of stuff. For our kids it was nothing unusual for them to go with Paul getting signatures or petitions at election time, or around Thanksgiving delivering food baskets. Paul was a precinct captain probably about 36 years, and around the holidays the Ward Office would ask you to turn in a list if you knew anyone in your precinct who needed food. You'd give the name to the ward office and they would make up a basket. Women would be up there putting baskets together so that they had like a turkey and all the fixings, and potatoes, and fruit and things like that which the captains would deliver to those who needed them.

What I liked about it was that most kids didn't realize that there actually were some poor people in the neighborhood because everything was fine at their home. We were never wealthy, but we always had plenty of

food to eat. Paul would sometimes take the kids with him if they went to someone's home who needed a basket, and the children were surprised that some people couldn't even afford to buy a holiday dinner. Things like that which you took for granted; I always thought that was a wonderful experience that they'd be exposed to that so they would be aware that there were families that needed food on holidays or gifts at Christmas.

And that was always foremost in the Mayor's mind, taking care of your neighbors, especially the elderly and people with children who could always go up to the ward office, and get help for almost anything that they needed. He never made a show about it, but always took care of neighbors in situations like that. If there was a fire in the neighborhood and the home was destroyed or damaged and the family needed a place to stay, the Daley's would be one of the first ones over there to see what they needed and to get money for them and make sure that, through different agencies, they would have a place to stay.

It was just different down here. It wasn't really like any other neighborhood. Everyone kind of looked out for everybody else. And the Daley family, they were in the forefront. I remember that as a kid. In fact, when I graduated from high school I ran into the mayor one day just on the street walking by, and he inquired whether I had a job, did I want to

come downtown and talk to personnel and find a job or something like that. But I wanted to do my own thing, so I didn't go. I just thanked him and went on my way.

But, I mean, that was the interest that he showed in the neighbors, which is probably why a lot of people from the 11th Ward had jobs, you know, due to that family. He would always encourage the young people to go to school if they could, or encourage them to get a job if they couldn't go right away, then go back to school later with money that they would earn to help their families and themselves.

Q: So you went to Nativity for elementary school, speaking of school, and then where did you go for high school?

Bonoma: St. Mary's, which is also in the neighborhood. It's around 32nd, just west of Morgan. It was a girls' high school for years, but was just turning coed at the time. I went there because we didn't have a lot of money and we could afford the tuition there. I went there for four years. I could walk to school, because I lived at 35th and Union, so we just would go right down 35th Street and over to Morgan and down to 32nd Street. So I went to school there and studied business. I was senior class president and valedictorian, and so it ended up to be a good fit for me.

Q: So you walked to school. Did the Daley girls go to high school?

Bonoma: Yes, I think Pat went to Mercy High School and she eventually entered their convent. I'm not sure where Mary went because they were like one year ahead and one year behind me. I started at Nativity in third grade because the first two years I went to St. George's on 39th and Wentworth because we lived down the street from there. That was our parish then.

When we moved to 35th and Union I went to Nativity. I think Pat Daley skipped third or fourth grade. She was very bright and got—at that time they called it a double promotion. So that's how Pat came to be a year ahead of me. But we always saw the kids playing around the neighborhood or doing everything anyone else down here did. You know, you didn't really pick them out as being special.

Q: Did most of the people that you knew in the neighborhood go to Catholic high schools then or did they go to—like what high schools did they go to just from the neighborhood?

Bonoma: Well, around here they went to either—St. Mary's or St. Barbara's, which was also a Catholic high school, not far from St. Mary's, if they lived a little more north of us. A few blocks, really not that far. A lot of the Irish girls went to Visitation. I know a lot of my friends went over to Visitation. Then they started spreading out a little bit. There was Loretta High School out south or Maria. Most of the boys who didn't go to Catholic

schools went to Tilden Tech. The Catholic schools at that time had all nuns as teachers so, of course, they encouraged you to go to Catholic high schools. Most of the boys went to De LaSalle or St. Rita if they went to Catholic schools. I think Rich and Mike went to DeLaSalle and John and Bill went to St. Ignatius.

My daughter went to Maria, because at the time most of her friends were going there. It was kind of like whoever you hung around with, that's where you went. I went to St. Mary's because it was close and I wouldn't have to travel on the bus or anything to get there, and it was affordable. And at that time a lot of us didn't go to college. I actually did have several scholarship offers, but I was going with Paul. He was going in the service and kind of talked me out of it. However, I made up my mind to not let that happen to my children.

Fortunately we made sure that our kids did go to college. My kids actually were the first in our family to graduate from college. They all went to college, and my one son went on to law school and he is an attorney downtown. But most of my friends just kind of stayed around here. They got married and also stayed here near their parents, who could help them if they ever needed anything and vice versa.

And really, I think the children of our generation are the ones that started moving out because it became so much easier to travel, and they already went away to college. My boys went to Marquette and my daughter went to DePaul. She stayed home. Back then you didn't want your daughter to go too far away from home but ultimately, it was her choice to go to DePaul and stay at home.

Q: Well, so you were going with Paul and he was in the service, and you're starting to have a family. But you mentioned that you were working downtown at one point for an attorney. Now when did you start working outside of the home?

Bonoma: Well, Paul was in the service for three years after graduation, so during that time I worked downtown for several different companies. After we got married and I got pregnant with my daughter, I stayed home. My husband was the type of person who thought that I should be home like our mothers were with our kids, so I stayed home when I had the three kids. We wanted to buy a house, and we eventually bought our first house on 38th and Emerald. The kids were growing up, so we wanted a home of our own. Before that we rented in the neighborhood.

I said well, if we're going to get a home, I'm going to have to go to work. One of my girlfriend's mother lived with her, and her mother was a

wonderful woman and a good cook and good with kids. The apartment we lived in at the time was—they lived in one apartment in the building and we lived in the other—we literally had just a door between the two apartments. It was on 37th and Union. So we were like one big family for a couple of years. Then her mom came to live with her. She was a Polish lady, Grandma Szumigalski. All our kids knew her as Grandma

When we decided we were going to look for a home and buy one, we knew I would have to go to work. So Grandma said, “Well, I’ll watch the kids. If you want to go to work, I’ll watch the kids.” Paul finally relented. He had been working two jobs just so that we could save the extra money that we needed to buy a home. And I said, well, I think it would be better if we both went to work. You wouldn’t have to work two jobs. Half the time he didn’t know where he was going, he was so tired when he came home.

So he relented finally, reluctantly, that I could go to work part-time. So that’s what I did. I was working in a law office 3 days a week, and Grandma watched the kids at my neighbor’s house. My kids were comfortable with her because they were used to seeing her every day. We moved to 38th and Emerald. They had built some new homes in the neighborhood and we bought one. Grandma would come over and stay with the kids, which I was comfortable with because that’s how I grew

up, living with my grandparents. She was also a great cook and many times she would have supper made when I got home from work.

My grandparents lived with us until they passed away. And everybody in our family, like my dad's sisters and their families would all come to our house on Sundays because Grandma and Grandpa were there. So I decided to go to work. I looked in the paper and found an ad. I could have gone to the ward office, I'm sure they would have been happy to help me out.

But I had good skills as a secretary. That's what I was trained to do. And so I just answered an ad in the paper, and ended up with this wonderful man, who also happened to own a brewery in the neighborhood, Canadian Ace Brewery. It was on 39th between Union and Emerald. Mr. Schultz owned that, and he also had a law office downtown. I went to work part-time for him in his law office. He was the senior partner.

His secretary was getting older, looking to retire, and there were five other lawyers there. He said, "I'd like you to work for me. Mrs. Ryan may retire in about a year." I said, "Well, I won't be able to work full-time, but I'll do whatever I can." So when she wasn't in I used to work for him and he kind of looked out for me. He was a brilliant lawyer and a kind man who was like a father to me and taught me a lot.

Actually, I think that's why my son went to law school because occasionally, on a Friday, my boss would say, "If Paul's home tomorrow, can you come in?" Or if Paul was working he'd say, "Bring the kids down with you." So I would bring them down, and he'd put them in the library and he'd give them projects to do, or I'd bring their homework.

Growing up in Bridgeport in the '50's and '60's, where with few exceptions, most of our father's and my parents hadn't gone to college. You automatically thought you were going to do what your father did, or your mother, whether you're a tradesman, or a truck driver, or a laborer or a stay-at-home mom. I was happy that my son Dave was exposed to the law firm, and I think that's really why he ended up going to law school. That's where I was working when the Mayor called.

About a year before that call, Bill Daley called. He and John had an insurance office on 35th and Halsted and they were looking for a secretary and offered me the job. It would be convenient, close to home, but was a full time job. I was honored that they considered me for the job but I knew Paul would not agree to me working every day. I told Bill I was only working two or three days a week and that was all I could handle at that time.

About a year and a half later, one of the Daley boys called me. I don't remember if it was Mike or Rich. They talked to me about going to work for their dad. One of his secretaries was retiring and I told them the same thing I had told Bill—I just worked part time and couldn't work full time. I didn't really want to switch jobs at that time because my boss was very good to me and my family. It wasn't a pressure job. At 5:00pm he knew I had to leave to be with the kids, so it worked out well for me. I couldn't accept, but thanked them for considering me.

And then one day I got a call from the Mayor. He said, "Rose, you know one of my secretaries is retiring." Well, the boys didn't tell me I'd be working directly for their dad. They just said did I want to come down and work as a secretary in their dad's office. So he called, and I said, the boys told me there was a job available, but I said, "Mr. Mayor, I really can't take on the responsibility of a full time job right now. I have the kids and my mom and dad don't live in the neighborhood anymore, and I'm reluctant to leave the kids with anybody full time."

My girlfriend's mother had gotten sick. She could watch them a couple of days a week, but it would have been too much to do it every day. He said, "Well, one of my secretaries is retiring, and I could really use the help. And I said I would love to help you out, but I can't do it at this time. So he said okay, and he thanked me and asked about the kids, which he always

did whenever he would see me—"How's the family?" That was the first thing he would say.

Later, when Paul came home from work my daughter said, "Daddy, the Mayor called Mama today to go to work." And he said, "What, Rich called?" He figured, because we knew the boys that Rich called. And I said no, actually, it was his dad, it was the Mayor who called. And he said, "What did he want?" And I said, "Well, he asked if I could go to work for him. One of his secretaries is retiring. And Paul said, "What did you say?" I said I told him I was sorry but I couldn't work full time right now.

And he's like, "Well, this is the Mayor calling. Why would you tell him that?" I said, "Do you want me to go to work full-time?" I don't know when I would be home. What would we do with the kids? "Well, by this time my daughter Debbie was in eighth grade. She's our oldest child. And he said, "Oh my God, you can't say no to the Mayor." He's the Mayor!" And I work for the city. I'll be out in the middle of the lake working somewhere.

Of course, the Mayor would never have done that, but that's what Paul's like—he was so excited about the call. And I said, well, that's what I told him. I had to tell him something, and I was honest with him, and he understood, really. And then a couple weeks later he called again and

asked if I would consider doing it until he could find a full time person. I told him I worked for this wonderful attorney, and he's so nice to us. I said he's like a grandpa to the kids. He's like a father to me, I said, and his secretary had retired, so I work three days for him, and occasionally I would work on Saturday. I would go downtown, and sometimes take the kids. I said I don't know how I would tell him I was leaving. I think he'd be devastated if I left. And he said, "Well maybe you should come down and we'll talk about it."

So I agreed to go down and talk to him. My husband came home and of course the kids told him as soon as he walked in the door—"Mayor Daley called again!"

And I said, "Well, I told him I would go down and maybe we could work something out." Maybe I could work three days for him, if that would help him out. And so I said I'm going to go down and talk to him, which I did. I went down to the Democratic headquarters. And he talked to me, and explained that his secretary Mary had been with him for 39 years, not just when he was mayor, but before that, when he was at the clerk's office. She had been with him a long time, and she wanted to retire.

Actually, I think she had worked for the city for a while, and this was not a city job. This job was for the Democratic Party of Cook County. So she

wanted to go back and get a few more years towards her city pension. I explained to him about Mr. Schultz, and that I was concerned about him. And I said, I don't know how I would tell him. He said, maybe you could come in the days that you would normally work for him. We could work it out.

He explained that Mary was a good friend of their family, and he would like to continue with someone that he knew. He said you really need someone that you know in that spot. I mean, I was so honored, the Mayor of the city of Chicago asks you to be his secretary! So he said, "How about if I talked to Mr. Schultz? If you want, I'll call him and just tell him it's going to be temporary until I can find someone full-time and then you'll go back."

So I said, I think I should talk to him and I'll try to work something out with him. But can you imagine, now, this man was willing—he's the Mayor—to call my boss and talk to him about me coming to work for him. He said and we'll look for somebody else, but I need someone soon, and I would appreciate if you could come and help me. And I didn't know if my skills were enough for this position. I didn't know what the job entailed. But anyway, I agreed. That's how I started to work for him.

The next day, I talked to Mr. Schultz, and of course Mr. Schultz says, "I know you're never going to come back. Once he gets you, you're not going to come back." And I said, "No, I will come back and work for you." And he said, "I know, he's going to want to keep you like I do. He's not going to let you go."

And he was right. I never went back. When I started out, I just thought I was going to work there a few months. I was going to work until the summer, and they were going to look for somebody. And now it's spring and summer is coming around, and I'm still there. The office manager said, "We have this big dinner coming up that we have every year. Around 10,000 people attend and we'll need your help working on that."

The Mayor did not do political events at City Hall. If a politician wanted to visit him he met them at Democratic Headquarters. That was where he had his political appointments. They may just stop in to City Hall, if they wanted, but most of the time any political people that came to visit, came to that office. And they had events like the Democratic dinner to raise money for future elections. So the Mayor said, "Maybe you could just stay until after the dinner." So, of course, I stayed.

Eventually, not only was I working three days a week, I was working five and six days a week. Some days I wouldn't get home till 9:00pm. Some

days we worked around the clock as the dinner got closer, and we're doing the seating. I'm like, "Oh my God, how do these people do that?" But we did it. A couple of nights we stayed there all night working on seating. Can you imagine seating that many people and getting tickets to them in advance?

We had several hotels that hosted the event. The majority of the guests were seated at the Conrad Hilton, because it had the largest number of ballrooms, but even in there, there were seven or eight different rooms where we had to seat people. There was the main ballroom, and then you had TV sets in all the other rooms so they could hear and see everything that was going on in the main ballroom. And getting tickets out to all these people prior to the dinner—it was really quite an ordeal learning how to do that. The women who worked on it were amazing. After the dinner, I mentioned that the kids would be out of school soon, and I did not have anyone to watch them full time.

Q: So that was in the '70s?

Bonoma: Yes, that was in the '70s. I think '74 or '75. The Mayor's typical day went like this: He would go to Mass, then go to City Hall, and if he didn't have a luncheon or a scheduled event at lunchtime, he would come to our office, which was initially in the LaSalle Hotel, until it was torn down.

The staff always joked that they were the kiss of death because they closed every hotel they moved into. Originally they were at the Sherman Hotel, which is where the State of Illinois Building is now. They then moved to the LaSalle Hotel, which was on Madison and LaSalle, and then that came down. And so we moved to the Bismarck Hotel, and we had offices in there.

When I told the Mayor that my children would soon be out of school for the summer he said he was not going to come to our offices every day in the summer, because he really was still recuperating. And he said, "You could stay home, and when I'm going to go there I can call you if I need you and you can come in. You could be with the children while they're home from school." This worked out fine for me. I worked part-time. And I'd be home with the children most of the summer. I think he was trying to make up for all the long days that we had put in for the dinner.

The Mayor told me that first year, that summer, I had about two months off where I could be home with the kids.

And so how long did I stay there? I worked for him until he passed away and then I worked for the new chairman, George Dunne. Working with Mayor Daley was a wonderful experience. Most days, he would do whatever he had to do at City Hall and then at lunch time he would come

by us—most of the hotels we worked in were close to City Hall.

Frequently, the Daley boys would join him for lunch. He'd call to see if they were available, or he'd have lunch with somebody else.

I remember one time—this is funny—there was a new restaurant opening up in the Loop, Wendy's. This was when Wendy's first came to Chicago, so that was in the '70s. And so of course he went there to welcome them and everything, and check out the restaurant and he had their chili, and he liked the chili, because he came back and he was telling us. How was the new restaurant, Mr. Mayor? Oh it was fine, they have really good chili, not just hamburgers. So he started eating the chili. Some days, if he was coming over there he would call and say, "Maybe I'll have some chili today." So of course we would order some.

Then one day Mrs. Daley called and she said, "Rose, how are you, how are the children and everything?" I said, "Fine, Mrs. Daley." And she said, "I understand the Mayor's eating a lot of chili over there." And I said, "Yes, Wendy's opened up down the street." She said, "I think he's had enough chili, so we want to cut back on the chili a little bit." And I thought, oh, do I have to be the one to tell him, or is she going to tell him?

(Slight pause as Paul Bonoma brings us water)

Bonoma: And she added, "We talked about it." [Laughs] Mrs. Daley said, "His stomach isn't going to take too much chili." So he must have been having a little problem and she probably asked him what he was eating, and that's when he told her about the chili. Oh, I'll tell you something that I think you would find amusing.

Q: Oh, thank you so much. I really appreciate that.

Bonoma: The Office Manager wasn't in the office this one day. She was in charge of the office, and I did the secretarial work. And I don't know—she had to go and get her hair done or something was going on—and I was there alone with the Mayor. After lunch, the Mayor came out of his office and he said, "I'm going to relax in my chair for a little while, Rose, and if I don't come out in about 20 or 30 minutes, just come in there and make sure I'm awake." I said, "Okay, Mr. Mayor."

So I'm sitting at my desk and I thought, my God, he might go to sleep! If he falls asleep, I'll have to wake him up. Well, I mean, to anybody that lived in the city, this was a big deal to be with the mayor, but to be that close, you're working for him and might have to go and wake him up, I'm like, oh my God, he's the most important person I ever met in my life. I was kind of intimidated, really, you know, thinking, what am I going to do? I thought maybe she'll get back in time, and she could go in there.

So I'm looking at the clock, and it's 15 minutes, and it's 20 minutes, 25 minutes, and I'm thinking I have to go in there because he has such a busy schedule. I'm sure he had other things to do because most days he had three or four pages of scheduled events and meetings. So finally I thought, oh, it's almost 25 minutes, I better go in there. So I go in and I'm so nervous, and I open the door, and he had his eyes closed, so I guess he was resting. He had a recliner in his office.

He had taken his jacket off, which, if you knew the Mayor, you very rarely saw him without his jacket—everything was perfect about his appearance, and he always had a suit on. I mean, I could never imagine him in a sport shirt and pants. Any time you saw him walking around the neighborhood he always looked perfect. He always looked 'Mayoral.' I'm sure if he was going golfing or something he didn't have a suit on. But I never saw him casually dressed.

I walked in there, and here he is in this recliner, and I see these big red suspenders. I'm standing there hoping that my presence is going to wake him up or something. Well, I think I probably maybe startled him a little bit. I told him what time it was and he said, "Oh, thank you, dear, thank you. Okay, I'll be out in a minute."

I came home and I told Paul. I said, 'Oh my God, I saw the Mayor in his suspenders. He's got these big red...' [Laughs] So we had a laugh over it. And Paul said, "Well, why did you get nervous?" I said, "He's the Mayor. I grew up seeing him from time to time in the neighborhood and I never saw him without a suit." Even in the neighborhood, if you saw him walking to church, he had a suit on. If he didn't go to mass at Nativity, then he would stop downtown at St. Peter's, but he went to mass almost every morning.

So that was my mayor story. I don't think I even ever told the boys about that. Probably was too embarrassed to tell them.

We did many different things there in the office. There was a national convention coming up, so of course I went back after my little vacation in the summer and went to see Mr. Schultz my old boss and explained everything to him. And he was very understanding, and he said, "I knew you were never going to come back." I felt bad, I really did, but we kept in touch.

Anyway, we worked on many different things there, not city matters. Anything that was political we did out of there. For instance, we had the convention coming up and the convention before that was the one where he was replaced as a delegate. We all thought it was terrible

because people elected these delegates to go, and now people who lost the election are now being told by the court that they could go as delegates. So it was trying.

The next national convention was in New York, and the Mayor asked me if I could go there because we had a lot of things to do to get ready. The office in Chicago actually was responsible for credentials for the entire state of Illinois, so anybody in the whole state that was going, had to get their credentials for the election and get their papers in. We also made all the hotel accommodations. The Democratic National Committee would decide what hotel you were assigned to stay in.

The Illinois delegation, because of the Mayor's status, was assigned the Waldorf Astoria. We worked really hard. Our office opened at 6:00 in the morning in New York, so we had to be there early and be sure that we had all the credentials ready for the delegates to pick up. The DNC people passed them out to each state office every morning.

It was hard to get rooms anywhere if you weren't a delegate, because first we would accommodate all the people who were delegates from Illinois. We had to provide them with rooms, so we had to know how many they needed. Every morning at 6:00am we would open the office, and the delegates would stop by, pick up their credentials for the day,

and then if they wanted to do something with their wives during the day—because sometimes they had some big events going on during the day, but most of the big things that were going on were in the evening.

What really struck me when we went there, I thought, well in Chicago we're just crazy about Mayor Daley. Most people that I knew seemed to love him. Before we went to New York, the Mayor mentioned he wanted to have a dinner in New York City for all the Illinois delegates and we asked him where he would like to have it. We had a list of the restaurants there. Of course we did all that before we left Chicago.

He would always encourage the delegates and his staff to take the families—always stressed families. Most of them would do whatever he said. If he said everybody should bring their wives and make a little vacation out of it, most of them would do that. And so we called a few restaurants to plan the dinner. Wherever we called, it couldn't have been any easier to get the accommodations required if he were President of the United States. The business people in New York also loved him, we learned.

Some of the restaurants that we called, when we mentioned it was for Mayor Daley, would say, "Do you want us to close the restaurant?" This is how much they thought of him. I was amazed. This was the first time I

ever worked on anything like that. To me that was, wow, they like him so much they're willing to close the restaurant if he wants to have a dinner there for the delegates, say we only need seating for 100 people, even if it was a bigger restaurant.

And we'd say no, he doesn't want to inconvenience anybody, do you have a room that would be large enough so that everyone could be together. And I'm telling you, we thought this was really going to be hard in NYC. No. They were willing to bend over backward to accommodate our Mayor.

And the policemen, of course, they loved him in New York. I mean, they'd see him on the street and they would come over to shake hands. They respected him. I don't know if it's because he never had to sign a contract with the policemen or firemen. Everything was a handshake. And they took his word for it. I believe they heard of his relationship with the policeman and firemen in Chicago.

But, you know, back then we had more federal monies coming into the city than we had when Rich became Mayor, but people still expected so much of Rich because they thought everything his dad was able to do, he was going to be able to do.

Well, the times were changing. Things were different. It was a lot harder for Rich, I'm sure, because he had to come up with solutions on how to do many things that people took for granted. We had to say no once in a while, which they weren't used to hearing, especially from a Daley.

Q: Did you also work for Rich?

Bonoma: Yes, I worked for Rich almost 20 years.

Q: But going back to that convention. What was that like?

Bonoma: Oh, my gosh—it was unbelievable! We would give the credentials out, and later we were allowed to go to the convention. And I was amazed at the reception he received. Because he hadn't been at the one before that, where they had all those problems with the delegates, the biggest line in that convention was to the Illinois delegation. People were lined up to get a chance to meet him or just to see him.

Now you can imagine you're in a big place, say like McCormick Place. I mean thousands of people are in there, because you had delegates from 50 states that had to be accommodated, and important people from Illinois who weren't delegates but wanted to come. And there was the Illinois delegation. The mayor sat on the aisle seat.

And all night, from the time he arrived there, there was a line of people in the aisle. They wanted to come up and shake hands with him and see him. He was, at that convention (the '76 convention) one of the most popular and influential people in that hall.

Well, I think he was the most successful mayor of any large city at the time, and very influential, because when the candidates for president, began to announce their candidacy, almost everyone that was running came to see Mayor Daley. I don't remember all the names now, unfortunately, but everyone that was running wanted to meet with him. They would come to Chicago looking for his support..

I think that's why at the convention so many people made their way to come and greet him. It was unbelievable; I couldn't get over that. And the bodyguards are saying, "Mr. Mayor, do you want us to cut it off, are you tired?" He was in his 70's then. And he'd say no, they're waiting in line, just let them be. He never would turn anyone away. They were just waiting to come by and say hello. I guess most of them probably knew him or just wanted to meet him. But it was very impressionable to see. You know, you'd wonder what's that big line for and here it was for him. People came from all the different delegations because he was so well respected or they just wanted to say hello.

On election night the Mayor would be at the Democratic headquarters. A lot of the committeemen or candidates would be stopping by. We had a telefax machine to receive and send out information on various elections.

Q: Oh, yeah.

Bonoma: I think it was the Associated Press wire, but I'm not sure. That's where we would get information on what was going on in the different precincts and counties throughout Illinois, and we could send information to different locations.

Q: It sounds very exciting.

Bonoma: It was. I mean, just from the people that you would meet there. One day I came home and I said to Paul, you know what? (The Godfather movies were out at that time, too. We were watching them.) And I said you know what our office sometimes reminds me of? I said you're not going to believe it. These people—now I very rarely would go home and tell Paul of anybody that was there because I was so conscious of not revealing who the Mayor met with.

That was one of the things I talked to the Mayor about when I first went to work there. He said, "You're going to get a lot of new friends now, and

that's why I need someone like you that I know I can trust that won't talk about who comes to visit me or who doesn't come." And I could understand that.

You could see why he would want somebody there that he knew because you could almost tell what's going on in the city or the country by who was stopping by there. You know, something that was delicate or sensitive was going on, and then you'd see it in the paper the next day or a couple days later that this was resolved, or you heard of something else that was going on, and you'd think to yourself, oh, that's why so-and-so was here.

As I said earlier, most of the presidential candidates that were running at that time all stopped by to visit him. They'd be sitting there and you could see they were nervous. And these were very important people—senators, congressmen, and people who had been in Washington for a long time, and were very influential.

I told my husband it reminded me of that scene in *The Godfather* where they were all waiting to go in and ask a favor of the godfather on the day of his daughter's wedding. Paul said, what do you mean? I said you have people who want to be President of the United States and they're all nervous about going in to see the Mayor because whoever the Mayor

decides to support, he was very influential and he could talk other people into supporting that person. Everybody came to see him. So I told Paul that's what it reminded me of.

I was fortunate enough to go to New York and work on the '76 convention, and it was an extraordinary experience. I never saw anything like that. To see these people, just waiting all the way down an aisle, sometimes 50 or 100 people at a time, just waiting to say hello Mayor Daley and go on. And he didn't discourage them. I think he felt welcomed back because he wasn't at the last convention I wasn't working there at that time, but I remember all the problems that ensued.

Q: So when he came back from that convention, then, there was the election then. Was that a very, very busy time for you then?

Bonoma: Oh, yes. Any time there was any kind of an election. We were there until the candidates we were supporting either made it or they didn't. At the time, I believe it was the Carter election. And I remember—he wasn't President yet—but he called there to see how Illinois was doing, so I put him on with the Mayor.

We thought we were going to carry Illinois, so the Mayor was a little upset that we carried Chicago, but we didn't carry Illinois.

Initially we thought that we were going to win Illinois. Somebody forgot about some counties way down south that weren't always solidly Democratic, and when the results came in from those counties we had to call President Carter and let him know the results weren't good. And I'm sure whoever was responsible for that misinformation wasn't too anxious to call the Mayor and let him know.

Q: But Carter won the election, so...

Bonoma: He won the election, so that was good. Even the local elections, and the Mayor's election when he ran, it was always a busy time there. I remember when I first went to work for him I had no idea what I would be working on in that office.

I was there about a week and the office manager said we were going to have a Central Committee meeting, which meant the committeemen from all of Cook County would come down there, and people who wanted to run for a certain office would come and give their reasons why they should be nominated for a certain office. And the committeemen, of course, would eventually go and see the Mayor to tell him who they were interested in supporting for the various offices.

The office manager was making arrangements to go to the room where the meeting was held, and asked the Mayor if she should call Sullivan

Reporting, and he said for what? And she said for the court reporter for the meetings. And he said, no, we have Rose now. Well, I about had a heart attack! I had no idea what I was getting myself in for, you know. And so I'm asking her what that meant and she advised me that the Mayor wanted me to attend the meetings and take the minutes.

So I was a little nervous that day after I heard that, and I said to her, "Geri, what was the mayor talking about I'm going to take the minutes of?" She said, "Well, we have these meetings, and we have about 80 committeemen, 50 from the city, 30 from the suburbs and if any of them stand up and want to be heard, you should know who they are, and who they are supporting and , whether they are for the person or if they are against, they would say why.

I was told that in the past they used to hire a court reporter to do that, and I thought now he's trusting me, and I'm thinking, oh my God, I hope I can do this—I mean I had never done anything like that—take minutes at such a large scale event. I said maybe the first day we should have a court reporter so I could see how it worked. He said, "You'll be fine. I know you can do it." So I said okay. Of course we always did what he wanted.

One of those days we were going down to the meeting, because they went on for quite a while until they chose all the candidates. I was going

down the hall, and the Mayor said, "Come on with me." So I said okay. I'm going to the meeting with him and the two bodyguards, and we got on the elevator in the Bismarck Hotel.

Usually the bodyguards would go first and secure one of the elevators so that he would be the only person in there, or whoever was traveling with him. Well, I think they probably tried to do that. I didn't go to a lot of places with him and it would go directly to that floor. I did go to these meetings. Suddenly the elevator stopped. I don't know if the guy didn't set the buttons so it would go straight down to wherever we were going. It stopped at another floor, and the door opened. It was the mayor and me and his bodyguard, and there was a family, who probably had been staying at the hotel—a man and his wife and some children standing in front of the elevator.

And, of course, they see the Mayor there and they said, "Oh, Mayor Daley!" They were so excited to see him there. And I looked at the Mayor—I didn't know what his reaction was going to be—and I look over and I see him smiling. You know what? He was as happy to see them, I think, as they were to see him. He had them get in the elevator. They were going to wait for another elevator. He said, "No, come on, we're all going down." He had them get in and exchanged greetings with them and everything.

Well, some people wouldn't understand that, but when you think of him, and when he was the Mayor if you weren't a person that saw him frequently, and suddenly a door opens and you see the Mayor standing there, it would be quite a surprise.

I'll never forget the expression on his face. He had such a great laugh. I mean, he had the most wonderful smile and laugh—I'm telling you, if he laughed, everybody had to laugh because it was this jovial, happy, contagious laugh. His personality was just so big.

When I got home, I said to Paul I have to tell you something that happened today. After telling him the story, I said I think the Mayor was just as excited to see them as those people were to see him. He got a kick out of their reaction, I think, probably the way they got so excited that the Mayor of Chicago was standing there in front of them! But he took time to say hello and what are you doing in Chicago and wished them well, so that kind of stuck in my mind.

Little things like that, you know, like how much he cared for people. I remember another day. He had been out and about going to different wards, as he frequently did, and he came back and he was in a hurry and went right into his office. And he said, Rose write this down, and proceeded to give me an address.

I don't know what neighborhood he was in, but he said I was talking to this senior at this event, and she told me that there was a tree in front of her house, and the branches were so far extended that they used to brush up against her roof—it was a two story house and her window and awning, and the noise would frighten her at night if it was stormy or windy. So she went up to the Mayor and she said, "Mayor, sometimes at night, you know, if it's windy and everything, I hear the noise. I've been trying to get someone to come out here and trim this tree." And she said, "I'm alone, I'm a widow, and I get scared when I hear this noise." He asked her the address of the house.

After he told me what happened and he said, "Nobody should be afraid to go to sleep at night, because something like that is keeping them awake." He said, "You call this guy in the Forestry Department and tell him I want that tree trimmed today before that woman gets home."

So I called Tom Donovan, the Mayor's Executive Assistant and said the Mayor was out south, and this elderly lady went up to him and I told him what happened. I said he wants that tree down or trimmed—Tom said that's fine. I said, "Tom, he wants it done today, before the woman gets home, because he doesn't want her to have to spend one more night with that frightening noise."

Tom started laughing. He said, "Don't worry, it'll be done today." But, I mean, little things like that—he was so caring where some other guy might just blow it off. I mean, that was important to him that it should be done yesterday.

Q: Were there other kinds of situations that he gave lots of priority to that you could see where somebody would come in and say—I'm thinking about him driving around the streets and making notes on what needed to be done.

Bonoma: Oh, yes. Whenever he went into a neighborhood—and Rich got into that too, because I'm sure Rich probably rode around with him on occasion, because when Rich became mayor, every time he went somewhere he would return with a list of things he wanted done. He would go through all the notes, and he would follow up to see that it was done. I mean, that was always a priority if he went in a neighborhood and people were complaining about something.

He felt that before you do anything in some of these wards, those people live there, and you have to inform them about it. You have to listen to what their concerns are and you can't always do what you want to do. Sometimes you have to make a change, if enough people want it, or

didn't want something in their neighborhood. He thought they should be heard before starting a big project.

The Mayor was very persuasive. People came in there that sometimes didn't want to do what he wanted. Believe me, by the time you left he could talk you into anything. I remember one time a gentleman the Mayor wanted to be a candidate for governor stopped by our office, and he said the Mayor wanted him to run for governor. He didn't want to run.

So apparently he must have talked to the Mayor and told him no, and he came in the office and talked to the Mayor's assistant and he says, "He is not talking me into it. My wife says no. She doesn't want me to run for governor." He said he got a call that the Mayor wanted to see him again, and said, 'That's what he wants to see me about, isn't it?' And we said, we don't know, because we really didn't know. The office manager told him, "Tell you what. Stop in tomorrow afternoon. The Mayor will be here."

Well, he came back a couple of days later and visited with the Mayor, and eventually he did run for the office. Unfortunately, he didn't make it. But anyway, he said, "I'm not changing my mind." He wasn't running, but the Mayor told him all the reasons why he thought he should. He was a very

persuasive person. I mean, he could get you to quit your job and go to work for him! [Laughs]

Q: Now, who else did you work with in the office? Were there other folks that you...so you worked directly for the mayor, it sounds like, almost like a personal assistant.

Bonoma: There were 2 other women I worked with on special events, but I did all the secretarial work for the Mayor.

Q: And then there were other folks that worked there?

Bonoma: There was another lady there who was the office manager. She was very knowledgeable about what we had to do there. She ran the office. She didn't have any secretarial skills, but she really directed us how to do everything else, like the dinners. She had been there for I don't know how many years and knew how to do almost anything that needed to be done.

Actually, when I first went to work for the Mayor, it was at the LaSalle Hotel, and there were two secretaries that sat outside his door. One was Mary Mullins, who was the lady who was retiring, and like I said, had been with him almost 40 years. Lovely, lovely person. Very capable. Mary ran everything, really. And there was another lady, Mary's

assistant, Geri Monson. There was also a receptionist in the outer office. After I came down there to talk to him and he talked me into it, I went down there and he introduced me to the staff. Mary had already left when I got there, but she would come in occasionally and work with us on some things. And so he told the office manager to get a desk in here for one. Rose is going to do all the secretarial work. And she said okay.

So after he left and went over to City Hall, the office manager said come on and she brings me to this room. It was down the hall a little ways. And she said, "This will be your office." And I said, "Okay, that's fine." And then he came back the next day and he called the office manager. He said, "Well, where's Rose today?" And she told him I was in the office down the hall. He said, "No. Rose sits where Mary sat. Rose is going to sit over here so when I need something, she can take care of it."

So I wasn't too popular when I first got there. I think maybe they felt, as I learned from them afterwards they were a little intimidated because the Mayor knew me from the neighborhood. None of them were from the 11th ward. I don't know how he chose them or where they came from, but they had been with him for years and years and were very capable women.

They were very competent, hard-working women, or they wouldn't have been there that long. And they thought, oh, she's going to be telling him everything we do. So I think maybe until they got to know me, they didn't know what my role was going to be there. It all worked out and we got along fine and became good friends.

I remember when one of the aldermen who was a good friend of the Mayor went to jail, and the Mayor was concerned about his family. You know he would call his wife and ask how she was doing and we'd write letters to him on occasion. He'd come over and he'd say send a little note. Sometimes he would bring a book and say send him this book, I think he would like this. He was really a thoughtful person. To do things like that with all that's on his mind, he's worried about sending this guy a book. But that's how he was.

That's also where I met Jane Byrne, when I went to work for the Mayor. I can't remember what year it was, but he started to realize that women could play a very important role in an election. He said, number one, they vote. And he said I think we should have more women precinct captains. And he decided to talk to some of the committeemen and suggested they should all appoint a committeewoman.

Now, a committeeman is an elected position, so some of them weren't too happy. The Mayor told them they could choose anyone they wanted. Find somebody in your office that's competent and delegate. It didn't go over too big with some of them. A couple of them he had to twist arms. But anyway, he started off by appointing Jane Byrne.

Well, she wasn't the most popular person to some of these men. They weren't used to taking orders from women but she had worked on a few projects for the Mayor and she did a good job. And so he called me in and he said, "Jane Byrne is going to be the co-chairman, so we have to find an office for her, Rose." And I said, "Oh, okay, would you want to put her in here?" I didn't know what he had in mind.

There was an office right down the hall from us, just a little ways down. And he said, "Let's go look at that." So we went down there, and it was fine. He said she's not going to be here every day. But when they had political events or something, she would have a place to go.

And he said, "I'm going to impose upon you again. I don't think some of the ladies are going to want to work with Jane Byrne." I didn't know what their objections to her were. But he said, "I'd like you to work with her. I think you could work with her fine," he said. "I'm sure she's not going to

ask you to do a lot, but if she needs anything help her out." I said I don't have a problem with that, which I didn't.

So that's how Mayor Byrne and I became friends. She didn't really ask me to do a lot. But she would run the Democratic Women of Cook County organization out of that office. She started that, and invited women from Cook County to join, and had dues, and she'd have different events such as luncheons, dinners, some of them pretty big. She would have a fashion show every year, so I would work on that with her. I thought she was very bright and enjoyed working with her.

Kathy, her daughter, was actually in college at the time and needed a job for the summer and Jane didn't want to ask the mayor. She'd say, "Rose, do you think we could find a job for her for the summer?" I said, "I'll check on it." The city hired college kids for the summer. So I would always help her. I think that's why she took a liking to me, because she didn't have to ask the Mayor herself. She knew I would be the one asking him, and he always said, yes, we'll find something for her daughter. He was always happy to help young people.

Q: Well, I'm curious about the press, because Jay McMullen was a journalist. And going back to when you worked for Mayor Richard J. Daley, did you have to work with the press at all?

Bonoma: Did I? No.

Q: Yeah, did you ever have any dealings?

Bonoma: No one in our office ever spoke to the press.

Q: Oh, interesting.

Bonoma: That was a no-no.

Q: Oh, really? Okay. Yeah, I'm curious about that.

Bonoma: The Mayor had a press secretary at City Hall, Frank Sullivan, and anything they wanted to know, they would ask it at City Hall. No, the press did not come up and bother us about anything like that. I worked with Earl Bush on some of the Mayor's speeches, but never on press matters. Are you familiar with Earl?

Q: Yes. Yes, of course.

Bonoma: I worked with Earl when I worked for Mayor Daley. The mayor liked Earl's writing. He was the best speech writer. And so when there was an important speech Earl also worked on it. I think at one time Earl worked over in the press office, too, but I believe there was kind of a rivalry between Frank and Earl.

Q: Oh.

Bonoma: I don't know what Earl's title was. The Mayor knew Earl had his pulse on things. He knew how the Mayor spoke and what the Mayor's plans were, and how the Mayor felt about different situations, and he seemed to be able to capture it much better than the Press Secretary. So almost every time there was a really important speech that he was giving, not only was Frank working on it, Earl was working on it.

I used to take Earl's dictation for some of the speeches. I don't remember whether Earl was still in the press office when I started working with him. I used to kid Earl because he was always late with everything.

Frank would have the speech done two or three days ahead of time. Sometimes the Mayor would say, did Earl give you anything? No, Mr. Mayor. Call Earl. See if he's writing anything. So I would call Earl, and he's going yeah, yeah, I'm still working on it. He never got anything done on time. Never. I don't know if he was just a procrastinator or what, but he was always calling me at the last minute. However, we got along very well.

Sometimes he would call me when I'm getting ready to go home at night and he'd say, "Rose, you have to help me, I gotta get this speech ready for the Mayor." Well, if I didn't have anyone to stay with the kids or I had to be home for some reason I'd say, "I can't stay, Earl." He knew I had a

typewriter in my home. And he'd say, "Can I call you at home later?" He knew I wouldn't say no.

So Earl would be dictating over the phone, or he would be still writing, and I'd say, "Earl, I can't go to the Mayor's house too late." I knew the Mayor was an early riser. I didn't want to be running over there waking them up. So he'd keep writing. As he did one page, sometimes Sylvia, his wife would be reading it to me. As she dictated a page I would type it.

Sometimes his son would be home, so his son would be dictating. And he also had a daughter Diane. If Diane was home, then Diane was reading it to me while he's writing. And I said to Paul one day, "You know, one of these days he's going to tell me he's going to put the dog on the phone and I won't be surprised, either, because I've taken dictation from everybody else in the Bush family by now." And then I would bring it over to the Mayor's house.

Occasionally, I stayed downtown to help Earl because I knew he had this important speech and he didn't have it written yet. So the other people would go home, and then I'm in the headquarters by myself. But if the guys on the detail knew I was working late, one of them would come in because the Mayor would always say, "Make sure Rose never stays here alone."

I would sometimes call Paul, if the kids weren't in bed to come and get me. And then one day Paul McLaughlin called me. He was my friend and neighbor, and the police commander at the first district. He called me and he said, "You know, Rose, the Mayor's worried about you being over there by yourself and then going home late, so if you're there late, you should not be in that building alone. You call me."

He would send somebody over there to make sure that I got home safely. He said I know the mayor worries about you, and if he heard I didn't send somebody to watch over you, he would be very concerned. If the Mayor had to go somewhere and he knew I was still there, he always would say to one of the guys, stay until Rose is ready to go. He would never want to worry about me coming home late, alone.

One night I left the office at almost 9:00pm, and I stopped at the house to give the Mayor the speech. Mrs. Daley came to the door and she said, "Dick, it's Rose." I went in and he said, "Are you just coming home from work?" I said, "Yes, Earl was late with the speech, so I had to wait until he was done." And he said, "Well, this is not going to happen again. You should be home with your children and Paul. He had plenty of notice to get this done. I'm going to have a talk with Earl tomorrow." I said, "I don't mind, Mayor, its fine." He said, "No, I don't want this to happen again." He was always concerned about things like that.

You know, it's interesting that on the day that he passed away, I worked on one of the speeches that he had to give out in the 10th Ward. I don't remember if they were dedicating a gym or what it was. Something was going on out there. Afterwards I was telling Paul, "I worked on that last speech that he gave out south before he died, and when Mike Bilandic became mayor, I worked on Mike's first speech."

I remember saying to Mike I don't know whether he wrote his speech himself or whether it was something someone else wrote for him, but I think one of the reasons they chose Mike to run was because he said in the speech he was not going to run for mayor. He would only fill out this term. And I remember saying to him, Mike maybe you shouldn't say that. But I think he honestly believed that he wasn't going to run again after that. And then once it's out, it's something that you can't take back. It stayed in the speech.

I remember going over to City Hall after the Mayor died, and it was so sad because the main doors to the Mayor's offices on the fifth floor were closed. So many people wanted to get in there and the aldermen were all fighting over who they wanted to replace Mayor Daley—I should be the mayor, and this one said no, I'm the mayor. I hold this office, so now it's my job. So they literally had to lock the doors there until a decision about what was going to happen was made.

Q: What was it like being in this neighborhood when the funeral was taking place?

Bonoma: It was so sad. You know, he was like everybody's relative down here. We felt like he belonged to all of us. One of the reasons I will always remember the date is because my son's birthday is on the 22nd. The Mayor died two days before, on the 20th. The guys in the detail used to affectionately call him "Pa," unbeknownst to him. When he was coming to our office, the detail would call, and if it wasn't on his schedule to come there, but if he was heading in our direction the guys on the detail would say, "Pa's coming to visit, heads up," and let us know that he was coming.

When he left the 10th Ward the detail first thought he was on his way home, but he apparently had experienced some kind of symptoms. I don't really know exactly what happened, I just know from talking to the guys on the detail that he spoke to his physician and apparently decided to go to the Doctor's office. But the detail in the tail car didn't know that.

And so they called and said we went past Ma's house, and they didn't know if they were going downtown by us, or to City Hall until he called the doctor and was told to come right in. I'm sure they didn't realize how

serious it was when they went there. But he was able to walk in, and he talked to the doctor, as I understand it.

You know, it had been a happy day. I think that was the day we had a holiday brunch. He had a staff brunch at the Bismarck Hotel with the City Hall people, but he would always include our office staff although it was really mostly department heads. And so he was in a good mood.

We learned that he had passed away from a telephone call from the Mayor's detail. We were all in shock and disbelief.

I remember seeing on television that they called the kids to come to the doctor's office. But it was awful. It was really terrible. At some point he was brought to McKeon's Funeral Home. I remember one thing, that he was never alone. From the time he died until he was buried, the family never left him alone. Maybe I shouldn't say that.

Q: No, that's...

Bonoma: History.

Q: It's history. That's what happened.

Bonoma: Yes, a member of his family was with him the whole time. It was so sad when they finally did wake him in the Church and have the Mass. I remember how cold it was. I don't think it's ever been that cold here

since then. But the cold didn't stop the thousands of people who came to pay their respect.

We had people all the way down our block, waiting in line all the way to the church to get in to visit, to see the Mayor. And there was a Salvation Army truck on this corner, and on the corner of 37th and Wallace to give people hot coffee. There were people there almost all night, some of them waited for hours in the freezing cold. I can't tell you how many people stopped in our house because they were freezing.

If we'd see an elderly person or somebody that we knew, Paul would bring them in so they could warm up. It was unbelievable the number of people. And they were only going to have the viewing so many hours, but, here it's getting later and later, 11:00, it's midnight, and they're still coming and coming.

The family stayed there because they didn't want to turn anybody away that had been out there waiting in the cold. They wanted anyone that wanted to come and say good-bye to him to be able to do that. The family was unbelievable in spite of their grief. Throughout the viewing there was an honor guard of policemen and firemen in the Church. The day of the funeral, there were cars downtown to take the aldermen and

elected officials, and probably department heads down to Nativity Church for the funeral.

I believe Special Events handled a lot of the details. Our office worked with them and the family to make sure that people who really should be there and their families would be able to get in. And so our staff and the City Hall secretaries were called to be downtown to ride in the procession to the church.

So I went down there and they had a car for us. When we arrived in Bridgeport all the way down Lowe Avenue there were cars from the funeral procession parked vertically so that they could fit more cars all the way down the block. And our car pulls up, and it was a coincidence, right in front of our house. So I went all the way downtown and eventually arrived back in front of my house to attend the funeral.

Coming down to the church from the Loop, I remember being on the Dan Ryan, and I guess they shut off the entrances and the exits going south. It was something to see, when you know how congested the Dan Ryan is in the morning. There were squad cars at every entrance and exit, and we came straight down the Ryan to 35th Street, and not a car in sight on the Ryan except for the cars in the funeral procession. After the last car passed they started letting traffic get back on the expressway.

Mayor Daley was unbelievable. He was always so good to the nuns and priests, though I felt some of them took advantage of his kindness because he would never say no. No matter what they asked, he would always find a way to do it. We would get buses for them if they were going on a school trip and they needed a bus.

We would take care of them. If they had an old nun that had to go to the doctor, guess what? They would call him and he would tell us to get somebody to take them there, wait for them, and bring them back home. He was so good to them. I don't care where they lived, they could get transferred from Chicago to Timbuktu, but they were still writing him and telling him, oh, we've got this big church or school, and we don't have this, and we don't have that. And he'd be sending them a check to try to help. Even as far away as Ireland.

Mrs. Daley asked people to do this project. That's one of the reason why I'm doing it. Mrs. Daley sent letters to several people who worked with the Mayor. I don't know how many people she sent it to but before she passed away I received a letter saying she was sending everything over to the library (at UIC) and if they want to talk to you, I would hope you would cooperate.

So that's why I said to Mike Daley, "I don't know that I would have anything important enough for anybody to want to hear." But Mike, like you, said that I knew him in a different way. He said most of the people that worked for him didn't even talk to him that much. They didn't know him. They just did their job. He said, but you got to talk to him regularly.

Oh, I have to tell you this, because Paul would want you to know. I had been working so late for a while there. The kids were getting older now, and I was working on the Democratic dinner, and sometimes I wouldn't come home all night. Occasionally, we would work so late that we would stay at the hotel and catch a couple of hours sleep when we could.

So now my husband is sorry that he told me to take the job. First he's the one insisting you can't say no to the Mayor. But then when I'm working late, he's going no, that's it, you have to quit, you can't stay down there so late. So he was giving me a bad time one day. He said, I mean it, you're going to get sick, and what are we going to do if you get sick? You can't work like that. You'll have to quit.

So it was funny because there was a precinct captain's meeting at the ward office that night, and he went to the meeting. And I thought, oh God, I hope he doesn't say anything to the Mayor. He was way in the back of the room, and the Mayor gave a speech, and then as he was

leaving, he turned around and he went in the direction where Paul was standing, all the way in the back.

And he went over to Paul—just to show you what a charmer he was, he grabbed Paul’s hand and said, “Paul, I just want to thank you for letting us have Rose spend so much time with us.” He’s apologizing, “I appreciate it so much, and she’s been such a big help to me.” And Paul said, “Oh that’s okay, Mr. Mayor, you’re welcome. I understand.”

He came home and said, “Well, you don’t have to quit your job.” I said, “What?” And then he told me what happened. He said, “Well, the Mayor came over and thanked me, made me feel so good. I’m the only one in the whole place that he stopped and had a conversation with.” So I said, “I understand, Mayor.”

Q: Well, everything has been interesting. Your stories are unique. No one has said these stories, so it’s a different perspective. Some of them, cover the same things, but in a very different way because of, as you said, the way that you knew him. How do you think he’d like to be remembered?

Bonoma: Well, I always felt that one of his biggest accomplishments was the U of I at Chicago campus. He took a lot of criticism when he displaced all the people in that area which were mostly Italians. When he had to do that,

they were all really mad at him. When the city took all that property for the university they were very angry at him. That would be like tearing Bridgeport up with all these people that have lived here so long.

Although now it's so different than it was years ago. We have every religion, nationality, race, culture etc. down here. Most of the people down here grew up here, and our parents grew up here, so whenever there was a vacant apartment, there was either somebody getting married or you knew someone who was looking for an apartment, or your friend, or one of your friends' kids was getting married and needed an apartment. That's really, I think, how this neighborhood was so close. You'd say, "Is that place for rent?" Oh no, their cousins, their aunt, a relative, someone they knew had promised it to someone already.

I think the anger and the criticism the project caused bothered him. He knew what he wanted to do over there. He wanted the U of I here for the young people of our city. Education was so important to him. I think he knew it was something that he had to do. I'm sure they looked around at different places they could put it. But he wanted it to be in the middle of the city where everybody had easy access.

It cost him some support from Italians. A lot of Italian families were unhappy. But I think that was one of the most important things he did. It

was important to him and the city. But I'm sure he had a heavy heart because he knew a lot of people over there, too.

Q: Absolutely.

I started to tell you earlier about my son David. His birthday was the 22nd of December. And, of course, everybody's down in the dumps and depressed because of the Mayor's death. We had put our tree up and other decorations. Mrs. Daley's tree was up, too, but the neighbors noticed their tree wasn't lit. And I don't remember who started it, but someone from the neighborhood said maybe out of respect for the family we shouldn't light our trees this Christmas. So you found very few Christmas trees lit down here.

So I wanted to tell David first before we did it. Because his birthday was so close to Christmas, we never wanted him to feel that it got lost because of the holiday season. We went out of our way to make his birthday special. And I said Dave, you know, the mayor passed away and everything—so we're thinking of not lighting our tree. A lot of the neighbors aren't going to light them out of respect to the Daley family and the Mayor; would that bother you with your birthday and all that? He said, "We don't even have to have a cake or celebration, Mom." Wasn't that sweet? I think he was thirteen.

Our kids really admired the Mayor. He was just such a...I don't know, he was like such a big person in this neighborhood that on the day of the funeral my son decided he was going to stand in line in front of the church on that freezing cold day of the Mayor's Mass. And I said, "Dave, you know what, you'll never get in. They already gave out more tickets than we have space for in the church, and I know many people are going to be coming just trying to get in, so I said, "You may not get in." And he said, "That's okay, I'm going to go. I'm going to wait over there in line, maybe I'll get in."

In fact, there was a picture in the *Tribune* of my son Dave in line out in front of the church with other people gathered there hoping to get in. They also knew they probably weren't going to get in. You could barely walk down 37th street. There were just mobs of people, from sidewalk to sidewalk, and David was out there. Of course I wanted to bring him in, but there were a lot of other people out there who were also trying to get in, too, so I didn't say anything to anyone. And then Tom Donovan came by and he said, 'Rose, do you need to get anybody in here?'

Paul Bonoma: Excuse me. It's 1:00. Do you girls want to take a lunch break?

Q: We're kind of almost wrapping up, so I think we're good. Thank you, though.

Paul Bonoma: You don't want a sandwich or nothing?

Q: No, no, I'm good.

Bonoma: I was telling Marie about Dave, when he was waiting to get in the church for the funeral, and we knew he couldn't get in because of the crowds.

Paul Bonoma: Yeah.

Bonoma: And Tom Donovan came back and said, you know, Rose—

Paul Bonoma: There's a picture we have from the Chicago Tribune. I don't know where it is, but it's of him waiting on the steps at the church.

Q: Oh, that's wonderful. I will look that up in the archives.

Bonoma: But anyway, Tom said, "Is there anybody out there, from your family that you would like to bring in?" I said, "Dave's out there freezing his rear end off," and he said, "Go get him." I didn't want to go out there calling somebody in, but Tom saw him and brought him in.

Paul Bonoma: Yeah.

Bonoma: Knowing the whole neighborhood, and I'm bringing my son in—I didn't want to cause a problem. So Dave got to go to the Mass thanks to Tom Donovan. His persistence paid off.

Paul Bonoma: Did you tell her about all the people in the street here?

Bonoma: Yes.

Paul Bonoma: Lined up all the way down 37th Street and also down Lowe Avenue.

Q: Wow.

Paul Bonoma: They put salamanders out in the street. You know what a salamander is? It's like a garbage can, but they build a fire in there, and they put them about every hundred feet out on the street so that people could warm up because it was below zero that night.

Bonoma: Oh, it was terrible. It was so cold. I told her they had the Salvation Army on the corners. So many people, some were our friends that were freezing, but still waited to pay their respects. People came from all over the city.

Paul Bonoma: Well, some of them were coming in here. We'd give them hot chocolate or coffee or tea, or whatever. But there were thousands of them out there in the cold. Unbelievable.

Bonoma: All night.

Paul Bonoma: Okay. I thought you guys might want a sandwich or something.

Bonoma: Maybe we'll take her to [Polo] and get a sandwich. Do you want to do that?

Paul Bonoma: Yeah.

Bonoma: It's a little neighborhood restaurant on Morgan. We could get a sandwich when we're done.

Q: Oh, well, that's very kind of you.

Bonoma: In fact the owner Dave Samber has a room dedicated to Mayor Daley there. He has a bed and breakfast above the restaurant.

Q: Oh, really?

Paul Bonoma: Yeah, yeah.

Bonoma: Dave would probably be tickled pink to meet you.

Q: Oh, okay.

Paul Bonoma: Did you tell her when I was mad at the Mayor?

Q: Maybe you should tell me that.

Paul Bonoma: *[Laughs]*

Bonoma: Yeah, you tell her.

Paul Bonoma: No.

Q: Oh, when Rose was working so many hours?

Paul Bonoma: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Yes, we did get that story. That's a great story.

Paul Bonoma: But he had that kind of a personality where one minute you're mad at him, and when he says hello you forgot that you were mad! *[Laughs]*

Q: Very charming. Very charismatic. Well, we could take a break now. Why don't we do that? And then if you can remember something else, we can add stories on. But that's such a wonderful story to end on, with your son standing out there in the cold. The image, I mean, that is really.

Paul Bonoma: Yeah.

Bonoma: Yeah.

Paul Bonoma: Oh, did you tell her the time when I was riding the back of the garbage truck and you were going up and down to...what was that?

Bonoma: In Washington? The Potomac.

Paul Bonoma: Yeah. The Potomac. You were going up and down the Potomac on a yacht. It was springtime and I'm working with Streets & San. I'm riding on the back of the garbage truck cleaning streets and corners, and she's on a yacht in Washington.

Q: [Laughs] Oh, so both sides of the city you were working.

Bonoma: No, those are those are Rich Daley stories.

Paul Bonoma: Okay.

Bonoma: We'll probably be dead before they ever get around to doing something for Rich Daley. It's too bad they wait until a person dies before they show their appreciation for all they did.

Q: Okay, and that is an important distinction that we have with these interviews.

Paul Bonoma: Oh, that's right.

Q: Especially now. And thank you for being so clear. The memories of Richard J. and Richard M., there's some overlap with people's memories, and it's important to keep that, you know.

Bonoma: I'm trying to.

Q: You've done a great job of keeping that clear. But many people have that, and you have to go back and correct the transcript.

Paul Bonoma: Yeah, I forgot that you guys are working on Richard J.

Q: Yeah. So Rose, do you have any other final thoughts you want to add right now, just to kind of wrap.

Bonoma: No, just that initially I was reluctant to do this because so many people had known him for so long in a different way. I thought those were the people that someone would want to hear from, not me. But I was just so lucky and so honored to have worked for him, and humbled by him even asking me, really. I never thought that I would be offered one of the top secretarial jobs, I think you could say, in the city, and that he would choose me. And volunteer me for other things. I remember the archdiocese decided every parish should have a school board.

So our church had a parish meeting to establish a school board and were talking about who should be on it, and they decided that initially they would appoint people to the board and then later on, we would have elections. It was decided we needed a secretary to keep track of everything, and take minutes. And the Mayor said, "We have the number one secretary in the city here, and you're asking about a secretary? That's Rose's job." So here I got another job. I come home and I said to

my husband, "Oh God, you're not going to be happy now. I was just appointed secretary of the new school board."

Bonoma: I was really honored that I was chosen to work with him and that he was persistent and asked more than once. He knew I was a legal secretary. And he once said to me that when he went to De La Salle—I don't know if this is so—but he did tell me that he took a shorthand class because he thought it would help him take notes in college. Well, I hope I was of some help to the project.

Q: It was just wonderful. I can't thank you enough.

Bonoma: If you think of anything else, or if you come across something that you would want to ask me, please feel free to call me.

[End of recording]