

Bay View Historical Society
2590 S. Superior St.
Milwaukee, WI 53207-1954
<https://bayviewhistoricalsociety.org/>

Project: Bay View Historical Society 40th Anniversary Oral History Project

Interviewee(s): Janice Liedtke

Interviewer(s): Caleb Westphal, Gail Germanson, and Bradley J. Wiles

Date: March 24, 2019

Location: Milwaukee, WI

Interview Length: 45:31 minutes

Preface: This index was compiled by Bradley J. Wiles in November 2021. It is based on the recording and an unedited transcript generated through the Transcribe Wreally application. The interviewee discusses her long career as a dancer and dance instructor and other activities as a lifelong resident of the Bay View neighborhood.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topics</u>
00:01-01:30	Introductory statements.
01:30-5:00	Liedtke (surname Hansing) discusses her early years in Bay View up through her marriage to Dick Liedtke. She went to Trowbridge School and graduated from Bay View High School. She has lived in the same house on Montana Street near Humboldt Park since 1961.
5:01-15:50	As a girl, Liedtke took dance lessons at a studio above the dentist's office where her mother worked. Offers a charming anecdote about meeting the dance instructor who encouraged Liedtke's mother to let her daughter take dance lessons. After having five lessons, Liedtke made her stage debut in the old band shell at Humboldt Park. Liedtke attended several studios in the Bay View neighborhood and elsewhere, while performing during musical programs at school. At 15 years old, Liedtke started teaching dance at her family's home and used a live pianist for accompaniment. A former instructor discovered that Liedtke was now a competitor and reported her to the city for operating a business in a residence. Liedtke found studio space on Bennett and Delaware Avenues next to a bridal and costume shop operated by her mother, who made all of Liedtke's student's costumes. Liedtke's family lived in an apartment

above the shop and studio. Her younger brother (John) took lessons from her and they eventually became a performing team called the Dancing Hansings. They started dancing professionally for theatrical agents in Milwaukee, dancing at hotel conventions and other events.

- 15:51-21:50 Liedtke participated in operettas as a dancer at Bay View High School and continued teaching after she graduated, married, and had children (Linda and Greg). Shortly after moving into her house in 1961, Liedtke's brother asked her to take over his dance studio but gave it up once she had her third child.
- 21:51-24:40 Liedtke reminisces about her brother who died in 2010. Liedtke recalls her brother getting into fistfights with other boys who called him a "sissy" because he was a dancer. He continued to dance throughout his life and Liedtke's niece still operates the dance studio her brother founded in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. Liedtke and her brother appeared on television frequently in the 1950s and were featured on the first colorized broadcast for WTMJ.
- 24:42-29:16 Liedtke discusses the Fourth of July programs at Humboldt Park dancing or marching in the parade. She became an active member of the Humboldt Park Association and other neighborhood groups. At the request of an associate from neighborhood activity, Liedtke helped teach a group of older women some dance routines to perform in parades. This group became the Dancing Grannies, which has become an award-winning fixture of Milwaukee-area parades.
- 29:17-34:55 Liedtke's father was an automobile mechanic. She remembers he and her mother had opposite personalities but got along very well. When they met her mother worked at Gimbel's Department Store. Liedtke said that her family did not have a lot of money but she feels like she had a good life. Liedtke said she always liked Bay View because the people are friendly and she likes being where she grew up. She discusses different places she lived in Milwaukee after leaving home and getting married. Her husband operated a service station on Holton and Lloyd, and when they decided they could afford to buy a house they moved to Bay View. She said they paid \$14,500 for their house.
- 34:56-38:28 Liedtke discusses the founding of the Bay View Historical Society. She was immediately interested in joining since she had lived in the neighborhood most of her life. She is a charter member and became involved with the archives committee immediately. The organization's holdings have been housed in different locations until the purchase of the Brinton House. Liedtke mentioned group bus trips organized by Paul Kohlbeck. Her brother is married to

Kohlbeck's wife's sister. Kohlbeck was part of an entertainment group who traveled with the Dancing Hansings, and would dress up and perform as Sophie Tucker in the South Shore Frolics parade. Liedtke discusses some of the changes along Kinnickinnic Avenue and other Bay View landmarks, but said it has not really changed that much. She mentions busing as something that changed from a neighborhood-based school system, but believes Bay View is still a nice place to live.

- 38:29-44:53 Liedtke discusses her work as a dresser for the Milwaukee ballet company. She began as a volunteer for a production of Swan Lake and had to dress the head ballerina, who could be difficult to work with. Liedtke was eventually put on the payroll and continues to work with them to the present day.
- 44:54-45:31 Acknowledgements and copyright statement.