

Interview with Marianne Ludwig
Interviewed by Cindy Sprinzl
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10:10 AM
Tremont Scoops 2362 Professor Street, Cleveland, Ohio

Cindy Sprinzl: ...Marianne Ludwig, its ten ten in the morning on Thursday October thirtieth 2003. Um, hi Marianne.

Marianne Ludwig: Hi.

CS: Could you ah, spell your name for us?

ML: Its spelled M-a-r-i-a-n-n-e last name Ludwig, L-u-d-w-i-g.

CS: Thank you, um, okay where do you live in Tremont?

ML: Uh, um we live in an west seventh street ah, we were the first people to put down money on the Tremont West Project.

CS: Um.

ML: So we've lived here seven years now.

CS: I see, and is that why you chose to move to Tremont, because of, of the project or you just wanted to come back to the neighborhood.

ML: Well, I had been aware of Tremont for many years, uhm, I uh, was in Tupperware for fifteen years and um, I had a lot of party chains down here and I used to always enjoy the neighborhood, and then when we saw a newspaper article that they were building new houses down here, um, but it was still going to be in the context of a historic um, juxtaposition between old housing and new housing um, my husband and I have always appreciated old neighborhoods and old lifestyles and ah, we had always had old homes and so, ah, we looked at it as an opportunity to have a new home in an old neighborhood that had good history um, neither of us is, has ever been comfortable with the idea of living in a cracker box subdivision um, so this was an opportunity for us to build a new house um, I had never had the opportunity to live in a brand new house and um, so the outside of the house looks new, but the inside looks like an old house.

CS: Um, did your parents live in the neighborhood?

ML: No, I didn't grow up in Cleveland, Um John and I met in law school at Case and ah, so I now have officially lived in Ohio longer that I have lived in, where I was born, um, but um, I did not grow up here.

CS: Um, I hope you don't mind me asking you what nationality are your parents.

ML: Um, I'm German on both sides of the family, uh, from um Germantownship, Indiana, which is near Evansville, ah, my husband is um, English on his mothers side and Irish on his fathers side. Highly conflicted.

CS: [laughing] So do you speak German?

ML: Uh, little, little bits not a lot, um my parents were a part of that generation where, your language got beaten out of you when you went to school, and so, its um, their parents spoke German in the home, and so you know my grandparents, I knew all of my grandparents quite well they all spoke German in the home, um my father later tried to renew his interest in the language in college, um, but as far as any fluency no.

CS: Um, lets see, what are some of your earliest childhood memories in Indiana?

ML: Well, in Indiana is were my grandparents are from, um, I was born and raised in Illinois, near Chicago, um, and um, you know post World War Two um, I'm sort of in the middle, middle range of the baby boomers, um, early fifties and um, memories I mean lots of space lots of kids lots of time to play, um, everybody had a yard had a swing set, um a lot of freedom, um, basically a lot of time to be a kid, um, we rode our bikes everywhere, um, and at that time they were building lots of, lots of houses for returning vets, you know starting families, and so, we didn't have any side walks we just had lots of winding roads and um, lots of fairly safe places away from major highways that you know, kids could play, um, this time of year the one thing I, I kid, kids miss a lot ah, you know we used to, the pile of leaves used to all be piled up in the streets and you'd set fire to them and that would keep you warm when you were out trick or treating, cause you'd have all of these piles of burning leaves, that's everybody used to burn they're leaves, you know, um, kids today they don't know what that's like at all, you know.

CS: It's against the law to burn your leaves now isn't it? [laughing]

ML: Absolutely, yeah its, yeah a lot of fun things are against the law.

CS: [laughing]

ML: So-

CS: Um, do you have a favorite story or song that German ?

ML: eh, hmn, not really, um- -

CS: A custom? German customs that you noticed growing up?

ML: Well, I uh, yea, uh, you know, eh, eh, when your growing up a lot of times you don't really know understand things as, as uniquely one ethnicity or the another its your

whole experience, um, I have, I have my grandmothers Springer Lee molds, I mean I real, you know, of course she made those cookies every year, um at Christmas time, um, it wasn't a cookie that I particularly enjoyed to eat but I enjoyed the process I enjoyed watching her do it and all the difficulties she would have in getting the special ingredients. You always had to go the pharmacy to get the hearts horn to put in it, uh, which is something that, now, now you would call it bakers ammonia, um, but um, so I mean that was something that was uniquely part of our experience, um, that, my grandparents built an addition onto our house, my mothers parents, and so, we saw them everyday and, from the time I was about six, and um, you know, eh, they were small time shop keepers until after the war and, ah, at that point in time uh, they closed up and grandpa went to work for a factory for a number of years, a lot of the small neighborhood businesses didn't survive because of the um, everything was disrupted by the war, people didn't have any money, and when they closed their books they closed a lot of debt, um, and um, so a lot of those little mom and pop operations were gone, um, grandma always wanted to be a store keeper, that's what she wanted, she grew up on a farm but she always wanted to have a store and, grandpa was pretty happy to give her what ever she wanted. My other grandparents um, stayed on, they had a truck farm, um, very small, small farm, I mean um, ah, and um grandpa used to drive fruit around to customers um, fruit and eggs and chickens and, and um, then he too, after the war there was a lot of factory work available, and really that's how these folks ended up with a middle class life style and were able to retire pretty well, um but to me, its amazing that you've got um, four people none of whom got farther than the eighth grade, and every single one of their children went to college, and most with graduate degrees. I think my aunt Tootsie was the only one of grandma and grandpas kids who did not have a graduate degree, uh, and my mother had a graduate degree. So.

CS: Um, lets see, so um, obviously you work here at Scoops, um, I mean were you here when you first moved to the neighborhood?

ML: No, no, no, uh, well its...um, when we first moved here there was, ice cream was something we enjoyed going out for and there really wasn't a place near by and I wasn't particularly happy with were I was working at the time, and uh, so we started just half jokingly looking around for a building, and um, so it took like maybe three years to find a building and another couple of years to get the building in shape, and then to open the business, and so it was, it was, like a four, four, to five year process, um to get this place open, um, so I mean it was not something that was necessarily a life long ambition, I, I consider it just a, another in the continuing saga of the varied things I've done over a period of time, um, its, its very challenging because I never wanted to have a business that would cater to what my grandma would have called the carriage trade, um I wanted it to be here for my neighbors. So, its, its been very, very challenging, cause on the one hand I only want to have stuff in here that I enjoy, and uh, I want things to be of good quality, because we deserve it, um, but on the other hand you have to always balance that between what people can afford and what they value, and um, so its, its been a challenge to keep prices reasonable but yet to have a high quality product.

CS: Um, do you know what business used to be in this building?

ML: Oh yeah, um this was the, well first of all the house behind the storefront um, dates from 1893. Um, they chopped off the um, uh, porch in fact the front door to the house is still back in that closet, back in the corner. If you open the closet door the back wall of the closet still has the decorative trim, it was the front door. Um, and um, they chopped off the porch, added this storefront, ah, probably about 1940 ish give or take. This was the original home of Morgan Printing Company, um, which is great because we've got steel beams running through the floor in here so it's a, its pretty solid um, and then after that it was, ah, ah, barber shop, uh, florist shop, a shoe store, a florist shop, and a barber shop, um the last phone number in the directories was back in 1985 for the store front for the business, and um, so it really has not been used for anything since ya, uh, since 1985 other than whoever owned it maybe did some storage, or, fixit work, or something like that, uh, and then uh, my husband and I bought the building in 1999 and um, but the business didn't actually get open until two years later.

CS: So, you own the house in the back too then?

ML: Well its all connected- -

CS: Okay, okay.

ML: It's all one property.

CS: Um, so you know your neighbors fairly well?

ML: Oh yeah.

CS: There seems to be a lot of renovations going on down the street, um, are those for homeowners or other businesses?

ML: Well, it just depends. I mean a lot of the buildings, buildings that have storefronts are being rehabbed for business, um, there is a lot of rehabilitation of the housing stock, um, thank goodness its, its, a lot of this is to the point of you either rehab it or you tear it down. Uh, a number of homes have just been taken down, um, some because they should've, and some because it was expedient. Uh, um, I'm not thrilled about the expedient ones. Um, its, its, very upsetting to me that uh, its much easier to tear something down and put up new than it is to cherish what you have, and it is also very upsetting to me that we have a mind set and tax incentives that encourage that um, I, I think there are a lot of landfills filled with beautiful old buildings that never should have been torn down, um, so, that's, that's a constant push and pull in a neighborhood that is coming back like this one, balancing all of those competing interests.

CS: So, um, do you like the changes in the neighborhood that you've been seeing?

ML: I like some of the changes I've seen. I don't like others. Um, and, and I, ah, ah, I'm, constantly frustrated by knowing what could be and what we have and how to get from one place to the other and not seeing that its happening. Um, we raised two kids in

Lakewood, we lived in Lakewood for Twenty years, um there is a lot of similarities between the Eastern end of Lakewood and the Tremont neighborhood, um, both in the variety of ethnicities as well as the variety of incomes, uh, uh, Eastern end, we lived right on the edge of bird town in Lakewood, and um, on the other side of Madison was bird town and on our side was sort of middle class, and yet we were not considered nearly as good as the people on the quote other side of the tracks over on Edgewater. So, we were kind of like in the middle and, um, I can see a lot of similarities, the problem is I don't see the public will too maintain and improve as I see in Lakewood, and um, there's too many people pushing too much paper for not enough result.

CS: Um, so, are you familiar with the Tremont West Corporation?

ML: Oh, absolutely.

CS: And do you feel that they are being a big asset to the neighborhoods with the things that they have- -

ML: Ah, I think they've done a lot of good things when it comes to residential development, um, I am concerned that, that a number of projects including the Tremont Ridge project, was built one way and its scooping out not exactly as it was advertised. Um, some of that happens just because things happen, um, some of it I think could have been controlled better, um, I don't think that they have done a very good job of commercial development, um we are reaping the whirlwind now of decisions that were made back in the 1980s when there was a lot of vacant land, and a lot of dilapidated buildings to be taken down, and um, there was no public will to address the issues of well what happens in ten years if all of the store fronts are occupied, and we have no parking, um, and rather than meeting the issue head on and reserving spaces for parking and investing money in some of that, um, they just decided to have a public persona that said we do not have a problem. And so now we, were reaping the whirlwind, and ah, we've gotten to a point now where if we don't find some way to address this issue it, it will stifle any further development.

CS: Are you involved in any of the Block Clubs?

ML: Oh, absolutely, yeah.

CS: How does that work?

ML: Um, John and I belong to the North of Literary Block Club and, um, I was the chair five years ago, um, for a year. I think it is very important to change over leadership on a yearly basis, its, it's a lot of responsibility and its also um, its important to have multiple points of view. Um, North of Literary is a pretty active block club, unfortunately its very much skewed towards what I call the new people. Um, because most of the people that are building on the ridge are people who are used to um, suburban sensibilities, they are interested in the workings of government, they pay attention to what goes on. They tend to be more involved and more aware, and also since they're new to the neighborhood they want to find out whats going on, um so we don't have as much input from people up the hill, who

tend to be older long time residents who have been there done that and are sort of either tired of fighting or just don't really care they just sort of insulated themselves from whats going on around them, and, and um, then you have a third group that is either old or new, they only come out of the wood work when something is really getting their goat or they need your support for something and then they get your support and then they leave again. So, but that's the dynamic of any volunteer organization.

CS: What kind of topics, you know issues do you address at the Block Clubs?

ML: Um, uh, supposedly it doesn't always happen, but supposedly, uh, whenever there is a new business coming into the area the Block Club supposed to be consulted, uh, um, supposedly, whenever there is a new house development or something the Block Club is supposed to be consulted. Um, a lot of times people that have particular issues with a property that's not being kept up, um, you know the block club will be, we'll be asked for support from the adjacent property owners. Um, we've gone to City Council meetings uh, in support of having property condemned, and things like that. Um, we have a little park that we built and are forced to maintain, because the city of Cleveland does not accept its responsibility to take care of its property. Um, lets see, what else do we do. We also, you know, try to keep each other informed about problems with crime, um, Citizens initiatives, its also an opportunity to get together with your neighbors once a month, and keep up to date on whats going on. Um, we have a core group of maybe ten to fifteen people that are pretty active ever single month come, and then another group of maybe ten to twenty that just kind of show up when they got a burr under their saddle, or, something. So, but sometimes the meetings can be pretty lively, and um, yeah, our Block Club is one of the most faithful of all of them. You know there are a number of them in the neighborhood, ten or eleven now, uh, um, which is pretty amazing, because in ward thirteen, I think there may only be that many Block Clubs in the whole entire part of the ward. And, um, but Tremont definitely is a group of people that likes to chime in on whats buggin them.

CS: Are the Churches also involved in this- -

ML: You know unfortunately, um, many of our Church neighbors don't get involved with what goes on around them. Um, they close their gates and just sort of ignore whats going on, with some very notable exceptions. I mean, now, see in our Block Club area we have Enunciation Church and they are very insular, um they are the mother Church for the Greek Orthodox faith for the city of Cleveland, and uh, almost all of their parishioners live out in the suburbs and come to Church, and as soon as Church is over they leave, they don't patronize local businesses, they don't get involved with anything local. Uh, the only time that you go to Enunciation is if there is a public meeting or something, or they rent their hall out. Um, so there's very little participation in the community, um, which is kind of a shame, but that's the way they chose it, and um, then there are a couple of other Churches in the Block Club area that I really don't know a whole lot about, they're awfully busy on Sunday, but you don't, you don't really see who goes there and representatives of the Churches don't attend Block Club meetings.

CS: Uh, so do you attend Church in the neighborhood?

ML: No, um, I, I don't. Um, we've looked into several different Churches, uh, John and I are sort of at a point in our lives right now where we're just kind of frustrated with organized religion, um, that's not to say that I'm not a spiritual person. I just chose not to particularly involved with any one congregation, um, I laughing say that, uh, yea, Sunday mornings tend to be the times I go out and [laugh] do stuff on the street, for the public good, and uh, so when I finish weeding the flower beds on Professor street in front of the places that don't take care of theirs, or I take the paint out and I paint the graffiti I finish up the job and say Amen, and that's, that's my Church.

CS: Okay. Um, lets see, you were living here in 1999- -

ML: Oh, yeah.

CS: Did you participate in the public meeting with the EPA about the Matter Site?

ML: Oh, Master Metals site--

CS: Yeah.

ML: No, um, actually air quality is not, we have a number of people that are very interested in air quality and, and that kind of thing, that's not one of my issues. Um, uh, I mean I'm, eh, I have so many issues already that's not one that I was particularly involved with.

CS: Um, I know I'm jumping around here, but ah, you said you raised two children are they still in the neighborhood? Are they still at home?

ML: No, um, no my kids aren't home. Um, Caroline actually bought a little house in Ohio City. Um, over a year ago now, so she lives over behind the Carnegies Library over in Ohio City, and our other daughter Shavonne she lives out of State.

CS: So uh, did you, do they have any of their German heritage? Uh, I guess its kind of hard to get much from their fathers- -[laughing]

ML: Yeah, they're kind of mixed up now. [laughing] Yeah.

CS: Okay, um well I think that's all the questions I have. I was just kind of interested in, um, how you felt about the neighborhood and a little bit about how you felt your culture, heritage is being preserved or not being preserved, um, in such a diverse neighborhood—

ML: Ah, were very committed to the neighborhood, but I, I came here because I choose to be here. I didn't come here to build a house and make a profit, and then...tick that off my list and move on. Um, that's a great fear that I have about a lot of the new building that is going on. Um, because that definitely is a major consideration for a number of people that are here. Um, I don't see myself living anyplace else, other than Tremont, unless, we had to move out of State, for um, job related or whatever. Um...so, with that as a given, I,

that's not to say that I don't understand that there are a lot of concerns. Um, this city, eh, eh, I mean Tremont is doing better than a lot of other places in the city, but that's not to say that it couldn't very quickly devolve into what it was fifteen to twenty years ago. Um, were still on the edge, and a lot of it has to do with the fact that there are some very poor decisions being made at 601 Lakeside, and also at our State government, and also at the Federal level, that are making it very difficult for urban environments to survive, um.

CS: What do you think um, how do you think Tremont is doing, being so successful against those odds. Um, its, you know in comparison to some of the other neighborhoods, or do you think their doing better?

ML: Um, we were very lucky to have an influx of artists and creative people in the mid 1980s, who looked at this as an opportunity to kind of hunker down and do their thing in the midst of an area that was not getting a whole lot of attention from building inspectors or any public officials and um, these buildings, the rents were inexpensive. They could do their thing and, and you know, build a community, uh, um, we also were very fortunate to have a number of people who just saw the tremendous possibilities in these old buildings, and start buying some of them up and doing some work at um, renovating them and turning them into businesses. Um, so, then we were also very lucky and this is where Tremont West comes in as a very positive influence to take full advantage of the cities use of the uh, tax abatement, and trying to build on, um, unused property to try and develop new housing, ah, um, so I mean there were a lot of years and a lot of plans that just. I would say it was a good ten to fifteen years of work, before you started to see this really, just really start to take off, and it wasn't until the mid 1990's that you saw it really take off. Um, one of the things that I find very endearing about Tremont is even though in a lot of other places you hear about, um, residents being very upset and very mean to new comers, who, you know, possibly they see as usurping they're neighborhood. Um, we were welcomed very warmly, and um, I, I think that is something that is, is distinctly a Tremont trait. This has been a very welcoming neighborhood, away from the times is was welcoming immigrants, you know. Well, were sort of immigrants too, you know were immigrants from the suburbs, and- -

CS: That's a great saying- -

ML: And its, uh, so, it, it has always been a very welcoming community, that's not to say that we don't have our rather loud disagreements, and there is some times when it is not an easy place to live, um, when you have so many people that are so passionate about so many things, but its never boring, and for anybody that uh, that just wonders why in the world there existing they should come here, because there is plenty to do, there's plenty more to do, and its never boring.

CS: Um, Okay, well I guess that's all. Thank you very much for, um, participating.

ML: Oh, your welcome, its very short, I thought it was going to be longer [laughing]

[end of tape]

