



2007 Sesquicentennial Oral Interview

Cat Rooney

CH: It is April 19. This is Cindy Higgins. I am interviewing Catherine Rooney. And, so would you tell me when you came to Eudora and why?

CR: Sure. Well, I also go by the name Cat.

CH: Okay.

CR: You can simplify it there. It was about four and one-half years ago. I bought a house in Eudora. And let me tell you a little bit of background that led me to Eudora and then you will know why I am such a good Eudoran resident. Anyway, I was suffering from a chronic condition that I had had for 13 years and had gotten gravely ill with it and wasn't expected to recover. But did, through Falun Dafa, Falun Gong, an ancient Chinese [exercise and] meditation program. In that process, getting back on my feet. I moved back to this area, because I had been a resident of Lawrence for 14 years, and I love Lawrence. I have family here. I was in transition in jobs and looking for places to live. The economy that year, and still is, was about that the only place you could rent was about \$800. I am not kidding, and it would be in a really terrible neighborhood in Lawrence. I wasn't too excited about that. Anyway, I got back on my feet and got this job at the University at Kansas. I was staying with best friend in Baldwin and her husband. I was scraping my money together, just sweating over this fact about having to rent. I couldn't find a place in Baldwin. I couldn't find a place in Lawrence. I didn't have enough money to buy a house. By staying with them for three months and cashing in a CD [certificate of deposit], this really cool thing happened. There was a house that came up in Eudora. It's on Fir Street, 939 Fir Street, on Fir and 10th. It's this little tiny house. I always call it the sunflower Kansas kind of sod home look. It is just a one level square box with windows on each side. I went and looked at the house. I walk in. I am so excited. It was like it was made for me. It had a bay window; I always wanted a bay window. It had big tall walls and ceiling real high, which makes a little tiny 900 square feet place look really nice. It had gigantic kitchen with three windows. It had an old-fashioned tub and lead glass. I mean it was: what else could you ask for? It was made for me. The price wasn't right. It was in the \$80s and didn't have air conditioning. It was above my price range for renting and anyway it wasn't for rent. In Kansas that summer, we had 100 degree heat for over a month. It was a brutal summer. There was no way. They put in an air conditioning because of that brutal heat. They listed it back on the market. I kept seeing it. I still didn't have enough money to buy a house. I saw this open house again and by that time my job had increased its hours, so I could actually rent. I



cashed the CD in. I wanted to buy. This house was cheaper than renting. They put air conditioning in and new carpeting — I was in seventh heaven — and they dropped the price \$10,000. It was under \$75,000 just by a smidgen. I could afford it. I bought it. It was like this miracle thing. I can afford a home: I was so happy! Then I found out, I am really suited for Eudoran lifestyle. I had this great little yard I could do what I wanted with. I have really nice neighbors. I love the community. There's a great vet. They've gone out of their way to help me with my needs with my cat. A grocery store that you don't have to wait in line for. They are all so friendly. You have this great post office. Again, I hate lines. There's hardly any lines. People are really friendly. All your needs are met— my bank is in the grocery store. What else could you ask for? There's Annabelle's for a greasy food. There's Casey's for gas and you can even cash a local check for gas. What else can you ask for? I am just saying just fell in love with Eudora. I think it is a great little place.

CH: Did you know the history on your house?

CR: It's over a hundred year old home, which is on all the little paperwork that you get. I found out from my neighbor behind me [Rex Burkhardt] that his family had been living in that house for quite a long time. That house and three other houses had been in the 1950s — a man had bought them out in the country and had them shipped in put them on cinderblocks. It makes a lot of sense. I am at the end of Fir, which dips down right before the water. It dips down and the runoff water from the street and ditch go into another little stream that goes into the river. What I am trying to say was that I used to scratch my head: What prairie moron, which I wouldn't think they would, would build a house right here because it is in a flood area? The ground floods all the time. Didn't think anyone settling in the area would be so silly to put a house there. The other three houses have a water problem. The gravel from their driveway ends up in the street. That solved that mystery.

CH: Does the city have any set up with your waste water?

CR: The rain water. The runoff water. Not at this point. It was so cool, though. When I first moved here, I called up the city and I am not kidding, we had this 105 degree weather for a month . [That weekend I moved in] then it just rained like cats and dogs. This was in September, four and half years ago. And all of the sudden, the ditch next to my house that I have to maintain, all filled up with water, and the water rose all the way to my cinder block house and into that stream. I thought: Oh, my gosh. My house will be Noah's Ark. I am kind of freaking. I called the city next day and the city manager took my message on his phone. He came to my door, a week later. I thought: Wow, he's not going to call me back. He came to my door and said, "I am the new city manager and I need to meet the folks to see what the problem is." [I was impressed. Who needs a return call when you can meet in person?] They did a small fix to keep it from going into my yard. That lasted about a year and a half. At present time, I hope the city will work with the city to get that ditch fixed.

CH: Are there any events in town that you like? Say events that happen throughout the year?

CR: I live in the older part of town which I think is the part of town that just shows my bias. I am not a suburban. Even though I grew up in suburbia, Overland Park. I don't

have to keep up with which date is the festival because I can hear the music. You can also see the carnival rides and things like that. I love all the little Oktoberfest, the C.

CH: CPA

CR: CPA picnic and stuff like that. So, I end up going there several times because it is so close to my home. I have my Baldwin folks [friends] —I mean it's a great community— come up on Wednesday night for pizza buffet at Simple Simon's. What else could you ask for? [That is a real treat.] Oh, and then my brother lives in Louisburg, Kansas, and he and his family came up to the pizza place to eat [and to see my new house]. You know how it is: You tell your brother, and he is a male, and he doesn't bother to listen. "Oh, it's a small town. All I have to do is drive in. I'll know where you live." Well, he couldn't find it. He was pulling around while they were cleaning the volunteer fire department's fire engine. He rolls down his window: "My sister just moved into town and she just moved to. She lives on Fir Street. Could you by anyway tell us where that is?" They directed him cause I am only a few blocks from there, and we are going back to the pizza place, and I couldn't remember where it was. We circle around and end up in front of the fire place again. He rolls out the window and says, "That's my sister in the car behind us." So they had to honk the horn of the fire truck. So I felt I had a royal greeting. Of course, I was bright red. So everyone in town knew I was here.

CH: Are there any other restaurants and if so what do you like to get there?

CR: Only Eudora could have a Mexican-Chinese restaurant. I love Jasmines. I am sometimes in the mood for Mexican. I am sometimes in the mood for Chinese. It is just excellent. I hope they can stay with us for a very long time.

CH: Are there any places I know you like to take photographs, in Eudora that you think are picturesque perhaps?

CR: The parks are nice. The buildings are great. Besides Christmas and looking around at Christmas lights, I often take an extra minutes after I have gone to Dairy Queen, another haunt of mine, see, all my needs are met here. I actually drive around the old part of Eudora and look at the house. I am fascinated by the hoses and I am also fascinated by the trailers. They are among our dwellings. They do allow because of economics. I appreciate the trailers because it allows people to live in a variety of housing. These trailers look like they came about more in the '60s and '70s. But it still reminds me that the community can meet a variety of needs. Our suburban area has the really cool \$250,000. Some of our Victorian homes, I am sure, are worth more than that.

CH: Do you go into the country, the surrounding area of Eudora?

CR: I used to get my car washed; the water in the Eudora is so mineralized. It's just spooky. For some reason, it's dusty, too. I use the local car wash. Then I toot out of town on the highway going over the bridge moving toward Leavenworth to get my car dried off. I love that drive. It goes over the bridge. I usually meet a train. I love trains. I can hear the trains from my bedroom. It's a nice noise; it's off in the distance. Anyway, that road is great. You get this country feel then I turn around and head back.

CH: Since you are not originally from Eudora and you do know people from around, what is their reaction when you say, "Yes, I live in the town of Eudora." Do they know where it is at? Do they know how to spell it? Do you ever notice what they might say?

CR: What is really neat is that everybody knows that Eudora is outside Lawrence. They don't scratch their head much. I will add this in, because of the trailers and different lifestyles of Eudorans. They say: "Why did you pick Eudora? Why don't you live in Baldwin by your best friend? Why don't you live in Lawrence?" Even my realtor goes, "I tell people I sold a house to a lady who loves Eudora." As if it's a big surprise to love Eudora. My best friend and her husband for pizza buffet, they know a lot of people. They are going to be 60 this year. Their high school teams would play the Eudora teams. So, they know people in Eudora. Also, they have a bridge with hot rods. There are a lot of people in Eudora who build hot rods. Jim, from Baldwin does hot rods. He always knows somebody in there. He always has to do a Eudoran joke, about us "dumb" Eudorans

CH: Because he's from Baldwin.

CR: It's a rival. It's a great way to feeling loved, being teased by others.

CH: Real quick. Describe the difference between Eudora and Baldwin. They are both small towns. They are both by Lawrence. What is the difference?

CR: Just the uniform of homes. You wouldn't see a trailer. It's a university town. Actually, to tell you the truth, I lived three months in Baldwin, and our downtown isn't used as much as it could be, but there is a different flow in Eudora than there is in Baldwin. Although, part of it isn't a bedroom community in the sense there is a connection that I didn't feel in Baldwin. They are a small town and they have non-commuters, too. I am rambling. There is still a core people in Eudora that still stay really tight into Eudora. You have more of that community feel. They have a couple of festivals. It just feels like a small town that has more unity.

CH: Do you have any kind of thoughts that Eudora is celebrating its 150th celebration? Do you have any birthday wish?

CR: Another neat thing about Eudora, because of the 150th, which you just asked me, I think it is just fantastic that a small town in Kansas has survived 150 years because of our economics, we haven't merged with Lawrence. We are not based on a university like Baldwin so if the university falls, Baldwin would have some problems. We're self sustaining. We survived it. We still have all the small town feeling. Everybody knows everybody and they are real helpful. We have a great small town.

CH: Thank you, Cat.

CR: Birthday wish. My birthday wish is that downtown starts thriving like nobody's business. I would like to see a clothing store, another Dollar General, [and a shoe store]. I think it would be really great if we could keep more of our money in Eudora and support local entrepreneurship. I hope then that we will become an even stronger small town. [Another wish is for "good fortune" for Eudorans. I hope to see people practicing Falun Gong in the City Park area.]