

**SARASOTA COUNTY WATER ATLAS  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
NEW COLLEGE OF FLORIDA — FALL 2013**

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*Sandra Sims Terry was born and raised in Laurel, Florida. She is the Executive Director of the Laurel Civic Association and works tirelessly for her community at the Sandra*

*Sims Terry Community Center.*

**Interviewee:** Sandra Sims Terry

**Date of Interview:** November 8, 2013

**Interviewer:** Jessica Wopinski



**Wopinski:** So to start off, would you like to introduce yourself?

**Terry:** I'm Sandra Terry, Executive Director of Laurel Civic Association. Born and raised.

**Wopinski:** So what do you have there? Photos?

**Terry:** This is my mom's little box that she sometimes pulls out with old photos in it.

**Wopinski:** Who are the photos mostly of?

**Terry:** Oh everybody. People in the community, my sisters and brothers, my grandmother, my granddaddy. Real old, old pictures of some from the turpentine still, and Caspersen Beach.

**Wopinski:** Where's Caspersen Beach?

**Terry:** In Venice.

**Wopinski:** Oh, is that the closest beach to here?

**Terry:** No, Caspersen is the one where the pier is; the one by the golf course. It used to be designated as the "black beach."

**Wopinski:** Yeah, I was going to ask about that. I think that's closer by me in Sarasota. The only one was like in Anna Marina.

**Terry:** Well people from Sarasota used to come down here. Well, the African-American people used to come down here. I mean there's two beaches between here and Caspersen, but you know, we weren't allowed.

**Wopinski:** Do you think that affected how often your parents or you went to the beach?

**Terry:** Not really.

**Wopinski:** Would you go very often?

**Terry:** We used to go to the beach all the time. It was wonderful, it was rustic, it was natural. Not like now. It's got a pier, and they're taking away the best parts of the beaches.

**Wopinski:** What are the best parts of the beaches?

**Terry:** Well the best part for me was a big old tree that had fallen down on the beach, and it was a big tree so it was like a big bench. You could go under it, and sit on top of it. You know, and there was a lot of beach, there was no erosion. So it was a whole different beach than it is now.

**Wopinski:** Why do you think they removed the tree?

**Terry:** Well when the beaches started eroding, and I guess I don't know what they were doing. The beach kind of came up to where the tree was, because the tree used to be a long ways from the shoreline, but then when the beaches started eroding, the beach was probably where that tree was. And then they built you know, Sharky's, and they've got the Coast Guard thing down there.

**Wopinski:** It's interesting to see that happen all over Sarasota beaches, because the vegetation, trees, and plants are what keep the beach from eroding.

**Terry:** Right.

**Wopinski:** I guess it looks nicer to tourists...

**Terry:** Well we didn't have jetties and piers, and docks, and all that stuff back then. Everything was bushes. I mean that's why it was just natural. Nobody had ever done anything to it or built anything on it, so it was just all natural.

**Wopinski:** Would you say that there's a lot more traffic of boats going through there?

**Terry:** Oh, I'm sure. Well there's a whole lot more people here now. You know, everybody has a boat. I don't think the boats are causing the erosion. They don't come that close to shore. But no, it's just the people; there used to be nobody. We went down the beach and down the shoreline, and there was a lot of water down here. *A lot of water.* Now basically the only way you can get to it is if you have a boat or if you own land. A long time ago it was just vacant land,

so you just walked across and fished, but you can't get to it now because it's private property. It was probably private property then, but who cared? There were no houses on it.

**Wopinski:** Has that restricted people from fishing?

**Terry:** It has. My poor mother went to her grave wanting to find some place to fish, but she couldn't go where she used to go. I mean she was 91 so she was really used to going to the places where there was nothing, but you can't do that now. I mean like Eagle Point, I know somebody who lives there and I took her out there a few years ago, because she hadn't been since she was a teenager. She used to work out there when she was a teenager, and she wanted to see it, because you pass by it, but it's private so you couldn't go in. I took her out there and we walked around and she got to look at it, but you know, it's just the way it is when people buy land. It's their land, and you know now if you don't have a boat, there's not much fishing you can do. The county bought the property on the river, and it's all fenced off.

**Wopinski:** Why do you think they fenced that off?

**Terry:** Because it's a park now, and to keep the cars out. When you keep the cars out, you keep the older people out, and you keep the people out who can't walk that far. So that's what happened to a lot of people; they can't walk a couple of blocks. That doesn't sound like a long ways, but it is if you can't walk that far.

**Wopinski:** Have you seen in your lifetime, would you say, a lot of people sustaining themselves through fishing?

**Terry:** Oh yeah. Fishing and hunting, I mean that's the way you lived. You could always fish. I mean we had a neighbor across the street from us, and he would walk down to the trestle, because the railroad track was there. He would walk down there to the trestle where the Dona Bay bridge is now, and he could only carry two or three fish back because they were like this (gestures arm's length). I mean huge fish. Just gigantic fish, and these were Sheephead that were this big, and [drum \*indistinguishable]. Oh my goodness, it was just amazing.

**Wopinski:** Does anyone find fish like that anymore?

**Terry:** You've got to go way out to find fish like that. You might luck out on some pretty big ones down at the trestle now, but there are so many oyster beds that are so high, and there are so many oyster beds. The only place the water's deep now is just right in the middle, and that's where the Sheephead will feed around the pilings and stuff. But they're not like they used to be. I mean we're talking BIG fish. People look at pictures now, and they think they've been Photoshopped. That's how big the fish were. Seriously! (laughs)

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**Wopinski:** Do you think that there's maybe less fish, or the water levels are lower, or why is that?

**Terry:** I don't think there's less fish, I think maybe they've migrated to different spots because most of the water around here... there's always a bunch of boat traffic, and people don't like not fishing with nets and stuff, but when you do that you catch everything not just what you're after.

**Wopinski:** Do you see people doing that a lot?

**Terry:** No, the only thing you could probably do that now with is mullet. But I don't know.

**Wopinski:** Do people still collect oysters a lot?

**Terry:** Not too much because they're full of oil and gas and stuff. That was what we used to do. We would walk down to the trestle, and I never took my hot sauce, I just got the oysters and ate them like that, but my sisters and brothers, they would walk down and you'd take your hot sauce with you, and you sat there and ate oysters all day. I mean the oyster beds are still there, but there's so much boat traffic that it's full of oil and residue, and gas stuff, and whatever. So now I don't think anybody eats the oysters down there anymore.

**Wopinski:** That's so gross.

**Terry:** That was our daily thing; you just went down there, and got oysters.

**Wopinski:** So how has that affected what people eat around here?

**Terry:** Most of the people here, especially like this building here—all the kids we have in this program now—this building was here when they were born. This building only got here in 1993. So we're at the point now where all the kids that come here think this building's always been here, because it's always been here all their lives. So people still fish, but they don't fish to eat. They fish for recreation, and if they catch fish, fine, if not you go to Publix (laughs). I think the charter boat people, that's their livelihood, but whether people catch fish, they're still going to get paid. I don't think people fish to live like they used to, to feed their families.

**Wopinski:** I wonder if people have to spend more time at work now that they have to buy their food instead of taking time to catch it for free.

**Terry:** I'm sure. We've come now to the generation where, and I always laugh when I tell people this, when I see the commercials on TV where they have the ready-made sauce that you just pour over the meat. These people don't know how to make gravy, so they buy it, they don't even know you can make gravy at home. You know, this is the generation where we are, and it's like you've got the little thing with the coffee in it, so you don't know how to measure, because you don't even know what a quarter cup is. So you can't measure and make coffee. People don't

know how to cook. When they go to the grocery store, a lot of them really don't know how to shop, and they don't go anywhere near the fresh vegetables and things you have to cook. I don't know what's going to happen, because I call myself, I say I'm old, but I'm really young in the circle that I run in because I'm the baby of my family, but I'm probably the last generation of us baby-boomers that cook.

**Wopinski:** Wow.

**Terry:** That cooks, or actually saw somebody cook. My kids laugh when I tell them, when you're frying chicken or something, I say, "Chicken will talk to you. Listen to it. It'll tell you when it's done." My grandkids just laugh. (Laughs) But it does! It talks to you. It tells you when it's done. I had to teach myself to cook, but I did that.

**Wopinski:** Why haven't the younger generations learned to cook?

**Terry:** They didn't have to. I didn't have to cook, my mother cooked, and you weren't allowed in the kitchen. That's the way she was. She didn't want anybody in her kitchen, and she cooked. And for a long time there was nobody home, but just she and myself, because my sisters and brothers were older, so she cooked. I didn't have to cook. I baked a lot. I like to bake, so I would bake cakes and do that kind of stuff. But as far as knowing where an egg comes from and knowing where milk comes from, you know, and fresh vegetables, and real rice, and how to cook that, you know that kind of stuff, I was always around that. We were poor as church mice, so I remember the days when you put sugar water on corn flakes because you didn't have milk. That was normal, and I was a picky eater. I think about my poor mother... she had to love me.

**Wopinski:** (Laughs)

**Terry:** (Laughs) I'm serious, there were some things that I didn't like. We were poor; I didn't know we were poor. I mean I was skinny as a rail and didn't eat that much anyway. The only cereal I liked was Rice Krispies, I hated Cheerios, I hated corn flakes (laughs). I was so funny. I wouldn't eat mayonnaise; I was probably grown when I ate mayonnaise. I never ate mustard. You know, it was like gosh; she probably should have thrown me out the back door or something.

**Wopinski:** (Laughs)

**Terry:** When I think about that stuff, it's so funny. We were poor, but she cooked, you couldn't go to the store and buy anything. Until the day she died, she would not have anything to do with a Chef Boyardee can. You don't eat that (laughs). You have to cook!

**Wopinski:** That stuff is so much more expensive, and bad for you... there's so much salt and everything you don't need.

**Terry:** Oh the salt, oh my goodness. The salt! I don't see how people eat it. Especially frozen

stuff, it's crazy.

**Wopinski:** It's gross. Something I've been seeing a lot lately now that I've been more aware of it, is how much sugar is in everything... Oh it's foul. We should not be drinking soda or having all these pastries, and sugary sweet things.

**Terry:** Right! People always tease me when I tell them I don't eat pork, but I stopped eating pork in my late twenties, because I figured out that every time I put a piece in my mouth, all my energy left me. I did that myself; I'll do stuff like that, and figure out what's going on. It's frozen stuff... when I turn over a package, and every single one says 40% sodium... people shouldn't buy frozen stuff. You know, it's convenient for some people, but I just don't want it.

**Wopinski:** I've noticed that there's a lot of rural space in Laurel. I'm sure there's a lot more people now than there has been in the past, but there's still a lot of land here comparatively to other places in Sarasota...

**Terry:** Oh, yeah.

**Wopinski:** Why don't you think people have very many gardens, and livestock, and that sort of thing?

**Terry:** You know as poor as we were, we never had a garden. After I got older, you know my mother planted a little garden, but she was working too hard. Everybody was working. Everybody was going to school. I mean the time wasn't like this; it was the regular time. We were bused to Sarasota for school, so by the time we got home it was dark. But I don't know, people are just getting into gardening, and even me, I've got a garden at the house, and a garden in the community garden, but I guess I just never had time to do it, but I enjoy taking people to the community garden and having a marvelous carrot with the top on it, coming out of the ground. To see where Brussels sprouts grow, "Oh my gosh, that's what they look like?" Yes it is. Then they see the broccoli, and the cauliflower, it's amazing to them to see that stuff because you don't see it grow. There's really no reason for you to see it grow I guess, especially if you live in a city.

**Wopinski:** It's so strange. I grew up in a really rural area too and we were always living on or near farms, and that sort of thing. We always had gardens because we had to, otherwise we wouldn't be eating much produce, but yeah it's really interesting to see how that's changed. To see people just having no idea where their food comes from.

**Terry:** Right up the road almost that whole piece of property coming from right there up to [U.S. Highway] 41 was a farm.

**Wopinski:** Really?

**Terry:** Yeah.

**Wopinski:** And it's not anymore?

**Terry:** No, it was strawberries. I remember when we walked home there was this big old strawberry farm and then on the other side, I guess I was little, and I really don't remember, on the other side it was vegetables. He had a vegetable stand right there on 41. Everybody had farms, so I guess you didn't have to have gardens really. You didn't have to because there were so many other people doing it.

**Wopinski:** I wonder where all the farms have gone?

**Terry:** They've moved out east even down here they were out east. Some of them still are out there. But people have their own gardens now. You can grow things in a pot; you can even have your own garden. You don't need that big of a space for a garden.

**Wopinski:** Especially now with things like hydroponics, you don't even need land outdoors.

**Terry:** My mother always had a garden in her yard after we were all gone. I still plant her garden, I just planted it a couple of weeks ago.

**Wopinski:** What are you planting in it?

**Terry:** Well she always had greens, collards, and mustards, and I turned her onto bok choy, and she fell in love with bok choy. (Laughs) She never pronounced it right, but she liked it. She would eat that, and she loved it man.

**Wopinski:** You have a lot of programs here where you are feeding children. How did that start?

**Terry:** That started way back in the early '90s when we were doing our homework program. The feeding program started back really when we moved the program in here. The homework program started in '92, then we moved in here, and were getting a lot of kids that I knew weren't going to eat when they went home. So we started giving them snacks. This program wasn't funded, so we had to do what we could, and then we started trying to give them hot meals. Then the food bank started helping us with plates and forks, and other food, and whatever they could give us so that we could make a meal. But it started basically because kids were hungry, and I knew it. I knew they weren't going to eat when they went home.

**Wopinski:** Why weren't they eating when they got home?

**Terry:** Well a lot of them were living with their grandparents, some of them were living with parents whose situations in which they probably would need food when they got home, and you know, it was just the way it was. That's the way it is with a lot of kids, and people don't realize it.

Some of these kids would come here. One of the other reasons we did it was because lunch was at 10:30 at school.

**Wopinski:** How are they supposed to last all day like that?

**Terry:** Exactly! They ate at 10:30 so by the time they got to us at 3:00 they were hungry, and I knew it. So that was one of the other reasons too. We were trying to tide them over because if they went home, and they didn't get supper, they didn't eat again until 10:30 the next morning.

**Wopinski:** Did they have breakfast at school?

**Terry:** They do have breakfast at school, but your bus has to run early enough for you to get to the school and eat. If it doesn't and you get there in time enough to go to class, you can't go to the cafeteria. That was happening too.

**Wopinski:** Why do you think that a lot of parents aren't able to provide for their children?

**Terry:** That goes back generations. Right now it's like three or four generations. I know way back when I was in school, that was a long time ago, I had kids in my 8th grade class, especially boys, who couldn't read. There just used to be that attitude in school that you just keep passing them on. Back then when you got to be 16, you could quit school. Well they'd quit school at 16 so then they got a minimum wage job, and they'd start having kids that they can't afford... I forgot the question now.

**Wopinski:** I was asking why do you think parents aren't able to provide for their children.

**Terry:** I think a lot of parents don't know how to provide for their children because they weren't provided for either, you know, it's generational. The knowledge gets passed down, and you take care of your kids the way the way your parents took care of you. I know people don't like hearing that, but that's true no matter what end of the economic spectrum you're on. A long time ago, I think people used to live with mom and dad; it was nothing to have three generations in a house. Some of that stuff you didn't have to do. You didn't have to make sure that the toothpaste and the toilet paper was there, and you didn't have to cook the meal, you didn't have to buy the food, you didn't have to pay the rent, you didn't have to pay the mortgage, but now you've got to get out there on your own, and you've got to do all of that stuff. Some of them don't know how to do it, and they don't make enough money to do it. Then there are a lot of things that some of the certain generations think are more important than taking care of children.

**Wopinski:** I'm almost afraid to ask what you mean by that (laughs).

**Terry:** Well you know, you must get your hair done, you must get your nails done, you must have a big TV, you *have* to have cable now, you can't live without it. When I was growing up, we didn't even have TV! (Laughs). But there's just things that a lot of people think are important,



and they're not. When I tell people that we were the poorest things in the county, and we were, we were poor, I mean we were *poor*, we had nothing, but we always had each other. We always had, this sounds corny, but we always had love. If you would see my mother, you would think she was raised by Queen Elizabeth. This was just the way it was. It was just normal. This was normal for me, and this was normal for her, and all the people around here. The elderly people, you would go in their houses, and they'd have the doilies here, their houses were always spotless, you sat down at the table, and you ate at the table. You always did that, there were just things that that generation grew up with that this generation doesn't do. A lot of the younger people, maybe they don't have time to sit down at a table every day and eat. Some people think that all children go home and have a meal waiting for them, and they sit down at a dinner table, and they eat with their families. Well that's really not true. Some people don't even have dinner tables because they don't use them.

**Wopinski:** You said that when you grew up, you always had a sense of love and community; how do you think that has affected your life growing up and what you've done with this community?

**Terry:** Well one thing that was always preached to us was to never envy anybody, anything. Whatever you wanted, you needed to work for. If you couldn't work for it and pay for it, then you didn't need it. We always went to school every single day, we were all in the top of our class, we were called, you know when you're going to school, you're called one of the "smart ones." To this day people, I don't know why, think it's a bad thing. I don't know why. I look at some of my friends and some people, and I always tell them that even though I don't know what they think I was doing as they were having their lives, my life was parallel, it was just at a different address. My grandmother was like my mother, I mean she was strict. She was really strict, and that's just the way it was. You just didn't envy anybody, you worked for what you got, you appreciated what you had, and you know, people thought we were rich. But you don't have to be rich to be smart, and I try to tell the kids that, you don't have to be rich to be smart. You don't have to be rich to be clean and well dressed, and well behaved; you don't have to be rich to do that stuff. You don't have to be rich to get a job. I couldn't go to college because we weren't rich. I might have been smarter than the other people, but I didn't have any money so I couldn't go to college.

**Wopinski:** How do you think that affects kids nowadays that having a college degree is so essential to having a good job?

**Terry:** Well when I think about college, I have to think about my sisters and brothers and a lot of people that I know who never went to college. I think it affects some of the kids these days, because I was on my job 32 years when I retired, and I had very good benefits. My sister worked in the school system for 31 years. My other brothers, they ended up going to the same company I did, and they both retired from there, which those companies aren't here anymore. You don't get

what we had. I was talking to somebody the other day, and I'm like, man I went and paid \$22 for a prescription the other day. I've never even paid for my insurance, let alone for that. That's gone. That's gone. Just like they said, you can't expect to go to a company and expect to stay there 30 years now, and leave with a pension and insurance, and all of that stuff. It's just not there, and as far as having to have a college degree, I kind of haven't seen that do many people that much good lately.

**Wopinski:** Definitely not. (Laughs)

**Terry:** You know, I will still try to help kids go to college and I think it's important, because right now after school, after you get out of high school, what kind of job are you going to get?

**Wopinski:** Yeah, that's sort of the strange predicament that we've gotten into; if you get out of high school, you can't really get a great job. There are definitely exceptions to that, I do have friends that have gotten because of connections or something like that, they've gotten great jobs. But then if you do go to college, you've put yourself in all of this debt, but then you're not getting these jobs that you're keeping for 30 years that would allow you to be able to pay off this debt.

**Terry:** Exactly.

**Wopinski:** You're lucky if you're getting any job at all that's much more than minimum wage.

**Terry:** Yeah.

**Wopinski:** I mean \$10 an hour is more than minimum wage, but it's not enough to pay off your student loans.

**Terry:** It's really crazy. I don't know what's going to happen, but you also get to that thing of the maturity, because when I was growing up, when I was 12, I was probably as mature as any 25-year old right now.

**Wopinski:** (Laughs) You think so?

**Terry:** I know it.

**Wopinski:** (Laughs)

**Terry:** But you know it's like people don't reason anymore. They don't use common sense, and maybe they never learned how to do that.

**Wopinski:** Do you think that says something more about you or more about 25-year olds nowadays?

**Terry:** (Laughs) You know, I look back and I look at how I raised my kids, and I'm like... my god. When I sent my kids off to college it's like... when I got married, I had never been left home alone. (Laughs) There's a whole generation of us baby boomers that kind of put that little cocoon around our kids, and we did good for them, but then we realize, oh my goodness, I'm getting ready to throw them right out there, and they're not prepared for that, because we didn't raise them that way. They aren't prepared for that world out there, and I think that's one of the things. We just care too much. We've just protected them so much. But then I was just like that too. It's just a different world, it's just a whole different world, it really is.

**Wopinski:** Yeah, how do you prepare someone for something that is so vastly different than your own experience?

**Terry:** I was talking to somebody yesterday about Vietnam and the armed forces and stuff, and you know way back when they started drafting people for Vietnam, they were taking 18-year old kids who had been raised that you don't fight, you don't hit people, you should always be nice, always forgive. They took these people who had been raised like this, and then you put a gun in their hand and you say kill somebody. Then they did it, and when they came back, you ignored them.

**Wopinski:** Yeah, it's awful.

**Terry:** You know how many people are walking around right now messed up still from Vietnam, let alone the other ones. But this is where America has to kind of... I don't know what we need to do, but you can't raise these children to be these caring, wonderful, never hit, never whatever, and then you just throw them to the wolves.

**Wopinski:** Yeah, and it's interesting now to see the changing times. We are still in war, but it's a different kind of war.

**Terry:** Where they really hate us.

**Wopinski:** Yeah, and a lot of the people who are signing up for the military are doing jobs that are so strangely similar to sitting in front of a computer and playing video games, and that's something they've been experiencing their whole life, but now they're getting paid to do it, and now it's real. But it's also somewhat virtual at the same time, with this strange drone war.

**Terry:** But we also raised this whole generation of people like me, and the generation above me; they're true Americans. They really care. We really believe that it's worth fighting for. We believe that. It's not something that somebody told us to say; we've been raised to believe that. And they believe it, and they go over there. It's just amazing that anybody would just go over there again, because they believe. They think this country is worth fighting for, and that's what they do. It's just crazy. That's why I take it personally when people don't vote.

**Wopinski:** Really?

**Terry:** I take it very personally when people litter. Seriously, you have no idea how personally I take it (laughs). But I do, I take it personally when you don't take advantage of everything you have here in America.

**Wopinski:** Do you know what I've been seeing a lot of lately is ,that for people in my generation, there is this call as a form of protest to not vote, because a lot of people believe that this two party system isn't representative. All of these corrupt things are happening in the government and a lot of people feel like as an individual their vote doesn't matter. What do you think about that?

**Terry:** Well I'm one of those people that if I see something that needs to be changed, I normally go about changing it.

**Wopinski:** Yeah? (Laughs)

**Terry:** (Laughs) There's that one saying that you have to be in it to win it, well you have to do something to change things. You can't just talk about it. You can't just talk about what somebody else is doing that you don't like, or the system, because that's kind of where I started... there were things that couldn't be right. They just couldn't be right. So you had to tell me why they were that way, and if you couldn't tell me then I'd set about trying to change them. Which is why people don't like to see me coming (laughs), but that's what you have to do, because there's nowhere that said that everything that's the way it is is right and it can't be changed. It affects people. These people that we elect are human beings, they don't know everything. They can't know everything so you've got to tell them if something's wrong, and go about trying to change it. You've got to be involved, you've got to be involved.

**Wopinski:** I think a lot of people kind of aren't involved, and I'm not really sure where this comes from, but I think that so many people are just apathetic.

**Terry:** And they've never been involved, and they don't know anybody that's ever been involved, and they truly don't believe they can change things. To give you an example, before the building was here, that pavilion over there had light bulbs and one little old lady, if she was still alive she'd be like 101. I went out there and she was saying something about the lights, and I'm like well, "If the lights don't work, why didn't somebody say something?" Being 101, she came from way back, and she said, "This white man that was out here told me that they were never going to put any more light bulbs in there." What!? And this was just somebody in a truck that worked for parks and rec that did that. I said, "He said what?" (Laughs). "He said they were never going to put any more light bulbs in there again." and I'm like, well you know me. So of course I was on the phone calling up somebody and I told the guy that came out, he said, "He told her what?" He said, "We replace more light bulbs on the beach and everywhere else, but

these have probably only been replaced once a year here.” So they put the light bulb back and they put the cage over it like they do everywhere else. But it’s like, that’s the way she was raised. She came from that era, which was kind of two minutes out of slavery, because that’s how old she was, and she was used to that. I mean it could have been a white duck that told her that and she would have believed it. (Laughs) because that’s just where she was coming from. I didn’t come from there (laughs). I could have believed her, but there are things that aren’t right, and they’re just not right so you have to change them.

**Wopinski:** Is that something you think that you emphasize with the students and children that come into the community center?

**Terry:** The one thing that we do with the children and everybody is... I probably mentioned this once or twice since I’ve been talking to you, but I don’t do colors. I don’t see people in color. I’ve never done that. When I was coming up in my house, I never ever heard anybody refer to anyone by their color. Ever. So I wasn’t raised that way. This program is probably the most diverse program in the county, because we don’t see anybody in color. You’re just a human being, and if you see these kids around here, they may not know what I’m saying or how I verbalize it, but when they come in here, they don’t see color. They don’t see that. They know they’re coming to a safe place, and Mr. John’s going to help me, and we’re going to do this and that. They don’t even think about that because we don’t do that. That’s never been done here, that’s never going to be done as long as I’m here.

**Wopinski:** Yeah, that’s essential.

**Terry:** Yeah, it can’t be done. You just can’t do that. People come in here and it’s so funny when they come in, and the reason I show all the pictures and stuff to people, because I want them to see whom we serve. They come in and they think that everybody looks like me; well everybody doesn’t look like me here. We don’t care and we don’t try to make them look like me, they’re just here. That’s part of me, that’s how I was raised. My father, he had a church in Fort Meade, and he started the Alliance over there with all of the churches no matter what, and that was one thing that was his life’s work. He was colorblind too. I was colorblind, and it’s just something that never came up. I always tell people, “Man, if I could be as strong as my mother,” because even when things were like the way they were when I was growing up, when I was little, that was when the signs were up on the water fountains, and you know you were supposed to sit at the back of the bus, you know all that stuff, she refused. I saw her; she always had her dignity, always. I can read, and I knew what the signs said, but it didn’t affect me the way it would affect, I don’t know, whoever. It was there. It’s not that I didn’t come through that era, and I didn’t see what happened, and things didn’t happen to me that I knew were wrong. I mean not even that long ago, even right here there were stores across the street, and people wouldn’t believe the stuff that I went through. But I would never blame it on race; I would always blame it on your stupidity. You know, they were just ignorant, and they were rude, and they were stupid.

**Wopinski:** I think some people are taught to see those things along race lines.

**Terry:** Yeah, it was awful. Places like Eckerd's... oh my god, that was the worst place on earth, they didn't even care.

**Wopinski:** What is Eckerd's?

**Terry:** Oh, you don't even know (laughs). Eckerd's is the forerunner to CVS. They used to be across the way. Oh my god, they were just the most racist, they were awful. And you know it was like they trained the employees to be that way. I don't want to be mean, but when I saw some of these companies go under, I was like yeah.... maybe it has something to do with your overall corporate policies.

**Wopinski:** How could a business like that stay open in an area where there are a lot of African-Americans?

**Terry:** Well, they were national, so they were everywhere.

**Wopinski:** Oh, and those were their company-wide policies?

**Terry:** Yeah, they had to be. How else would somebody scream at me, and throw money at me when they should have been giving me the right change back anyway with a line of people behind me in the store? I mean some of the things... I could tell you stories (laughs), but no, when some of these companies went under... they had to go under. You could not have a corporate policy like that and survive. It was just too awful.

**Wopinski:** Do you still see some of that today, even if it's not as blatantly there?

**Terry:** Well it's still out there, and it's probably mostly out there when you go into stores and they have older workers. The one that gets me is I'll go somewhere with my sister who's like eight years older than me, and they'll say, "Oh, thank you, girls..." and I'm like, "Where do you see any girls? Do I look like a girl?" Now that could be a compliment, but I don't think it is. It's not a compliment to me to call me a girl, because I'm not a girl (laughs).

**Wopinski:** Yeah that's so condescending.

**Terry:** Yes it is! And then sometimes I'll pay attention to what you say to the person in front of me and the person behind me and, "So you didn't call them a girl, so why did you call me a girl?" That's one of the things that's one of my really bad pet peeves. I think I'm going to print some cards up. I told myself one time that I was going to print up some cards that I was going to leave with them, and tell them, "The next time you see a 70-year old girl, will you let me know, okay?" (Laughs). No I'm being bad now, but it really just irks ya when they do that.

**Wopinski:** Have you ever been confrontational in those kinds of situations?

**Terry:** I'm usually not, because people are so stupid. I think the one time in another store that kind of went under, I was standing in line and some people behind me pushed their cart into me. Now, like you said, I'm not confrontational, and you know, I pushed the cart off of me, and I'm like, "Don't do that." So they did it again! So I took it and I pushed it back again, and I said, "Don't you hit me with that cart." And the lady, you won't be able to use this, the lady looked me straight in my face, and said "What's the matter, nigger, you got a knife?" Now me, I've never been called that word, maybe... well, I had never been called that word in my life, but that wasn't the problem. The problem was that the cashier was there, the manager was there, neither one of them said anything or did anything.

**Wopinski:** That's awful.

**Terry:** That was probably about the worst thing. There were other things that happened, but I just had never seen that kind of venom. From then on I hated people with Michigan tags (laughs).

**Wopinski:** (Laughs) where do you think that comes from? I wonder how people develop that kind of hatred?

**Terry:** Well a lot of people moving into Florida were hoodwinked into thinking that the only people that were in Florida were all Caucasian. I think they were really hoodwinked into thinking that, and then when they got to Florida, they figured out that, oh my god, there aren't just white people here. And they didn't appreciate that.

**Wopinski:** I wonder if they're trying to get away from Detroit or something (laughs).

**Terry:** Well I said Michigan because they had a Michigan tag, and when I got out of the store, they were out there, and I kind of followed them for a couple miles to make them think I was gonna... do something. Oh I was so mad.

**Wopinski:** (Laughs) oh, I bet you scared them.

**Terry:** I was so mad that day. Florida is a different place. I mean we have people here from everywhere, but the one thing about Florida, and I always say this, even on my Facebook when I'm doing stuff, and I'm like, I don't care how many bad people you run into, the good people will always outnumber them. If that were not true, you would not be sitting here. They will outweigh the bad. The people who have been in my journey, it's like my path has just been directed to all of these good people, all of these good-hearted people, all of these wonderful people. I have a really bad habit of not being able to be around people and know people and connect with people without really connecting with people. I can't treat people like a tree... they're people! I get connected to them! I guess that's a really bad habit with me, but that's just what I do.

**Wopinski:** I don't think that's so much of a bad habit (laughs).

**Terry:** I know! (Laughs)

**Wopinski:** Maybe a time-consuming one (laughs).

**Terry:** I like people! (Laughs) and I've just been blessed to have all of these good people in my path.

**Wopinski:** Well it seems like, at least from what I've seen, that you've paid that forward (laughs) in many ways.

**Terry:** Oh it's just amazing. I always tell people, I don't even like to think about those couple of incidents maybe in my life. My niece was in college and she was doing this paper. She called me up and she had to ask people to tell them about something really bad that had happened. And I couldn't really think of anything.

**Wopinski:** That's very lucky.

**Terry:** Well you know, I was serious. Even though my parents were divorced when I was two, I was close to both of them, and I had my grandmother, and I still had all of these people. Now when kids' parents get divorced, it is really a split. It wasn't for me, because I was too young. My older sisters and brothers, they had had two parents and they knew what that was, but I had never had that. I just had everybody (laughs). It's interesting.

**Wopinski:** Do you think that was maybe influenced by living in such a small area; that everyone just was here?

**Terry:** I think when I was here as a child, there weren't very many children here. There was a lot of, well I called them elderly, but they were probably in their 40s. No, they weren't in their 40s, they were in their 30s, now that I think about it. But there were people that were older than them, so I guess a lot of the people around me were in their 20s, 30s, or 40s. Of course we used to think that was old. It was the people, god they were so smart. They had businesses and created businesses, and they had the work ethic. When they saw things that needed to be done, they did them. They knew how to do things. They came from good strong stock. That's why when sometimes when people meet me, and they want to know how I got this way, I'm like "well, you know, I came this way." I wasn't broken and somebody fixed me. Sometimes that's what people think. Everybody thinks, well for somebody like me, there had to be something wrong with you, and somebody taught you, and fixed you, but no, I came like this. (Laughs) this is the way I came! These were the people that I grew up around. I grew up around some very intelligent people, and what I do now is what I saw when I was growing up. Like I said, I don't know anybody's home that I'd go into that wasn't spotless. I didn't know people who didn't go to work every single day. They dressed well; some wouldn't go out of the house without being dressed



up. You know, we had three meals a day. My mother got up every morning and cooked breakfast before we went to school, and we had to catch a bus to go to Newtown to go to school. She got up and cooked breakfast, and when we got home from school, she had dinner ready. Sometimes we had to wait because she got home late. Maybe we had to wait 30 minutes sometimes for the rice to soak, and I'd think it would be forever for that rice to soak (laughs). It's just normal; that's what I know as normal. I've never known not normal. That's all I've ever known.

**Wopinski:** Why do you think there are so many people who don't know that as normal?

**Terry:** I don't know. People used to really come down on me when I said, "I just want these kids to know what normal is." Somebody in a meeting stood up, of course sometimes I'm bad about all these letters behind people's names of their degrees, and he stood up, and he's like, "What do you mean by normal? Normal is different for everybody." I'm like, "No, there is a normal that everybody should know." He knew what I was talking about, but there is a normal. That's why I started taking them to the opera, because I wanted them to see that what they see on TV was real. How would they know? They wouldn't know that. Somebody went on a field trip one time, and two of my nieces were on the trip, and one of them was bullying the other one, and I laid into her, and a parent goes, "Oh my goodness, you're fair with everybody!" I'm like, "Yes I am. I don't care who they are."

**Wopinski:** Fair with everybody? Isn't that what fair means?

**Terry:** (Laughs) but people are not fair with everybody. I don't care who somebody is that comes here. I'm sorry, I don't care what their parents do or have done. I don't care, they will never be treated differently here. Never. You can't do that to kids, you just can't. But my normal, a lot of these kids will never have my normal. They won't have my mother, but we'll give them as much of my normal as we can. I set out that as one of my goals: to get them off of the street where they live. It must have been 10 years or so, I was telling somebody that most of the kids who live in Sarasota County don't go to the beach; they've never seen it. He said, "What do you mean?" I say, "How would they get there? Who takes them there? They don't know what the beach is. They don't go to the beach." He was like, "Oh-ha-ha." And they don't! He didn't know what I was talking about! But they don't go, how would they get to the beach? They don't even go to the grocery store. That was another thing, I had teenagers, and we had a party. I made them go to the grocery store and buy the stuff. They were in there looking around... No one... Who takes their kids to the grocery store?

**Wopinski:** My mother did, which I'm always grateful for.

**Terry:** I went shopping with my mother too, but it wasn't like going to Publix now. You know, it's like kids don't go normal places like the grocery store or the beach. "They don't get to go to the beach?" You know, "That's Florida: the beach," but the kids who live in Florida don't ever get to go to the beach. They don't! They never get to go to the beach. I wanted them to see things

that are normal. I wanted to take them to buffets. That's a big deal. I mean you can get everything you want, as long as you eat it. So, it's just... it's stuff like that, you've got to expose them to that kind of stuff. That's all I wanted. I took my kids everywhere. We were poor, so we took in everything that was free. You had to. We just did that. Every toy they ever got was an educational toy. They've got some good educational toys out there. Yeah, I just want the kids to know what normal is. They don't have to do normal, but they need to know what it is. They really do. I mean people need to know. This is one of my big things, that everybody's not okay. They're not. They're just not okay. You don't even know what these kids have to go home to. They look normal. I mean we've got some smart kids in here. Everybody, I guess expects them not to be smart. They can be smart, and not be rich. They can be smart and go home to hell every night. You've got to at least show them what normal is, at least so they know.

**Wopinski:** What is it like providing this place for kids to kind of grow up?

**Terry:** And they have! (Laughs) A lot of them have grown up here. I'm really this strange bird. I am really strange—you know that. I've just always been, I don't know if it's curious or interested or... somebody at my work one time called me "a perfectionist." And I'm like... "What?" She said it like it was a dirty word. And I'm like, "Oh my god..." She really called me that! Oh my goodness. I just want things to be right, and good, and I can't help it. (Laughs) But doing some of the stuff we've done is amazing. It's really amazing. When you run down the stuff that got done here before I retired. But you had to; you have to be there. I couldn't have done that by just sitting around waiting for somebody to do it, because nobody's ever done anything in this community that didn't come out of this community from somebody here. Nobody did anything here; it had to always come from here. You know, when I came up behind people who had it hard. I mean they really had it hard because this community just didn't matter.

So you had to be brave to go up and find somebody with a little bit of conscience. I was like Pollyanna on steroids; too stupid to know that if I pay taxes, I should be getting the same as everybody else. So I said I'm glad I was that dumb, because I'm like, "Why are you spending my tax money everywhere else, but you can't spend it here?" (Laughs) That was just funny... I just saw an opportunity when I saw this land sitting here. It's, you know, the way this journey started. The building was just because I used to go to the school board all of the time. I was always out there for my kids' school stuff, but I was just sitting there. It's funny, that piece of land out there that they're getting ready to put Chase Bank on, there was that piece and where Hess is, and somebody was trying to buy it and do something with it. The people were giving them such a hard time, and they just gave up. But if I hadn't been at that meeting that night, I wouldn't have known that. Then the wheels started turning. It just happened that the person over at parks and rec was... Everything just fell into place. It just started falling into place. I didn't know he had money to put a park in [indistinguishable] road. He said, "I can't put a park there, because the land's too expensive." So all he had to do was move it not even a mile from there to here. That's what he did and we went looking for buildings and the county was getting CDBG [Community

Development Block Grant] money, they were writing a grant to start getting money, and everything just came into place. This wasn't here originally. This was all built on for us. Which is also something extraordinary, because it hasn't been done for anybody else. Everything we do is hybrid. (Laughs) Everything we do is hybrid. It's all hybrid. Nothing is straight in the line; it's always out of the line (laughs). Yeah that's what I tell everybody.

**Wopinski:** That's good though, because... I don't know... It seems like you're making it work. (Laughs)

**Terry:** It's just like these computers. That was hybrid. When she came and talked to me, I'm like, "Well, we need to update these computers, we have seven now." That was even hybrid. "What can you pay for?" But for everything... When people come to me, we collaborate. It's always something different.

**Wopinski:** You were saying that tax money that you were paying doesn't go into...

[Interrupted]

**Wopinski:** So you were saying that you didn't think about how your paid taxes weren't showing a return in your own community. How did you kind of figure out how to deal with that? Or like... do you get government money to do some of this stuff?

**Terry:** When I talk about that stuff I'm talking about the building, and the park. Sidewalks, the drainage, the paved streets, the new streets, the water, all of that stuff was actually done with Community Development Block Grant money. It wasn't really done with tax dollars, because that's federal money. All the stuff that I got done was done mostly with the CDBG grant money. I think the first thing that was done with some of the county money, was when we built this. When it was part CDBG and part parks. That was the first that we had gotten. You know that kind of money mixed to do stuff. With me, it's like, if that's the money that I'm going to have to use, than fine I'll use it. But even if I hadn't fought for that, I wouldn't have gotten it because it still would have had to come through the county, but we are completely separate here. Everything that you see was either begged or a grant, or a donation, and we're responsible for this. We're responsible for our pens and pencils, and paper, and ink, and insurance, and all of that stuff.

**Wopinski:** Do a lot of the donations come from community members?

**Terry:** When you say community... Well my community is... I have a big community; my community is Sarasota County (laughs). The programs that we offer especially to adults are really programs helping low-income people, and it's not something that we could charge for. So you know, when you say community to me, I can say yes because I think of my community as Venice, you know, Laurel, Nokomis. That's my community, so when you say that, yes.

**Wopinski:** I guess I was kind of originally thinking of Laurel, but...

**Terry:** But most of the people we serve don't even live here. They don't live on these couple of streets, most of the people we serve. We're a nonprofit, so we can't really do that. And I've never thought like that. The people that we serve, if you're saying, "Do we get a bunch of donations from them?" Well no.

**Wopinski:** Right. Well other people living nearby... Do you think people that are making donations are coming here also?

**Terry:** You mean for services?

**Wopinski:** Yeah, I mean to take advantage of the services or use the gym or the garden, or anything like that? Or would you say that it is mostly people who aren't really involved on the day to day that donate?

**Terry:** Well it's people who don't need our services that are donating. There's some of those people I talked about before that are just in my journey, they're just good-hearted people from a church that's not one of our mission partners, and we gave them a tour, and we showed them stuff on the internet. And they were inspired, that's what she said. It's just like people donate to Red Cross don't actually use it. It's just that, we're a nonprofit, and we're just lucky enough to have people who really care about what we do. That's the mark of a good nonprofit. You just wouldn't believe some of the people that I come in contact with. They just amaze me, how good they are. I go to one of our mission partners and I have to go on and speak at least once a year. I listen to the sermon and he preaches to them that they are servants. That's what they are; they are servants. And that church believes that. That's what they do; I mean it's amazing. That's why I say the good people will always outweigh the bad people. Then of course I write grants twelve hours a day (laughs). But no, people give back, they volunteer. They do things, not that the people we serve don't do anything. It's the people that we're here to help; the reason I'm helping them is because they can't give me big donations or whatever. That's kind of why we're here.

**Wopinski:** How do you think this place affects the people who use it and their idea of community?

**Terry:** I guess the way we run the place is like one big community. Our volunteers are so committed and they really care. They either have lives that were wonderful and they appreciate that, so they want to give back, or they had lives where they understand what these kids are going through, so they want to make sure that they have a good life. The things that we do kind of make up this little tight knit community, and it's like an oasis. I always call it an oasis. You know they feel safe when they come here, and that's the way we want them to feel. It's like its own little community right in here with all of the stuff that we do. I mean if I went through the year, we start from our day of service for Martin Luther King, and we do the Black History

Month, we do an Easter egg hunt, we do the end of school thing, and in the summertime we have camp, we've got teen empowerment so our teens don't have to sit home all day doing nothing, we have Earning by Learning because we don't want them to lose anything over the summer, on the 22nd we do our annual health fair. We've got like 20 organizations coming with displays but that's when we do the USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] that day, we do extra food that day, we do the farmers market that day where we give them free vegetables. Whenever I do something like that, I like to do a lot of stuff on the same day because the people we serve, a lot of them don't have transportation. They have to find rides here. So I like to do stuff on one day so we can get them here, because that group of people doesn't have the wherewithal to get up and go somewhere every day to do something different. I don't know, I guess I watch the people in this community who were older than me, and elderly, I watched them work and I watched them do as much as they could do and when they couldn't do for themselves then here I am trying to find a way to get it done for them. That's kind of how our housing program got started. Just trying to help them stay in their houses. I don't know, I think there's something wrong with me. (Laughs)

**Wopinski:** (Laughs)

**Terry:** Seriously! I just see this stuff, and you see that this needs to be done, and you just find a way to do it. I was a pretty smart kid in school. Thinking out of the box and beyond the box was always something that I always did. So maybe that's why people picked on me so much (laughs). But I call this the little oasis. It's definitely turned into a little oasis. I mean this is a beautiful park. It's beautiful. Oh my gosh. It is really. And it's used! It is used from the pavilion to the garden to the trail. Now we've got a new person here, so we've got pickle ball, and basketball, and volleyball, and they use that. That couldn't make me any happier than to see this place used.

**Wopinski:** Yeah, it's awesome. Could you tell me a little bit about the housing program?

**Terry:** Our housing program... The city used to have a housing program, it wasn't in the county. They had a program where they rehabbed people's houses, and they actually forgave the mortgage after a certain amount of time. When the county got into that program, they started getting CDBG money, and that kind of money. That was when I had a lot of people down here who were elderly and they had been in their houses for 50 years, and they needed stuff done to them. We even had some of them that they could never fill the papers out for themselves, so we started helping people fill out the papers. Some of them couldn't read or write. That was what we were doing as far as housing, and then there were a lot of old houses down here that needed to be torn down, and then I started doing that. Well, I started burning them down in the beginning, because we couldn't afford to tear them down, so the fire department practiced on them. They would burn them down, which was great because it was cheap. Then we got into the housing program and we got qualified, and we were tearing down houses, and rehabbing houses ourselves. We rented them or would sell them. We did that from Newtown to North Port. We got

that first piece of land down at the end of the road. There were six new houses that we built down there. In order to do that we had to put the water line in. We were our own contractors on everything. We put the last piece of water line in ourselves, which did the whole community. Then we got that road put in from 41 to Church Street. We got some stuff done (laughs). We really got some stuff done. The people had to qualify for a loan for our housing program, and they had to be 80% of the median income. It got to the point where people weren't even making the money to qualify for the 80% median income to get into the houses! We were like, "this is too hard to get people into the houses." So there were some houses that we bought that were strategic to us for the neighborhood. We bought and rented three houses and four apartments that we rented. But that was a need. That's how we got into it; there was a real need. People were growing up to the point where they were getting married and they needed places to stay, and there was no place around here. It's bad like that now; we've lost a lot of our kids that grew up because there's no place for them to live. They want to live here, but there's no rentals or anything.

**Wopinski:** Where do you think they mostly go from here?

**Terry:** Oh, a bunch of them are in North Port. Well everybody's in North Port from Venice, from this area here. They're in North Port, because when North Port kind of tanked, you could go down there and get a brand new three-bedroom two-bath house for \$600 a month for rent! So everybody kind of went to North Port.

**Wopinski:** Man, that'd be nice to have rent that cheap.

**Terry:** Oh yeah, there were all kinds of houses down there, because they had built all those houses because they thought the boom was coming and it busted instead. They had brand new houses sitting down there, never been lived in.

**Wopinski:** I mean, that was too bad, but it was probably awesome for the people who were able to get in there and buy a house inexpensively.

**Terry:** Well it was for some of them! I don't know what's going on down there, I don't know if some of them still have rent for \$600. I can't imagine that, though. (Laughs) when you've got a three-bedroom house, you've got to pay the air conditioner, and lights too, so that stuff starts creeping up on you. So that's how we did the housing. We're not doing housing anymore. And then the governor appointed me to the Florida Housing and Finance Corporation. That's the state housing board, and I did that for eight years. I can't believe I drove to Tallahassee for eight years... (Laughs). Tallahassee and wherever else we had a meeting, because we had a meeting in a different place every month. Miami, Fort Lauderdale, you know, everywhere. It was very interesting.

**Wopinski:** Do you think people appointed to those positions have families that have been doing

that for a long time?

**Terry:** Well this board has certain seats. They had somebody who did tax credits, they had an elected official, I can't remember the department, but the head of that was on the board. So there were certain seats. I took the Low Income Advocate seat. So that's why I was on the board and that's what I did. You don't have to talk a lot; you just have to say something when you talk. There are just different seats for different people. That was very interesting.

**Wopinski:** Did you like working for the state?

**Terry:** Well it wasn't really a job. It was a volunteer position.

**Wopinski:** Oh...

**Terry:** (Laughs) No, you didn't get paid... For me, I never even got my per diem (laughs). But no, that wasn't a paid job. That was a volunteer job.

**Wopinski:** Wow... So they appoint you to a volunteer position?

**Terry:** Yeah... You had to be appointed by the governor. That was a very important board. I mean they were handling something like almost 600 million dollars. That's a lot of money. A lot of money goes through there. It was good though. It was interesting. All of my boards that I've ever served on were interesting (laughs). There were a lot of them. *A lot*. But you learn.

**Wopinski:** Are you working on anything now?

**Terry:** You mean other than trying to make payroll? No, we have so much stuff going on right now. Grants are continuous. None of them have the same application date, they all have different reporting, so it's like you're always writing grants, you're always doing grant reports. You're always getting your insurance certificates in to people, you're getting your audits done, and you're getting your income tax done. You know, you're making sure the programs runs. You've got money for salaries, and you've got to do that every single day. This time of year we've got the health fair coming up. That's a big deal. We do the USDA every single month. Then Ben is under the grant that I got from CDBG, and he does the [light ...] which is the light bill, where they come in and we help them with their light bill. I mean we're doing 40 of them a month. Yeah, so we don't need anything new. People ask, no we don't do any new stuff, because we do enough. We don't have room to do anything new. I don't do anything that doesn't need to be done. So I don't have to make my programs turn into something else. I can't do that and get money. That may be a problem for me, because I don't do that. But I don't do anything that doesn't need to be done. We do that every day. Then Christmas is coming and we have a big Christmas party too. This is a really busy time of year. We just had a \$10,000 matching challenge grant, which was good. We didn't do a fundraiser this year, we always do one in October, and we didn't do that because it's just too much. I couldn't do it, I didn't have time and

you've got to start off with money to do a fundraiser, and we didn't have any money to start off with this year. So we're going to have to do it another way. We have to raise that money a different way, but that's what we do. We raise money every day, every grant has outcomes, so we're always doing reports, and you have to keep your data. That's how we have to take care of this place, and that's every day. You've got to make sure we've got food for kids' cafe. I mean everything's every day. It's not like "Okay, we're done with everything, what can we do now?" We don't have those days. There are no "Let's see what we can do next' days" (laughs). No, it's an ongoing thing we keep doing. I don't know if people realize that about nonprofits. I mean its daily, daily, daily ongoing.

**Wopinski:** Do you ever see yourself slowing down?

**Terry:** Well, I hoped I could have seen myself slow down in '99 when I retired, because I was working 40 hours a week and I was putting in about 40 hours a week here. I was thinking, "Man, when I retire, I'm going to be able to work just 40 hours a week." Well, it didn't go to 40, it stayed right where it was. There's just so much to do and we're so small. We don't have a marketing staff, and a grant writing staff, and a development staff, we don't have all those people. They're all me.

**Wopinski:** I do not know how you do it (laughs).

**Terry:** I don't know either (laughs). When I look and I see my mom and my dad—he was nine when he came here, and she was three. Of course they lived over in Mission Valley, because that's where the community was—but when I see him with tears in his eyes, talking about seeing his name on the front of that building... She got to sit on her front porch, and watch them pave that road, and put those big pipes in for drainage, and see a sidewalk go in. I mean when I grew up we didn't even have ditches, let alone sidewalks. They're there now, but we didn't even have ditches. It was just a dirt bumpy road with holes in it. To see her come from that little bitty thing right there (showing photo). That was one of the houses that were right here, one of the row houses that were right here. To see her live long enough to see sidewalks... yeah that's kind of the whole street there (referring to photo). They lived to see this so they didn't have to walk in four feet of water. They lived to see this, and they lived to see the name on the front of the building, you know? It was just amazing that they got to do that. You know, and to spend almost a whole century.... That's unbelievable. Really. One day I'm going to sit down and think about all this stuff that's happened. It amazes me that people can see what happened. They can see it. They can touch it, they can feel it. When we talk about it, it's not like you can't see what we've done, or see how it's come. You know, the drainage isn't ever going to go anywhere, sidewalks aren't going anywhere, the paved streets aren't going anywhere, and the building's not going anywhere. That's kind of for me, in the back of my head, like when I'm doing this stuff, it has to be permanent for after I'm gone. As long as this building belongs to the county, it's going to be here.



**Wopinski:** Do you have anybody...

**Terry:** Oh, here comes that question. (Laughs) I don't know as soon as I find another crazy person, I'll be okay. But I do get asked that question a lot. You know, we didn't get started like some other nonprofits start. Like it or not it does have a lot to do with me, and that could be good and that could be bad, but hopefully we can keep it going.

**Wopinski:** Maybe it's not a matter of finding another crazy person, but a lot of crazy people (laughs).

**Terry:** Yeah, but we are. We're going to have to find somebody to keep this going. It has to be somebody who just loves people. All of them. Everybody. Maybe we'll get there, I don't know.

**Wopinski:** Well I should be going to class soon, do you have any closing statements that you'd like to make?

**Terry:** About water? Or what?

**Wopinski:** Well not necessarily...

**Terry:** I don't know... what did we focus on? You've asked some very good questions, so maybe ask me another question, and I could answer it.

**Wopinski:** I'm trying to think of a good final question... (laughs). This is something that I've been thinking of a lot since I first met you, and have not asked directly, but why do you think that it is important to act on what you think is needed in the community? Why is it important for you to act?

**Terry:** I think about why I do this a lot. I think it really does come from all of those people that I grew up with. When they saw things that they needed to be done, they just did them. And maybe it is a little bit of perfectionist in me, that I want everything to be right and good all of the time, but I do want everybody to be okay, and they're not okay. And that bothers me. So I guess I set out to try to make sure that even if everybody's not okay, at least they have the tools to get okay, and if you don't have that, you're never going to be okay. So I guess my thing is that I just want everybody to be okay.

**Wopinski:** well I think that's admirable. Thank you so much for participating; this has been a great conversation.