

ORAL HISTORY

of McCormick House

Marcia Goltermann (MG)

**Interviewed by Dave Oberg (DO), Elmhurst History Museum
Executive Director**

DO: I'm Dave Oberg, I'm the director of the Elmhurst History Museum, and it's wonderful to be here today and working with our friends at the Elmhurst Art Museum. And I'm just wondering if you would share with us your name and tell us where and when you were born.

MG: I'm Marcia Goltermann. I was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1931.

DO: Wonderful. And what is your relationship to the McCormick House?

MG: Basically it was always the Fick house for me because I lived next door to the Mies house when it was on Prospect Street and I still live there.

DO: Good. And can you share with us some of your favorite memories of this house.

MG: Yes, yes. Ray and Maryanne Fick lived in the Mies house, slash McCormick house, slash Fick house. While in the fun days we went next door to that house, sometimes for parties, sometimes for dinner and we'd sit out in the backyard with the Ficks. So the house was our neighbor's, they were our neighbors. Maryanne was not a big cook so we ordered out a lot. Anyway, very nice people. And Ray Fick was the mayor of Elmhurst at one point. He was the one that actually—the underpass, where it is now, the only underpass that Elmhurst had, when he was mayor he got that pushed through. But he was a great guy so it was fun to be there and in the McCormick, Mies, Fick house with him.

DO: How has this house changed since you first encountered it? And what are your thoughts about that?

MG: Well after a while after the Ficks sold the house to the Elmhurst Art Museum, slash fine arts center it was called then, it was vacant in the house there and the board, the Elmhurst Fine Arts Center--there was another name to it besides that--had their board meetings there. So it wasn't cared for in those couple of years that it was there and then when they moved it over here, then it became treasured.

DO: So how do you feel, what do you believe is the significance of this house to Elmhurst and to the world beyond?

MG: Well it's like a little jewel I think right here, and we've heard that expression before about this house because the lines are very clean. It's significant in that the

style is a mid-century style that you don't see in the western suburbs very often. So not only is the style interesting, significant, but the fact that it's right here in the middle of Elmhurst, across the street from the train station where people can have access to it, is a significant factor.

DO: So how do you feel the community reacted to this house when it was a residence? Did people have things that they said about it?

MG: As a residence? I don't know. I never heard anything negative about it. It was very, I don't want to say secluded, but it was on a deep lot so it was set back from the street so I think it wasn't anything prominent that anyone said too much about. It was different from the usual western suburb houses but it wasn't too different.

DO: What about when it was moved? Do you remember any public reaction?

MG: We were out of town when it moved so I never saw it move but it was interesting in that when the house went on the market and that board at that time had an architect on the board. His name was, I can't think of his name now, he worked for that big architectural firm, the biggest one in Chicago. Can you tell me what that one is and then I'll tell you—*(turns to audience for name of firm)* Yeah, he worked for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. And his grandfather moved houses. This was an architect that lived in Elmhurst. And I'll think of his name as soon as I leave here. But he lived here and he was on the board for the Elmhurst Civic Center, Fine Arts Center, and when he heard that the house was going on the market, and it was presented to that board that they should buy the house. He, the architect that was on—I can't remember his name, but he said no problem because his grandfather moved houses. So that settled it. So we decided to buy it and move it because we already had the land.

DO: What was your reaction, and maybe do you know any public reactions as well, when they transformed this into a space to exhibit art?

MG: I thought it was right. It was the right thing to do. Yeah.

DO: Now how would you like to see this house changed for the future?

MG: I have no thoughts on that. How can you change it for the future when it's such a futuristic looking house looking anyway?

DO: What would you say is important for people to know as they experience and visit this house?

MG: I suppose the design of the house, the functionality of it, the less is more significance. It's not ornate, it's very clean in its style.

DO: Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to share about the house?

MG: Let's see. I think it's evolved very well. You know, for the last twenty years. It, for a while, it had a problem because the offices were in the house and that was all that we had, the house for the offices. And most people did not like that. Or it was hard to use a house as a functional office. So since that was moved, the office was moved from the house and the house was freestanding as it is. It's more pure style wise and historically. What was your question again?

DO: I just wanted to know what other things you wanted to share about the house.

MG: Uh-huh. It's become more worldwide too. Now that it's a house and not the office house.

DO: Wondering if you would speak to us a little bit about your involvement with the Elmhurst Art Museum.

MG: Well I was on the board for six years. And now my daughter has taken my place, which is a good thing. That's been my involvement plus the fact that I was there when it started. And then it was probably ten years or so that I wasn't involved at all. But then recently, we support it and promote it.

DO: Good. Is there anyone else you think we should talk to?

MG: Well there was a director that I thought was a very influential director. Her name was Jenny Gibbs, and she's now in New York City running the Sotheby graduate program there. Talk to her. She would be glad to talk to you.

DO: Any last thoughts that you want to share with us?

MG: It's nice to see all these people here. Yes, thanks.

DO: Thank you so much. We really appreciate your time.

MG: You're welcome.

