



City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



Project Name: *TWIG Oral History Project*

Title: *Interview with Linda Lovell*

Date of Interview: *February 8, 2021*

Location of Interview: *Interview was done via Zoom*

Interviewer: *MaryAnne Beatty*

Transcriber: *Meia Cacho*

Abstract: *Linda Lovell was born in San Antonio, Texas, moving to Kentucky at age three, and has lived in Alexandria her adult life. She has since decided to retire in Alexandria as she enjoys the many activities in the city. She talks about her love for antiques and cooking and how TWIG has been instrumental in making connections with other people with the same interests.*

Also present during the interview was Janet Hawkins.

This transcript has been edited by the interviewee and may not reflect the audio-recording exactly.

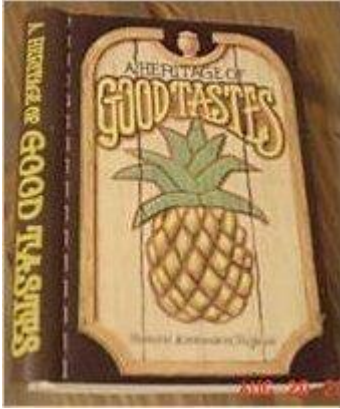
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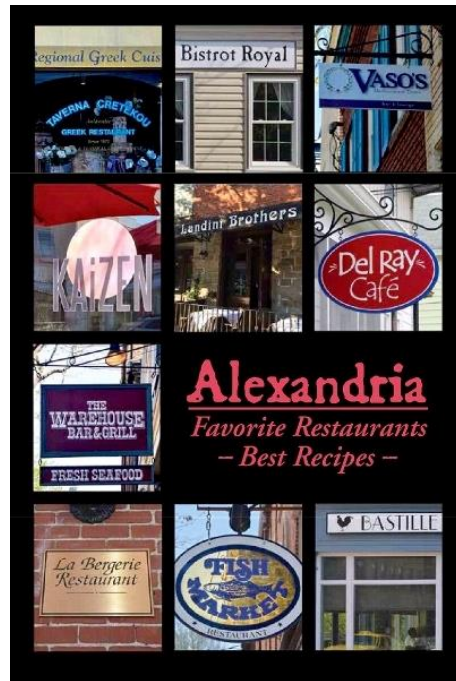
Introductions 00:00	
MaryAnne Beatty:	<p>Hi! My name is MaryAnne Beatty. And I am an active Twig, and I'm a member of the Historic Preservation Ad Hoc Committee. And I'm pleased to be with Linda Lovell, an Honorary Twig, a friend, and a neighbor. We're going to talk with her today about her experiences in Twig and get to know her a little better for our Oral History Project that we're doing for Twig, as well as for the city of Alexandria. So, thank you, Linda. Thank you for being on Zoom with us. I'm also with my colleague, Janet Hawkins, who is a member of—she's the chair of our committee. Anyway, hi, Janet! So, Linda, we are friends, and we've been friends for a while. It's so nice to get to interview you this way. Can you talk about your experiences? I know you grew up in Kentucky, and you came here for a federal career and had a very successful federal career, and after your retirement, joined the Twig and worked your way through the ranks. And you're now an Honorary Twig member. If we could start off, if you could just tell us how you got to Alexandria, Washington, a little bit about your career, and your life before Twig.</p>
Life Before Coming to Alexandria 01:35	
Linda Lovell:	<p>I will be happy to. I am, interestingly, was born—most people who know me think that I was born in Kentucky. I was not born in Kentucky. I was born in San Antonio, Texas. My mother and I were with my father at a then Army Air Corps base. I was born at the hospital there at what was then called Fort Kelly. I'm not too sure it still exists. When I was two months old, my father was sent to Germany. My mother and I went on a three-day railroad trip back to her hometown in Kentucky. My parents were both from that area. So, mother and I stayed there until after my father returned. And after he returned, he took part in the GI Bill, went to Valparaiso, Indiana. Mother and I went with him. He went to college, so I was at the Valparaiso Technical Institute, I think it was called then.</p> <p>At the age of three, my father was hired to be the communications engineer at a new radio station in a little town in Danville, Kentucky. So, we moved there, and I was the age of three. That is where I did grow up after the age of three. It was probably 8,000 people then. It's approximately 13,000 now. I still have family there. The radio station still exists, but</p>

	<p>I attended college at what started as—I started at Ursuline College in Louisville, Kentucky, a Catholic college. During my freshman year there, I transferred—sort of, this is a long story, which I’m not too sure we want to get into, but I was encouraged by a male professor to major in chemistry. The girls’ school did not have a chemistry program, but the boys’ school, Catholic school, Bellarmine University, did.</p> <p>And another student and I from Ursuline were encouraged to transfer; the same town, both in Louisville, Kentucky. We were driven there every morning by a man in a taxi cab, who would take us to college because, of course, we were still living in the dorms back at the girls’ school, but we were taken every day to our classes at Bellarmine University, and then the two colleges did merge. So, I graduated with a degree in chemistry. At the time that I graduated, in your senior year, you were encouraged to fill out many, many job opportunities. One of them was with the federal government. The Vietnam War was going on. So, the federal government was employing a number of women scientists because we would not be drafted.</p> <p>So, I actually had my position. I had three job offers with three different government agencies. Don’t tell this to today’s graduates because they would now be shocked. And I had my job in February of my senior year before I graduated in May. I was taking physical chemistry at the time. I wasn’t sure I was going to pass physical chemistry. I was like, “Well, let’s hope I pass this because I’ve already got a job waiting.” So five days after graduating from college, I came and took my job with the federal government. I was twenty-one years old.</p>
<p>Career 06:17</p>	
<p>MB:</p>	<p>Wow!</p>
<p>Linda Lovell:</p>	<p>Actually, I did live in Alexandria then, actually not too far from where I’m living now. It was in Seminary Hill Apartments, believe it or not. Yeah, with two other FBI employees, but then as the Crystal City area was beginning to develop in Arlington County, and as I got promotions, I moved into Arlington County [Virginia] and lived there for several years and actually was living there when I joined Twig.</p>
<p>MB:</p>	<p>Interesting. So, during your federal career, you worked downtown at the FBI headquarters for most of it?</p>

Linda Lovell:	I did. At the beginning of my career, the laboratory facility was located in the Justice Department Building. So, the J. Edgar Hoover Building was built, and the laboratory moved into that building. That is where—my entire career was spent with the laboratory.
MB:	Interesting.
Linda Lovell:	Thirty-eight, almost thirty-nine years.
MB:	Wow! Just a sidebar, when I worked at the Justice Department, I was in the solicitor general's office, and down the hall was Hoover's old office with his teapot still on his—where he would keep his tea. [laughter]
Linda Lovell:	Well, I was old enough that Mr. Hoover was the director when I came on board.
MB:	Anyway, small world. So, you had a very interesting career and retired, and then is that when you joined Twig, after your retirement?
Retirement and Joining the TWIG 08:25	
Linda Lovell:	Yes, about a year my retirement, I had known Janet Hawkins, who is joining us today, for a number of years through our volunteer work at one of the historic museums in Alexandria. I was looking for other ways to volunteer to fill my time. I had been a very busy person when I was working, so I felt that I needed to, and was still what I considered young. So, I needed to occupy time, and I knew the good work of Twig. And so I approached Janet, and Janet brought myself and another individual, who is a Twig member, in at the same time, Debbie Homburger in at the same time.
MB:	Interesting. And what did you get involved in when you started Twig? I know the [Thrift] Shop is always a first, stocking.
Linda Lovell:	Actually, yes. That was my first and then very early on, and I'm trying to forget [sic] which came first, but I'm pretty sure being chairman of the Cookbook Committee was my first job. At that time, we still had, I believe it was the second cookbook. <i>Always in Good Taste</i> , I believe.

	 <p>TWIG Cookbook <i>A Heritage of Good Tastes</i></p>
Janet Hawkins:	Didn't you help sell <i>Seaport Savories</i> ?
Linda Lovell:	I might have, yes.
JH:	I was the never-ending. We had 15,000 cookbooks to sell.
Linda Lovell:	<p>Yes. And they were stored at the hospital. Yes, they were stored in a basement area, and we would sell them at various events. We even sold them at Alexandria Farmers Market sometimes. We would sell them at River Farm [botanical garden] events, wherever we could find because we had a huge number of those and finally got rid of them, but I don't believe it was. I think that was still existing when I left that. And then I went and became a weekly Shop chair with Debbie Homburger when she was the Shop manager. I was one of the weekly Shop chairs. And then I became treasurer. I was treasurer for two years, both with Debbie and with Anita Carson, when they were both presidents. I was treasurer for two years. I have also been a co-chair of the Homes Tour. I forget exactly which year that was, but I was co-chair of the Homes Tour. As I began doing more things with Historic Alexandria's tourism, not tourism but historic properties, I became a Sustainer and now have become an Honorary.</p>
<p>Significant Contributions of the TWIG to the Community 11:47</p>	
MB:	During your time, what do you think are some of the most significant contributions that the Twig has made to the community and to the hospital?
Linda Lovell:	Well, I think for the hospital, definitely the scholarship. I was very happy when we—I know that the scholarship program was something that was early on in Twig. It had lapsed when I first joined, and it was something that we started again. I was

	<p>very happy to see that, that we started. My sister-in-law, she's retired now, but a nurse, and I have about three cousins who are nurses. I was very pleased when that scholarship program was reinstated. And then it's just amazing to me, the amount of funds that we have raised for instrumentation, for the specialized wings for women, for all of these kinds of things.</p> <p>I just think it's very special. On a community basis, not only, of course, a lot of this community is with the hospital, but I also feel that one of our fundraising efforts, the Homes Tour, the brochures, and the programs that were produced as part of that Homes Tour that included the histories of those houses that were toured, I think, is invaluable. And I am happy that we have preserved programs from all of those years of doing that. And hopefully, we'll be able to start that again.</p>
<p>Memorable TWIG Projects 13:39</p>	
<p>MB:</p>	<p>I hope so, yeah. So, you talked about some of the memorable projects you worked on. You talked about the cookbooks and the Homes Tour. What other things come to mind? Maybe things that you and Janet worked on together or just— [laughter]</p>
<p>Linda Lovell:</p>	<p>Janet and I, and Twig, I think, has finally decided they're maybe not having another cookbook, but after we sold, there was the fourth edition of the cookbook in which we solicited recipes from restaurants in Alexandria. That was something that I worked on with Janet. That was interesting not only because of the fact that we went out and got this participation from the Alexandria restaurants, which was a good community thing, but also, we had a group of cooks among the Twigs who tested these recipes to make sure that you could do them in a home kitchen.</p>



Alexandria Favorite Restaurants – Best Recipes Cookbook

And then we would have tasting events to see if they tasted, or if you had a problem making it. Should we include this? I remember there was one scone recipe, when I kept looking at it because there’s a lot of chemistry in cooking, and I keep looking at the recipe, and I kept thinking, “There’s nothing in this recipe that’s going to make these scones rise.” I thought, “Okay, but I’m going to make them.” I had a cooking sheet filled of just flat—it was edible. It was delicious, but it wasn’t a scone. So, we had to call the baker back, and she goes, “I can’t believe I left out the baking soda.” We’re like, “Yeah, that should make them rise.”

MB:

That’s funny. [laughter]

Linda Lovell:

Yeah, and then also, a lot of the chefs in Alexandria have started that they weigh things instead of using cups. They would weigh the flour. And also, everything ended up in grams or liters instead of actual—I remember getting an email from Cindy Peterson, she won’t mind if I mention this, saying, “What is 800 grams of eggs?” [laughter] That’s what the recipe had said, which a large egg is about 40 grams, and so I ended up telling her, “Try eight large eggs.” So, it was fun, a little frustrating. That’s the current one that I think there are still copies of.

<p>JH:</p>	<p>I'm going to interrupt real quickly. Yeah, I think one of the things that Linda is being very modest about that is that there were a lot of Twigs at the time who were questioning whether or not we should have another cookbook. Linda, I had a little group of people who met, and we discussed whether or not people do still buy cookbooks or use cookbooks. So, Linda did a little research on that. And we decided that people are still buying cookbooks. And so then we had to present that to the membership. We didn't really ask for their approval, but we sort of said, "You're never going to do this cookbook." But I was going to ask you before you move on to something else, if you would share in your interview what we used to do to sell cookbooks. There was a process at some of these farmers' markets and so on.</p>
<p>Linda Lovell:</p>	<p>Oh, right, yes. Yes.</p>
<p>JH:</p>	<p>And how many Twigs would get involved in doing the sales.</p>
<p>Working on the Cookbooks 17:57</p>	
<p>Linda Lovell:</p>	<p>Yes, so we made samples. I've forgotten that. Thank you, Janet. We made samples from our various recipes. We would present these at the farmers' market. And we would also—several of our—not only selling the cookbooks, but at our welcoming teas, almost all the recipes at the welcoming teas were out of our cookbooks. So that was another way we would use them, but there was a whole group of Twigs who would bake or cook. And depending upon our—whether it was going to be outdoors at Carlyle House [historic site] when they would have an event or, like I said, River Farm, or any of these places. I remember, at one time, we were at the Old Presbyterian Meeting House. And we would also have them available during Twig Homes Tour. There would be an area during the Homes Tour where we would—we would always have usually at a historic site, a rest area, restrooms, water, things like that for people, and we would be also offering our cookbooks. And we would have samples. So, there was a whole group of people who would participate in making the samples. And I enjoy cooking. Cooking and chemistry sort of go hand in hand; at least baking and chemistry go hand in hand.</p>
<p>Finding Lasting Relationships Within the TWIG 19:40</p>	
<p>MB:</p>	<p>Interesting. After all these years and all the fun projects and</p>

	<p>things that you've done, can you talk about the friendships you've made through Twig and some of the lasting relationships?</p>
<p>Linda Lovell:</p>	<p>Well, I'm still a member. Debbie Homburger and I, and Janet, a number of us still see each other, Anita went [also], before COVID. Debbie and I would have our lunch dates. We would also go to lunch together about every—at least we try to go once a month. Haven't been, of course, in some time, but see each other socially as well. And also, even as an Honorary, and I am glad that—I understand that the Honoraries are going to be more included in the emails and newsletters than had been in the past. I'm very glad to see that, but, yes, I've been able to develop—well, I know we knew each other in an exercise class before meeting in Twig, but have developed several. Since I've mentioned Cindy Peterson already, I was in buying, not too long after I moved into my condominium, I was at the Pier 1 [store], which doesn't exist anymore, buying a chair. And who comes in but Cindy and her husband. And I go, "Oh, good! You can put my chair in the car for me." [laughter] And, of course, he did. So, you know, it's little happenstance kind of things that are always enjoyable.</p>
<p>Continuing to Support the TWIG 21:40</p>	
<p>MB:</p>	<p>Yeah. And so why do you continue to support Twig in your role as Honorary?</p>
<p>Linda Lovell:</p>	<p>Well, I think because of the work that we do for the hospital. I think that anybody would want to—and it's coming up. It's going to be interesting with the hospital making the transition to the new site [as of 2021 the expected date for the hospital's new location will be 2028.] It will be interesting to see what happens to the old site, what happens to various—and also, just being able to have a place to give things that you think while you've enjoyed it, being apparel or home décor, or something like that, being able to give it to the Shop and knowing that someone else might enjoy it for a while if you've enjoyed it for so long. I think that's—I recently had a situation where my aunt passed three years ago, but her daughter is finally getting around to clearing through stuff and came across a number of White House ornaments which I had bought through the years mainly from Twig as a gift for my aunt. A number of us had similar ornaments, and I thought, "Well, let me give these to Twig because Twig will be able to get a nice donation for them, and someone will enjoy them." And Twig's money, all</p>

	the donation goes to the hospital, so it's a win-win situation.
Staying in Alexandria 23:31	
MB:	Yeah, yeah. My last question is, you've been involved in the community during your professional life, and you've retired, and you decided to retire in Alexandria. What makes it such a special community? And why have you decided to stay here?
Linda Lovell:	Well, if you figure out when I came, at twenty-one, my entire adult life has been here. There's actually a group of friends that we have all known each other since we were five years old. There's about nine of us. Only three have passed away. We still communicate with each other. We still know each other well. We're scattered all over. While I do have family still in that little town in Kentucky, most of my friends and most of the people that I wanted to travel socially with in my retirement were here. So, I felt that I could have—plus, there's theater [here.] Before COVID, there was theater and museums. While the little town I come from is not totally without culture, it is small. So much more activities for me to do here.
MB:	Yeah, yeah. Is there anything else I'd left out or anything else you'd like to add?
Linda Lovell:	Not I.
MB:	Okay.
JH:	I have one quick question to ask you, Linda, because I'm trying to remember this. You participated in the Antiques in Alexandria, [Charity Show] didn't you?
Linda Lovell:	Yes.
JH:	Do you remember anything about that, that you'd like to share today?
Linda Lovell:	Antiques in Alexandria, did Twig join in that as well?
JH:	Yes, Twig was one of the partners. It's actually something Anita Carson was very instrumental because of her friendship with Oscar Ryder [a founder and chairman of the annual Antiques in Alexandria show]
Linda Lovell:	With Oscar Ryder, right. Yes. I think that's how I got involved in Alexandria Association, actually, is through that. And then Historic Alexandria was also a beneficiary of Antiques in Alexandria. That was held before I joined Twig. That was held a great number of years. Refresh my memory. There was—or

	no, I'm thinking of a Homes Tour that Alexandria Association also had. That's different.
JH:	Yeah, that was a different thing.
Linda Lovell:	Yeah, that was different. Antiques in Alexandria was held at the Episcopal Seminary, yes. It was held in the spring or the fall.
JH:	It was in March, I believe.
Linda Lovell:	<p>March, yes, at the Episcopal Seminary. It was over a weekend. Interestingly enough, I am walking by one of the booths one day, and I recognized the name. I went up to them, and I said, "Excuse me. Where are you from?" They went, "Oh, we're from—" let me remember the name of that town. It's even smaller than Danville, but it's a very small town near Danville. And I went, "Oh!" I said, "Do you by any chance know—?" and they go, "Oh, yes." This particular individual had been deceased, but they were the younger part of the family. It was a family-owned antique business, and they would travel around to the antique shows. I kept running into them at antique shows. And then when I would go back to Kentucky, the husband belonged to the same church that I was in. [laughter] So I'm at mass one day, and he looked at me, and I looked at him. And we both sort of went, "Ha!" It sometimes shows you just how small this world can be, but those were—I think they sort of died out when the décor changed, and it's like antique values are not quite what they used to be. I have a house full of them and a condo full of them, which I'm not too sure who's going to get, expect that I do know the younger members of my family have already said they want this, this, and this. [laughter] A couple of my pieces are from my grandmother. I have a piece that is from the 1800s. I have several that go way back. One is a rocking chair that nobody's allowed to sit in, but we keep that. But it is interesting. Yeah, and I can't remember, Janet. I know that after Episcopal Seminary, they were held near, off of Eisenhower Avenue, somewhere, for a couple of years.</p>
JH:	It's okay. I'm going to stop this, and we'll talk about this.
Linda Lovell:	Okay.
JH:	I think we're done, thank you.