

An Interview with  
**Anna Forder**

at *The* Historical Society of Missouri St. Louis  
Research Center, St. Louis, Missouri

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interviewed by Maureen Zegel  
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**Oral History Program**

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## PREFACE

The interview was taped on a placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [ ] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets [ ]. Any use of parentheses ( ) indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks ["" ] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [   ] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [   (??) ] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Josephine Sporleder.

Anna Forder: My name is Anna Forder.

Maureen Zegel: There you go. We're going to talk today about your growing up, your life as a girl, your career and we're looking at women who have been change agents who served in leadership positions and as they grew during a time that was not very much like your parents' time, were able to affect many changes, sometimes monumental, sometimes just in their household. So, maybe you should talk a little bit about growing up as a young girl.

Anna Forder: Well, I grew up in Lemay which is down near Jefferson barracks and I grew up in a beautiful old farm home that was up on a high hill and, in fact, from the kitchen you could actually see the Illinois bluffs in the wintertime when the leaves were off the trees, although we were about a mile from the river so something like that. It was a glorious place to grow up and it was all farm area around us. There were tenant farmers. My family owned the property but the people who were around there were tenant farmers but they all had jobs in other places. They just farmed on the weekends because they liked to be farmers. I remember particularly old Mr. Guhe and he farmed but he had mules that plowed the fields and harrowed the fields, et cetera and we used to follow him around and when I was a little girl, if he was really nice, when he was coming back from the field after having plowed, he would let us drive the mules home. We could put the reins around our back and drive the mules home and that was Mr. Guhe who let us do that. It was spelled G-u-h-e, not G-o-o-y. He was quite a character. But my father had died when I was quite young. I was about five years old when my father died but my mother remained living in the house and my father's brother who was two years older than my father helped raise us. He came and he was very influential in our lives and lived at our house for a while. He had been a medical doctor and he had gone into the real estate business with my father in the 1920's and their distinction, when the recession and when the Great Depression came along was that they never foreclosed on one person, even though they had built many houses in the area. And my uncle was a very kindly man and when I think back, I realize that he was a great influence on my life and one of the things that he always used to say to us, "You're not worth anything if you don't go to work, girlie. You're not worth anything if you don't go to work," and I always taught that to my kids too: "You're not worth anything if you don't go to work. You got to go to work." And as a result, both of my sons now go to work

and they actually support their wives and families, et cetera. So I'm very proud of that, having been able to not only have that in my uncle's generation but my generation and then passing it on to the next generation and I hope my kids pass that on to their kids.

Maureen Zegel: So your uncle was an influence. You looked up to him?

Anna Forder: Yes, I did.

Maureen Zegel: What was being a girl like living in a big house up on a hill? Where did you go to school?

Anna Forder: I went to the local public school in the Melville School District and my mother had been raised in a household where she was an only child. Her mother had died when she was a year old and she'd been raised by her grandparents and her grandparents would never let her do anything. They'd always say, "Oh, what would Jack say?" meaning her father, "What would Jack say if anything happened to you?" So she was very protected. So when we were kids, she was determined that we were not going to be protected, that we were going to be able to do whatever we wanted, and we did. We played with whomever we wanted. All the kids in the neighborhood were our friends and we lived in relative wealth compared to the people in the neighborhood, some of whom lived in houses that didn't have indoor plumbing and stuff like that. But those were our best friends. Alma Tucker was one of my best friends.

Maureen Zegel: When you say "we," you have a sibling?

Anna Forder: I have a sister that's a year older and a brother who's two years older.

Maureen Zegel: So you were all close in age.

Anna Forder: Yes, we were little stair steps. My brother was born in 1937; my sister in '38 and I was born in 1939.

Maureen Zegel: When you played with the kids, did you ever pay attention to stereotypes, you know, the girls playing tea party and the boys playing football?

Anna Forder: The play wasn't delineated like that. It never seemed to be delineated like that. However, when it came time to play sports, my brother was able to play organized sports long before my sister and I. I was really

almost in high school before I was allowed to play in an organized sports situation. We all learned to swim early because across the street from us down in a deep valley, in a deep ravine, there was a natural spring and my father and my uncle who were home builders had put a house foundation in down there and then they ran the spring water through the foundation and out the other end and so we had a swimming pool essentially as kids, which was kind of fun and I can remember just running across that field and getting bit by bees because we always had to be the first one to get to the swimming pool, that type of thing. Later on, that swimming pool became the center of kind of an unusual thing. In the wintertime, it was always empty. They ran the water around it. This was at the end of the war. My father was still living. It was in 1944. There were German prisoners that were brought to the barracks, Jefferson Barracks, which abutted up to our property across the way and there were a lot of Germans in our neighborhood and there were some people in the neighborhood who were putting food and clothing and some of the German prisoners had escaped from the barracks and had been told where to go to get food and to get clothing so that they could just get out and become part of the American populace and as my father was walking down the front yard one time, all these soldiers in cars and trucks came by with guns, et cetera and came up our hill came all these soldiers and they were all descending on the swimming pool and they caught the prisoners who had escaped. They were German prisoners who had escaped. So then my poor father, he had to vouch for all the Germanic people in the neighborhood, that they would not have done...nobody in our neighborhood would have done it. It was somebody from outside the neighborhood who had put the food and the clothing down there. So I don't know whether they ever found out who did it but it was kind of an interesting story from the Second World War and then after the war was over, I remember one night my mother was sitting by the back door...in those days we had one telephone and it was right by the back door and I remember her sitting there saying, "Don't let those people back in the United States. You don't let those people back in the United States," and she was talking about a family named the Baers and they had gone back to Germany in 1936 or '37 saying, "Oh, Hitler will win, Hitler will do this and that" and, of course, they got put into concentration camps as soon as they went back to Germany, they grabbed them and put them in concentration camps because the assumption by the Germans were that

they were just plants from the United States. They were enemy agents being brought in. And then the old man was killed. He was in a labor camp and of course he died in the labor camp because they just worked the living devil out of them. The mother and some of the kids...one of the kids was born in the United States so, of course, he was an American citizen. So she wanted to get back with the Red Cross. She was trying to get the Red Cross to get her back and they were calling my mother to sponsor her and my mother said, "They are Nazis. Don't you let those people back in the United States. We will not have them back." My mother was not a vindictive person but on that point she really was not of a sweet, loving, kind person that she usually was.

Maureen Zegel: So growing up, you sound like you had a lot of fun.

Anna Forder: We did, we had a lot of fun. We were pretty free in the summertime, once school was out, I don't think I wore shoes except to go to church on Sunday. You had to wear shoes to church on Sunday. Other than that, we went barefoot most of the time in the summertime, played with all the neighborhood kids.

Maureen Zegel: And did you live there throughout grade school?

Anna Forder: Through grade school and high school, yeah. In fact, my brother and his wife live there and they were living there until about two years ago, in the same old house. So it's a beautiful old home. Unfortunately, it had to be torn down, which was a sad day. It was a very sad day when it had to be torn down because it was a historic building and the building behind it was a log house that was an actual 18<sup>th</sup> century building. It was built in the 1700's and the developers came in and, everything's gone. I went to public school and then I went out to Villa DuChen, I went to Catholic high school.

Maureen Zegel: Did you live there? That's far from...

Anna Forder: I was boarding. I was boarding in high school, and two years of high school, I went to Notre Dame High School and then the last two years I went to Villa DuChen and then I went on to Grinnell College up in Iowa.

Maureen Zegel: Talk a little bit about going to school...

Anna Forder: Oh, girls high school. It was wonderful because you could play sports. You could actually be on a team but if you were in public school, there were no teams for any girls in public school at that time. They could be cheerleaders but that was it. There was no organized sports for young women. Only the Catholic schools did and I do think that of all the public schools, I think Ladue High School had some organized sports for girls, if I remember correctly, but otherwise, it was always the Catholic schools and, for instance, Mary Institute, which was non-sectarian but it was a private school for girls.

Maureen Zegel: And you played against one another?

Anna Forder: Yeah, we played all around and played against all the Catholic girls.

Maureen Zegel: So what sports did you play?

Anna Forder: Well, in the fall we played field hockey. In the winter we played basketball and in the spring we played tennis.

Maureen Zegel: You carried that athletic ability throughout most of your life.

Anna Forder: That's right, yes. I mean, it gave me a lot of self-confidence and it helped me. We were on a team and it helped me be able to be very active which I was a little hyper active and so it helped with hyperactivity and the hyperactivity did interfere with some of my intellectual functioning because I was not able to be real consistent in school. I was very, very inconsistent about school work. I could do very well sometimes but then other times I kind of didn't do quite so well. But it was really the hyperactivity and the attention span that I think interfered with that and I don't think that I understood that until I was much older and I went to law school and I began understanding about attention span and I'd also been through social work school and I'd sort of learned the psychology of how people behave and that hyperactivity was a real thing. I mean, it just affects some people more than others.

Maureen Zegel: It just wasn't identified as a problem.

Anna Forder: Yes, right, and it's not necessarily a problem; sometimes it can be a real benefit because it helps you to get things done that ordinarily somebody a little more sedentary wouldn't have the energy to do.

Maureen Zegel: So you went to high school, you played sports, you did fairly well in school?

Anna Forder: I did not do fairly well in school. I did mediocre. I sometimes did well, sometimes didn't do so well so was always kind of mediocre.

Maureen Zegel: You were a C student?

Anna Forder: I was a C student, yeah, but in those days, you see, 90% of the kids or 80% of the kids were C students. There were a few that got A's and B's, there were a few that got D's and F's, but the large majority of the kids...it was before grade inflation...C was the norm. Nowadays it's B and A is the norm and C is considered failing, but it's not. But that's because of grade inflation which came in in the late 1960's...'70s.

Maureen Zegel: Then you went off to college?

Anna Forder: I went to Grinnell College my freshman year, had a good time. I loved Grinnell College. It was a very good school but I decided to transfer to St. Louis University and that might have been a good choice; it might not have, but some of my very, very best friends that I still have today, I have as a result of going to St. Louis University and still remain friends with those folks. I still see them. I still associate with them. That's part of my social life, having a relationship with people from St. Louis University, and still have some friends from Grinnell College even though I only went there one year.

Maureen Zegel: What years were you in college?

Anna Forder: I started in 1957, in the fall of 1957 and I finished in the spring of 1961 and I wanted to go to law school but in those days, schools could openly discriminate against women or people because of their background, et cetera and the reason was, they said, was that if I would go to law school, I would be taking the place of a young man that had to raise a family. So Maureen Zegel, you know me well enough to know that I did raise a family on my income from law. So I really needed to go to that law school. But in those days they could discriminate openly. After the Civil Rights Act, I think it was in 1970 that I think Haram Lazar and [inaudible 15:36] and Dick Childress at St. Louis U said, "Hey boys, we better stop this," and they started admitting women to law school on an equal basis with young men and so we could all get into law school. The only women

that could go to law school were women who had straight A averages and, as I always like to famously say, I had a very good time in undergraduate school but I sure didn't have a straight A average.

Maureen Zegel: So what did you do between...

Anna Forder: Well, it was one of the points that I wanted to make to the young women that might be listening to this: If something is forbidden to you for some reason, don't get too upset because you go on and you do something else and then maybe you can come back to that thing later on. Maybe you can come back somehow to fit it into your life. I took a job as a deputy juvenile officer with the juvenile court and I was essentially a juvenile probation officer.

Maureen Zegel: In St. Louis?

Anna Forder: In St. Louis, in the city, yes, which was a very interesting job, a wonderful job. I really learned a lot and it was my first kind of introduction to...I had known very, very poor people; I mean, I'd grown up around some very, very poor people but it was my first introduction as an adult to have to deal with and to help very, very poor people because when I was a kid, you don't understand that somebody else is poor. That's your friend so it's not part of your life but when you become older, you understand the struggle and the stress and the problems that people who are not economically on a sound basis have in their life because they're never quite sure where the next dollar is going to come from, if they should happen to lose their job or whatever it is that they're doing. It was also my first introduction to dealing with black children. I had never really, in my life, I'd never...I had known black people but never any in a way that I had to deal with them on an everyday life. I mean, I had known because, for instance, we were coming back from Grinnell College one time and I offered a young woman who lives in St. Louis a chance to come back to St. Louis with us. I said, "My mother's coming to pick us up. I'll give you a ride back if you need a ride back," and she said, "Okay," and her father was the principal of a grade school in St. Louis and we were coming back and we were walking into a restaurant in, I think it was Troy, Missouri and there was a guy standing there with his hands saying, "We don't serve colored in this restaurant." Wow! I mean, it was just shocking, eye-opening. I remember my mother saying, "Come on, let's go, let's go. We'll just go, girls" and we went down shortly and we saw a sign, it was a lunch

place where they had a Greyhound bus sign and my mother knew that you could go in there, so she went in first and she came back out and said, "Okay, girls, come on, let's go have lunch." So we went and had lunch but it was an eye-opener and we're talking, say, 1958, I think, something like '57 or '58, something like that. I do remember being down in New Orleans. I had cousins who lived in New Orleans so I went down there for Mardi Gras one year, had a wonderful time but I do remember the whites only water fountains, that kind of thing, "colored only" water fountains, getting on the streetcar on St. Charles Avenue and having the gate in the back where black people had to go and sit in the back of the streetcar, that kind of thing. So that was an eye-opener for me. That was something that I never experienced.

Maureen Zegel: Until you started working with African American kids and how many women...

Anna Forder: I mean, not only African American, but white kids too because, I mean, St. Louis at that time was about 50/50. It was about 50% white and 50% black so you had all kinds of people that came through the juvenile court. And I worked there for three years and then I began thinking, there's something more to understanding why kids get into trouble than I'm understanding. So I decided I would go to social work school and I applied to Mizzou to go to social work school and they had a one-year program. You get a Master's in one year. It was 12 months, you had to go 12 months. You started in August and went around to the following August and I finished social work school in one year. By that time, of course, I was much too rich and beautiful to go back to the juvenile court. I had other ideas about what to do. So I went to the International Social Workers Convention in D.C. and I took a job with Catholic Relief Services and they sent me to the Vietnam to work in Vietnam for two years.

Maureen Zegel: And what years were those?

Anna Forder: It was '66 to '68, I guess, it was about that, somewhere around in there.

Maureen Zegel: So the war was...

Anna Forder: The war was on, oh, yeah, oh, very definitely, it was the middle of the war. I worked for Catholic Relief Services and there I did international adoptions and we did refugee resettlement and there were two young Vietnamese women in our office who had been trained in the United

States in nutrition and they worked with pre and post-natal Vietnamese women and I helped them essentially just by logistics, just helping them get food and clothing and that sort of thing from wherever we needed it, Saigon to wherever it was needed in the outlying areas of South Vietnam. So that meant that I had to make friends with the helicopter pilots and of course that wasn't too difficult because the helicopter pilots had no other girls around and so I was very popular with the helicopter pilots, me and my friends. So we took a lot of helicopter rides to a lot of different places in Vietnam, spending time with leprosariums, making sure that Sister Agnes got her food to the leprosariums up in Kantooman down in [inaudible 23:45].

Maureen Zegel: Leprosarium, for people who had leprosy?

Anna Forder: Leprosy state, yeah, because they actually had to segregate the lepers from the rest of the population, treat them with sulpha drugs and then once they were free, then they could go back to their population because it was a disease that still occurred there. The really unfortunate thing was that if they had children, the children had to be separated from them because the babies, if they lived with the people who had leprosy, the babies would get leprosy so they had to separate them. It was really kind of sad. And I used to have to go with the doctors who had to work on their extremities because sometimes their toes and fingers had to be removed and we had to go with the doctors when they went out and did surgery on some of the people.

Maureen Zegel: How long were you there?

Anna Forder: I was there about...not quite two years, a little under two years. Then from there I had three children to deliver three babies, to deliver three little Vietnamese babies to take to Australia. They'd been adopted by Australian couples and when I got to Australia I suddenly thought, hmm, I don't think I'm going back to Vietnam. I think I'll stay in Australia and I took a job as a pediatric psychiatric social worker at a big public hospital in Australia and that was very interesting because my boss was a very bright guy, his name was Barry Nercomb and he was a really, really smart man. He eventually, he and his wife migrated to the United States and he was a powerhouse in the area of pediatric psychiatric social work. He did a lot of research, you might say and I never realized the acuity with which on the narrowness of the area, pediatric psychiatric social work and

pediatric psychiatry is a very, very narrow area but really very refined and I learned a lot from him. Then my mother died in the meantime. My mother had died in the States. My father, of course, had died when I was very young, when I was about five...my mother died so I decided, well, I'll go back to the States and see what I can do. And I got a job back at the juvenile court again and I applied to law school and this time, of course, Bella Abzug and Gloria Steinem and all these folks had done their job and so I was admitted to law school on an equal basis with the guys.

Maureen Zegel: And how many women were in your class in those days?

Anna Forder: I think the year before me, there were about 15 and in my class, I think there were about 25. Now, I went to night law school because I worked during the day at the juvenile court and went to night law school. I kind of figured that one out real quick. They were making you take all these extra hours so I signed up because that's what they made you do but after about two weeks I just dropped one of the courses so that I could spend time...because I knew, with the lack of concentration that I had, I couldn't concentrate like other people, I had to adapt to what I could actually do. So I thought, I'm going to manipulate the system and that's exactly what I did so that I didn't have the same amount of tension, you might say, that some of the other students had and, indeed, some of the guys and gals flunked out during the first semester because the demands were so great. But I was able to stick it out, and worked. I did that for two years and, of course, when you go to night school, you have to go all year round. You can't just go the two semesters. You have to go in the summer semester also to be able to get out in four years. Law school is three years. To get in four years you have to go in the summertime too. And I got really tired so after two years of this, I quit and went full-time my last year of law school and then graduated and had the big party for graduation, et cetera, and then the reality set in of what are you going to do. So I went into practice with Michael Forest and Elsa Stewart and Maureen Dickman and we had a law office there at the corner of Laclede and Newstead. We had to get work no matter how we could get work. I mean, we were taking every single possible assignment from every judge we could find: juvenile court; probate court, wherever they had assignments and you could make a little bit of money, that's what we were doing. It was really scratch law practice but by the time we finished,

I was taking a draw of about \$40,000 a year which, in those days, was really a lot of money.

Maureen Zegel: Now, this is the 1970's?

Anna Forder: We're talking the '70s, yeah, 1974, '75, '76, yeah.

Maureen Zegel: So that was a real active time for feminism, those whole decades seemed to be...that's when I met people...

Anna Forder: Yes.

Maureen Zegel: Talk a little bit about what it was like to be a woman in the '70s.

Anna Forder: Well, things were happening fast. They were happening real fast and things were opening up real fast in new jobs and that sort of thing and so when I saw that women were being admitted to law school, I immediately applied so that I could go to this law school that I had been refused before. So, as I say, whenever the door closes, don't just consider that it's totally closed. You have to wait your turn and even though you might not be able to do that...like, one young woman had wanted to do something else and law school was the alternative for her and she had taken law school because there was something that she wanted to do that she couldn't do. In other words, you got to be calculating and you got to be cunning and you've got to think ahead and you've got to play the averages and sometimes you don't always see what the results are but you can eventually. So I practiced law and we knew that there were no women judges so that was another little avenue that you have to work. So I knew it was very political so I worked very, very hard in politics, support of the governor of Missouri, worked on a lot of other campaigns, some of which were successful and some not so successful and then the other thing I found out, and by this time I'm 38 years old, I said, you know, I don't see myself getting married and having kids and the only way I'm going to have kids is do it on my own. I mean, I grew up in a single parent family. My mother never remarried. I grew up in a single parent family. I adopted my kids, people said wasn't it unusual and I went, well, that was the only thing I knew so to me it wasn't unusual, being a single parent family.

Maureen Zegel: And did you have a hard time?

Anna Forder:

No, because I knew that it would happen because I had been the supervisor of adoptions at the juvenile court and I had seen some young women that adopted children as single parents. There was one young nurse that adopted children. Judge McMillian said, "These kids need to be all adopted. These kids need homes" so the Division of Family Services started a program for difficult to place children, meaning children who were older, children who were bi-racial, children who may have some physical difficulty, those kinds of things. So I went and they had these classes that you had to take, and I thought, oh, well, I know everything. I don't need to take these classes but I thought, well, wait a minute, you better swallow your pride and you better do what they say because that's the avenue for you to get in, and of course the classes were wonderful. They were very, very good. They were very realistic and these two young women that taught it, Maryanne Michael was one and I can't remember the name of the other young woman but they really had it together. They knew exactly what they had to prepare people for and I told them that I would take an older female child, thinking that an infant might be difficult. Well, the first child they offered to me was an infant baby boy that wasn't free for adoption but I knew, it didn't take me but two seconds to say...or five seconds to say, "Yes, I will" because I knew that if I got too picky about the children that they were going to offer to me, that suddenly the children would all dry up and that opportunity may not come open and that I was the one that had to be flexible, not them. You understand how it is? My commitment has to be more than their commitment has to be. And they said, "Well, can you go down and pick him up tomorrow" and "No, I can't." I had to be in court the next day. I was a lawyer, I had to be in court. So I said "I'll go down next Tuesday," so Maryanne, Mike and I were going to go down and pick Peter up and I said to her, "Maryanne, have you ever taken care of a baby before?" Now, mind you, this is a three-month old baby...She said no and I went, "I think we better somebody to go with us." So I called my friend, Mary Flanner, who was just this wonderful pal of mine who has since passed on and Mary said, "You're going to adopt a baby? Oh, my goodness" and I knew Mary, herself, had been adopted, and I said, "Would you mind going down..." "Oh, go down? Oh, I'd love to." She said, "I'll set all else aside." She not only set all else aside, by that afternoon, she had a baby bed for me, she had a baby changing station for me, she had all kinds of

clothes for me and she had organized a baby shower for me. I mean, it was just incredible. Mary Flanner was just a wonderful person.

Maureen Zegel: And she had a lot of children, right?

Anna Forder: Well, she had two children and I remember as we were leaving the door, Molly was about two-and-a-half and she was crying and everything and she said, "Oh, Molly, be quiet," she said, "Carly is staying here with you. I have to go someplace." So we go down and stay overnight and we go and pick up this beautiful little baby boy and that was Peter and about a year later...see, he wasn't free for adoption because his parents had not signed the papers for him. The mother had signed the termination of her rights but not the father. So again, you have to be flexible and I thought, well, if I get this little boy a good life for a year or something like that, if it doesn't work out, I will have given him a good life for a year. I will have done a good thing for a little kid. I would have been a good foster parent. But after a year, by my own manipulations, it all came to fruition and he was adopted. By this time, Peter was two-and-a-half, I guess, something like that and so then I thought, well, no kid likes to be raised by themselves so we'll have to see what I can find and a lady down the street from me said, "Hey, you know, Children's Home Society has two bi-racial kids" because Peter is actually tri-racial. He's part American Indian and part black and part white..."They've got two bi-racial baby boys and they're trying to find homes for them at Children's Home Society." So I picked up the phone and just said, "I understand..." blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and I had done a lot of favors for Children's Home Society when I was the supervisor of the adoption department in the city so I had a foot in the door. You never know when you're going to have a foot in the door because of being nice to somebody, you see, and of course by that time I also had become a judge because I had the foot in the door to become a judge because I had worked in the gubernatorial race, the governor's race and when a circuit judgeship opened up, I applied and I got appointed. But, you see, you don't know those things ahead of time, do you? You cannot know where each one of these paths are going to take you but you have to be...

Maureen Zegel: But you're always building...

Anna Forder: You're building, you're thinking, yeah, you're always thinking. You're always building that base, you're always making some kind of a plan for

yourself. It can't just be yourself. It has to be the whole neighborhood and also, by building that wonderful friendship in the neighborhood, that then became...when I would have to go downtown to take a verdict, I'd be out walking the streets trying to find somebody to come and take care of the kids while I went down the street and there were all kinds of people in the neighborhood who would come over and sit with the kids while I would go down and take a verdict downtown because the juries in those days couldn't be separated. They had to make a decision and sometimes it would be really late at night, you know, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00 o'clock at night and people in the neighborhood always came over and helped me. So, as I say, you have to be nice to everybody and you have to really do things for other people because when you do things for other people, it comes back to you eventually somehow. You don't see it ahead of time. You can't predict how it's going to happen.

Maureen Zegel: So you adopted Jack?

Anna Forder: Then I adopted Jack, yeah, right, so now I had two little boys. It soon became quite obvious that Peter was somewhat learning disabled so he had to have special schooling. It wasn't severely learning disabled. It was a reading problem and math problem and a little hyperactivity but he did have a gift. He was a superb athlete, and when I say superb, I mean, really, really a good athlete and with boys, that's very, very important because men really look up, they really adore good athletes. And Jack, fortunately, was intellectually gifted. He's a very, very smart kid and even to today, he's very, very bright and really, really...he's a good writer, he's the kind of kid that can get along with people and Peter is the same way. They both have that kind of personality.

Maureen Zegel: Having a mother who knew half the population in the state of Missouri [inaudible 39:31]....

Anna Forder: Yeah, I think it helped a little bit by having a lot of people around.

Maureen Zegel: You were talking about your life up to that point. Even up to that point, you had a significant influence on so many people, as a person who worked for the juvenile court, think about all the children you saw and met and being a lawyer and, as you said, taking any client who'd walk in the door, think about all those people you helped, and then as a judge, think about all those people you had influence over, their lives.

Anna Forder: Yeah. Well, I remember one kid. Many years later I remember one kid coming up to me and saying, "You don't remember who I am" and she gave me her name and she said, "You know, you were the only one at the juvenile court that ever cared for me," which sort of hit my heart because she was not a terribly successful person but she at least was not in jail and she was raising her own kids and taking care of her own kids. Then I remember a couple when I became a judge, it was before they had joint custody arrangements in domestic relations and this man and woman came in and they wanted to have joint custody and I said, "Well, we can't do that" and this is what they wanted and I said, "Okay, I'll tell you what: I'm not going to go with you but don't ever come back and challenge this order that I'm giving you because..." ...I said "it won't hold up in court but I'm going to go with you because I think that's what you want" and I heard from this woman many years later, actually it wasn't so long ago, she said that those kids were both grown, they're both happy. It worked out very, very well and she said, "I remember you telling me, 'Don't ever challenge this in court'" but it was kind of like, I wanted to do what was the right thing for her and her husband and for their children but, by law, it wasn't actually copacetic. I kind of went around the edge of the law to get it done.

Maureen Zegel: Don't you think judges get to that a little?

Anna Forder: Oh, yeah. You do get to do it and I remember very clearly a very, very unfortunate case where a son came...the father was out working on his car...I can't remember exactly how it happened but the son came in and was beating up the mother and he yelled at the son and the son went outside and was going to kill the kid but he not only shot him once, he shot him several times and I put the man on probation. I mean, it was really kind of shocking that would put somebody who killed somebody on probation but I considered it to be one of these kind of cases that was justified because this man would never do this again. It was a circumstance in which he was protecting his family and his life and a lawyer said to me...I said something about it and he said, "Judge, you remember that he killed a guy." The lawyer who was talking to me was a lawyer who had a social degree. Now, he was trying to caution me that we don't want this to hit the newspapers, we don't want that and he said, "He did kill somebody" so I said, "No, this man, of all the people that I've seen, even though he did kill the boy, he deserves probation." He

was on probation for five years and of course there were no problems after that. But it was a shocking case but it was one where I really went out on a limb to get that done. Some of those kinds of things can be very distressing.

Maureen Zegel: How long were you a judge?

Anna Forder: Thirty-two years. I was a full-time judge for about 22 years and then a part-time judge for about 10 years. When I was a part-time judge, I got sent out to different places in Missouri. I would go and try a case in Marble, Missouri or down in Cape Girardo or up in Troy or out in Montgomery City or Kansas City or something like that and that was kind of fun. And I didn't have to work full-time, but then I decided after a while that I recall clearly that there were some male judges who kind of hung on a little bit too long, you might say. I decided I was not going to be one of those kind of judges. So I turned my judge card in, I put my bar license on "retired" status and three weeks later I got a jury summons. I had to go back out and serve as a juror downtown.

Maureen Zegel: And had you ever been on a jury?

Anna Forder: No, no, of course I'd never been on a jury but I'd seen many juries, of course.

Maureen Zegel: And what was that like?

Anna Forder: Well, it was kind of interesting but I didn't get chosen on the jury; I was on a panel but I was too far back. I was 41 or 42 or something and they stopped at 38 so I was too far back to get chosen. But I'll probably get called again sometime.

Maureen Zegel: If you live in the city, you'll get called a lot.

Anna Forder: And then I worked as a librarian. I worked at the library for a while and then they kept changing the computer program about every year or two and I decided that was not a real good thing because I was not really computer adept and so I'm a volunteer at the library and I volunteer delivering Meals on Wheels and so I know all my Meals on Wheels people. I'm friends with all of my Meals on Wheels people. I have kind of a regular route on Monday that I go around and I enjoy my grandchildren.

Maureen Zegel: How many grandchildren do you have?

Anna Forder: Five grandchildren. Both Peter and Jack are married and Peter has three kids and Jack has two.

Maureen Zegel: Talk a little bit about the women you've met over the years.

Anna Forder: Oh, yes, some wonderful people, yeah.

Maureen Zegel: And how they've made a difference. You've made a difference in a lot of people's lives. Talk about some of the other women you've known who have made differences, big and small.

Anna Forder: Well, Juanita Evans at the juvenile court, she was a social worker in the juvenile court. She really made a difference in my life. I really enjoyed working with her and she taught me a whole lot. She was a supervisor and she just taught me a lot about dealing with black kids; she taught me a lot about dealing with kids who were confined in detention and dealing with some of the other employees at the juvenile court, some of whom were a little bizarre. She was a wonderful role model and a wonderful teacher. And then I got to meet Ruth Bader Ginsburg and I was quite interested in meeting her.

Maureen Zegel: When did you meet her?

Anna Forder: I met her at a reception at the White House. Jimmy Carter had a reception at the White House for the National Association of Women Judges. And I also got to meet Sandra Day O'Connor there and this was before Ruth Bader Ginsburg was on the Supreme Court and then I met her later again when she was actually on the Supreme Court. And then, all the women that we got together and we started the Women Lawyers Association together and they were looking for the first president and I didn't want to do it because there was so much and I said, "Okay, look, I'm going to do this, I'll be the president until we reach the point of which we're going to have an election for a new president." So the first year I was the president of the Women Lawyers Association and I don't know that I was really a very successful president with the Lawyers Association but we kept it together, we kept it organized and we got things sort of put together about what we were going to do, et cetera and that's what we got done essentially the first year and now it's grown into this big organization that has a foundation and everything.

Maureen Zegel: And what was the purpose of the Women Lawyers Association?

Anna Forder: Well, it was really to promote women to be judges and to promote women into being members of big law firms and to promote young women going through law school. And we have a scholarship fund. We give money to at least two or three young women every year to help defray the cost of law school. I don't know how much money we give each one of them. I think it's two and it will be a student at Wash U, St. Louis U or SIU-Carbondale. We have the three schools; we give money to some young woman who goes to one of those schools. It just helped us with camaraderie and finding jobs and then beginning to encourage more women to run for the state legislature. It was the avenue to get lawyers into running for the state legislature and promoting women's issues. We had Marion Cannes and Sue Shearer who were our big heroes in those days and they would come and they supported the Women Lawyers Association and Marion was a Republican and Sue was a Democrat and the two of them worked hand-in-hand with each other on all women's issues, on early childhood education, helping out single mothers, getting medical care for children, that kind of thing. And most of us were new lawyers because, you see, there weren't very many always. There was Doris Banta and here was Margaret Nolan and there was Anne Nederlander, there was Sue Goodwin and...I can't remember her name. There were very few women that were actually working in law that we could look and we could emulate. But they were all very helpful with us. They encouraged us tremendously. Oh, I know the woman who was the librarian at St. Louis U and I can't remember her name. Anyway, she was very helpful too. So those were some of the women that got us going and we got thinking, if they can do it, we can do it. We don't have to be alone in this. We can make it work. And so, of course, when I got appointed as a circuit judge, there were no other women appointed as circuit judges in Missouri.

Maureen Zegel: You were the first?

Anna Forder: It was totally unheard of. And someone said, "What was it like?" I said, "I was really scared the first day I had to walk out on that bench." It was pretty scary but you have to go ahead and you got to do it. You got to take the bull by the horns and you got to move with it. I remember my son talking to me about getting a job and I said, "Why don't you apply for it?"

He goes, "Mom, I don't know whether I'm really ready for it," and I said, "Pete, do you think that I knew exactly how to be a circuit judge when I walked out on that bench the first day?" I said, "No, you have to grow into it because there's no way to have a preconception. You can look at other judges. You can say, well I can think, I know how so-and-so acts or so-and-so acts but you don't know it until you're making the decisions yourself." So I said, "You don't have to know what the path is before you go down the path. You have to sometimes make your way as you go down the path."

Maureen Zegel: And be brave enough to take the first step.

Anna Forder: That's right, you have to take that first step and you got to go with it. And I think Lisa van Amburg said it one time, she said, "Anna, you were fearless. You were absolutely fearless" and I went, "Oh, no, I wasn't fearless." I said, "I was plenty afraid but I just decided, somebody's got to do this. We've got to get this done. We can't sit in the shadows for the rest of our life. And then we've got to encourage other young women to do that, got to feel the breeze in your hair," so to speak.

Maureen Zegel: Can you talk about some of the challenges you've had as a woman in your career, how they would be different than being, say, a male judge or a male whatever?

Anna Forder: I mean, to tell you the truth, some of the differences are, for instance, our family had a...I'm digressing a little bit here but, for instance, our family had a real estate business and when my brother was younger, he just walked right into that real estate business. I mean, it was just given to him. There was never any invitation to my sister or I to go into the real estate business. We were never considered. I mean, it was just never going to be part of our life, to be able to go into the real estate business. We were expected to get married, quite frankly, and have children and have a rich husband or have a husband supports because that was the 1950's. That's how people lived in the 1950's. I suddenly realized that's not going to be my life. I'm out of college now and I've got to do something and I had to go to work so I went to work at the juvenile court and then, of course, things begin to build after that. Then you begin to get some maturity and you begin to get some self-confidence, hey, I can do this job; hey, I can do another job; hey, I can do a better job; I can do this kind of work; I can do that kind of work. As you mature and you see

more things, more things begin to open up to you but, as a woman, there were certain things that you couldn't do. In other words, could I have been a steel worker back then and made a lot of money as a steel worker? No. In fact, I don't know that that would even be open to you today. I mean, I'm looking at these buildings being built in the central west end, I don't see one female steel worker on those entire crews. Now, why is that that there are no women on those steel worker crews? I see people doing concrete work. Do I see any women? No, I don't see any women.

Maureen Zegel: They hold the signs on roadways.

Anna Forder: That's right, yeah. So you may see on a big construction site, you may see one woman, two women, that's all. You never see more than that and those kind of jobs are...I don't know whether we don't put women into those jobs or we don't encourage women to do those jobs. Those are high paying jobs.

Maureen Zegel: The military is beginning to change.

Anna Forder: Yes, that's beginning to change, I agree, that's moving along and there have been big changes in the military because when I was in Vietnam, there were very, very few women in the military in Vietnam. They were scarce as hen's teeth. I met a few but there were not many. Most of the women were in jobs back in the States in supportive kinds of jobs, I think. The women in the military, of course...ships, oh, my God, no; oh, there are no women on ships; oh, women on ships? Oh, that will be the end of the Navy. You know the ships will sink or whatever, I guess, I don't know what they think, or the women will run the boat into something else. So, yeah, that's changing and that's been very helpful I think to women, to have those kinds of jobs opened to them. It's a way to get ahead. And certain fields, of course, are still open but when you look at, say, for instance, nursing, you see more men becoming nurses than you ever saw before. That was a woman's profession. Why is it a woman's profession because women couldn't go to medical school? Now women are able to go to medical school on an equal basis and so you're seeing more doctors and you're seeing more young women be able to take leadership positions in those kinds of professions. And some of these professions, they're hard-lined professions; you still don't see very many women.

Maureen Zegel: And I don't think even the military is going to open up to that kind of thing because women are being looked at as they have the brain power and they also have the physical power to do just about anything that men have to do in the military because, first of all, it's getting less and less physical. It's more and more technical.

Anna Forder: How do you get that drum to where it's supposed to go, right?

Maureen Zegel: So physically challenging jobs will be a thing of the past in another...

Anna Forder: Well, I always tell people and groups of women, I always look around and [inaudible 58:36] women and I said, "Now, be careful because..." ...I said, "you got to keep the pressure on because you will lose ground if you don't keep the pressure on. The testosterone will take over and you'll get put back in the place where you were before, being told what to do, told how to do it and that sort of thing." I mean, that's what so disappointing about women in many Third World countries, is that they do not have a chance. They don't get to feel the breeze in their hair. They don't get the chance to be in a position of leadership and using their brain power, thinking up new creative things to do and that sort of thing and it's very sad.

Maureen Zegel: Yeah. My daughter-in-law comes from [inaudible 59:21].

Anna Forder: Yeah, right.

Maureen Zegel: Any South American and Central American countries, women suffer. Do you go out and address groups of women or young girls?

Anna Forder: I don't do it so much anymore. I used to a lot but I don't do it so much anymore. I mean, I'm in my retirement phase now. I'm still active and I help out and I'm on a couple boards and I'm on the board of Independence Center that helps seriously mentally ill people and those kinds of things but in terms of giving speeches and going out and talking to folks, I don't do it as much anymore. I'm not in the game so much anymore so that I don't have those kinds of things to talk about, to say that would be really interesting anymore. You begin to flatten out a little bit. You're not as high on the game.

Maureen Zegel: Right, I understand. Is there anything we missed?

Anna Forder: I'm not remembering anything we missed. I'm not thinking of anything else. I can't think of anything else, Maureen. That's the story, so to speak.

Maureen Zegel: And I'm sticking with it.

Anna Forder: Yes.