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C O N T E N T S

This book contains the following order of inter-views:

Rosemarie MCIrny

Book 16

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V. 16

This is Rosemarie McInerny at 4635 So. Wallace Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Q. Miss McInerny -- I know that your family has been in the Yards here for many years. I am anxious for you to tell us about the family stories, about the arrival of the McInerys and how they settled down here.

A. The McInery brothers -- there were 3 brothers. They were Thomas, Patrick, and Michael, McInery and they all came from Limrick, Ireland, and they came to Chicago here and they went into the Undertaking business here back in 1873.

Q. On this site?

A . Originally at 43rd Street and one brother after a short time went into politics -- Michael McInery, and he became the Alderman of what was then the 30th Ward and it ran all the way down from 22nd Street South, and I think at that time, instead of having one alderman they had two alderman for one ward because the wards were very large and then there was Patrick and Thomas stayed in the Undertaking business and they both had large families of boys and girls and their families started working in the Undertaking business but previous to that they worked in the Stockyards. In fact, my Uncle Jack used to say

that he went into the Yards when it was dark and he'd come out of the Yards when it was dark. He put in a whole days work but they were in business since 1873 down there on 43rd Street and then they split up in business and Patrick McInery and his family stayed at 43rd Street, I think it was 650 W. 43rd St., and Tom McInery which was my grandfather opened up a Funeral Home at 50th and State because he promised his brother that he wouldn't open a Funeral Home up here in the same neighborhood so they were there for quite a few years, then they opened up in business here at 46th & Wallace Street and have been there I imagine a good 75 years. And all the family died off, one right after another. There were only 2 boys that actually married out of my grandfather's family and that was my own father Tom and my uncle Michael; but his family died very young and the only ones left to carry on this business were the 3 grand-daughters which was unusual because there wasn't too many women undertakers. But one thing about this area, most of the people who lived here worked in the Stockyards, and most people had nicknames. They were a grand bunch of men that used to hang around this Funeral Home and I can give you some of their nicknames which are kind of funny: One was Potato Head Murphy, he later went on to become, I think it was a lieutenant on the police department before he died and

then there was a family called the Quinns and one was called "Dynamite" Quinn because he was so fat and moved so fast and my own father was so big and strong they used to call him "Samson McInery" and my Uncle Mike McInery was called "Neighbor" because there was so many people he knew in the neighborhood and he used to forget their first names so he didn't want to slight them so he called everybody "neighbor" instead of trying to recall their own names, and there was another good old friend of theirs called Ed Brady but his nickname was "Monkey Face Grady" and Seeker Burns -- there was a great man -- family of the Burns' in this neighborhood. There was Seeker Burns, and they called him "Seeker" because he was a dog catcher and he used to seek out the dogs in the neighborhood and he had a brother Henney Burns who had a barn up near the Stockyards there for years until he died and in later years anybody of the old fellows in the neighborhood that needed a shelter would stay in Henney Burn's Barn.

Q. Well let me ask another question or two?

A. Did I get off on a tangent?

Q. No, that's all right. I've noticed the streets here all have sort of Irish names, like Emerald, and Parnell.

A. Well a lot of the street names are changed. I think years ago there was Dexter Ave., like 45th Street and 46th Street. Instead of having a number as a street name there was a street

name but they've been change in later years. Emerald was predominately an Irish area and I think that's why you would find a street named Emerald here, you know.

But the area has been called Canaryville, along with being in the Stockyard area. It was called Canaryville and there was an Irish story about that, that had something to do with birds that flocked in this area because of some type of tree they had planted and they called it Canaryville.

Q. Huh! that's the story.

A. Yes, huh uh! Canaryville.

Q. That was my next question and you got ahead of me on it.

A. And there's different groups in the neighborhood that are still called Canaryville, like the Canaryville Little League, and the Canaryville Improvement Association and they've kept the name going.

Q. Is the neighborhood disappointed that the Stockyard Industry, and the Meat Packing Industry has faded away or were they sort of feeling it was a nuisance to them anyway.

A. I don't think they every felt as though the Stockyard was a nuisance, they looked at the Stockyards years ago as their livelihood and I think the original disappointment for a lot of the people in the area was when the bulk of the Stockyards moved years ago -- where did they go -- to Omaha or somewhere, I forget, but at any rate, that was the real disappointment

and I think in later years there wasn't much employment left in the Stockyards for people to feel this, in this area, now.

Q. Yes, this latest program is an anti-climax now.

A. In fact, I think the people are looking forward to more development in the Stockyards, like they developed some of these small industries over there.

Q. What sort of employment did people find after the Stockyard and the Meat Packing closed down, and threw everybody out -- so to speak -- people to go looking for employment. Where did they wind up? Do you recall any stories about that period?

A. Well, I think a lot of them went to the packinghouses that were left in Chicago. You know, they worked in the local packinghouses because even when the Stockyards left I think the bulk of the packinghouses were -- a lot of them were still mostly from these areas, you know, the meat packers!

Q. They were small.

A. Yes, they were small, right, and I think the old time men that depended on their livelihood are long gone, you know, like the, hog handlers, etc.

Q. Do you have any stories about those olden times, like you said your grandfather who worked from sun-up to sunset, never saw it.

A. He used to say that to us when we were kids -- when my father died when we were young -- and if we'd come over to try and get a nickel or dime off from my Uncle Jack that's when he would give a sad story about the Stockyards -- he'd go to work when it was dark in the morning and he would be coming out dark at night for a small amount of money. Of course, a small amount of money was a lot of money at that particular time, but I don't have any real stories about things that happened in the Yards. I know the neighborhood here, they wrote a poem about this place years ago.

Q. Can you recall it?

A. Yes, I sure can. It's called "Bring out the Lace Curtains and Call Me McInery."

"I'm nearing the end of my life's pleasant journey  
Quick, send for the priest and tell him I'm dying  
My last minute on earth so swiftly are flying  
Tell dear Father Dorney (he was the original founders of  
St. Gabriel) I'm meeting my maker  
He's losing his old collection up taker  
Then pull down the shades and light up the candles  
Call in the O'Briens, the Caseys and Randalls, the  
Murphys, the Burkes, the Bradys and all  
Tell them you darling has answered God's call  
Call Schultz at the Butcher and order some meat

But watchers who sit through the night have a treat  
There's good Mrs. Smith who is sure to bring cake  
Please ask her advice in conducting my wake  
Bring out the lace-curtains and call McInery  
I'm nearing the end of my life's pleasant journey."

Now that poem was written by T. J. O'Donnell and this was written up several times in the "Wake of the News" in the newspaper, and it was written up recently in recent years by Michael Royko in the Daily News but it kind of depicts their attitudes about things that were very closely knit, everyone knew their neighbors and were close to them.

But one thing you were talking about the people in the Yards, at one time the wealthy people from the Stockyards, such as the Swifts that resided in this neighborhood on Emerald Ave. and they had big mansions there and there's a church over on Emerald Ave. that I don't know the exact establishment date of the church, it's called the Union Ave. Methodist Church. Some of the wealthy families from the Yards, such as Swift, Armour, and those have given yearly donations to that church.

Q. Up to the present time.

A. Even to the present time, right, and they're always donating a certain amount of money yearly to that church over there.

Q. That's very interesting, I'll try to follow that up.

Right, right. I don't think it bothered the people living here. In fact, I don't remember the last time I could actually say I smelled the Stockyards. I never noticed it going and I didn't actually know it when it was here.

Q. You grew up in it.

A. I grew up in it, right, right. But I don't think the people living here mind it because it was part of their lives.

Q. O.K. fine. Is there anything else that occurs to you that might have a little bearing?

A. Let me think -- with the Stockyards itself.

Q. Yes. How about relationships with the Back of the Yards neighborhood. Were they sort of rivalries?

No, I don't think so. I don't think we ignored one another and I don't think there was any rivalries. The other side of the Stockyards, like Ashland Ave., was more of a commercial neighborhood more so than a neighborhood like Canaryville itself. This was more of a neighborhood where the other side of the Stockyards would be actually -- I guess the Back of the Yards is only there. I don't know whether they call this the Front of the Yards or not, but at any rate, I don't think that that area was a neighborhood such as this, and I don't think there was a great -- there were probably people from over there that worked in the Yards but I don't think there was the intensity of population of people working in the Yards that

there was in this area. The same like on the other side of the Yards would be Ashland Avenue, it was more commercial. It wasn't a neighborhood that you would find here so there couldn't be a rivalry in that respect. There never was, and I don't think that that area was, well, it wasn't predominantly Irish like this neighborhood was and I think that was more of a Polish settlement in that area. On that side there were an awful lot of Polish people that earned their livelihood in the Yards too and worked good and hard. There were an awful lot of people from this area that worked for Union Stockyards Railroad too! I'm trying to think of any stories from the Stockyards, I mean that would have happened there and I just can't seem to recall any -- something that would be interesting. I knew at one time here my own grandmother had cows in this building, You know, at one time people here years ago, didn't have big wakes in a Funeral Home. They were all in the houses so that this was more or less just an office and a storage spot where they put chairs and anything they would need for a wake in the home and the entire back of this building was a big barn and they had their own horses and carriages and cows. My grandmother had her own cows and the room that's above the garage now was a hayloft and that's a casket room now so you can see what things can be changed into.

Q. Well I think that we've got a good deal to go with now.