

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Phyllis Cheaney

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2021-002

Phyllis Cheaney, whose father died of COVID-19 in September 2020 and while caring for him caught it herself, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: February 8 & 19, 2021

Location: Phyllis Cheaney's home in Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:43 + 1:31 / 1.72 + 1.52 = 3.24 hrs.

Session 1: Early life, family story and professional career as an educator

Session 2: Father's battle with COVID-19, his care and death in Sep 2020

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on Apr 8, 2021.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Phyllis Cheaney, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2021-002

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Phyllis J. (Cline) Cheaney was born in May 1947 in Springfield, Illinois and grew up on a farm near Petersburg, Illinois. Her father, Carroll Cline, was a tenant farmer, while her mother, Imogene Schafer, was a housewife and later worked in a local medical center. The family, which included Phyllis's younger sister Patricia, lived in a house on the farm. Both girls were active in 4-H and did their share of chores on the farm. Phyllis attended a two room school from 1st through 6th, and Petersburg High School (which became Porta High School in her senior year), graduated in 1965. By that time, she was dating Dick Cheaney, and both she and Dick attended college at Eastern Illinois University. She graduated with a degree in elementary education and a teaching certificate in 1968, and also married Dick that same year. They both pursued a teaching career in Springfield. Phyllis taught for many years, starting at DuBois School. After receiving a master's degree in 1971 and doing the necessary coursework for an advanced degree., she became a school administrator in 1978. Dick retired in 2000, last serving as the principal at Franklin Middle School. Phyllis retired two years later while serving as the principal at Butler Grade School. By that time, Phyllis's parents were retired and living in a home in Petersburg they built in 1992.

Phyllis discussed her parents' health in detail. By early 2020 her father was legally blind and had severe hearing loss. He also had mobility issues and was a cancer survivor. In early 2020 he also came down with shingles. Phyllis's mother also had numerous health concerns, including glaucoma, heart trouble and kidney problems. In mid-March 2020 Governor J.B. Pritzker put the state under lockdown, and after that Phyllis and her sister had very little direct contact with their parents. In late August her father became ill, and was admitted at Memorial Hospital, initially diagnosed with pneumonia and later as having COVID-19. He was released five days later, with Phyllis receiving only a one hour notice. With no other options, she brought her father home. Over the next month she, her sister Pat and to a lesser degree their mother cared for her father. All three caught COVID-19 as well, but thankfully did not have serious symptoms. Carroll died on September 21, 2020 and the family held a graveside service for him at Oakland Cemetery in Petersburg.

Subject Headings/Key Words: COVID-19 pandemic; growing up on the farm near Petersburg, IL; Memorial Hospital, Springfield, Illinois; caring for COVID-19 patients; Memorial Hospice care; Eastern Illinois University; teaching grade school in Springfield, IL; school administrator in Springfield, IL; reopening schools during pandemic; Porta High School

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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