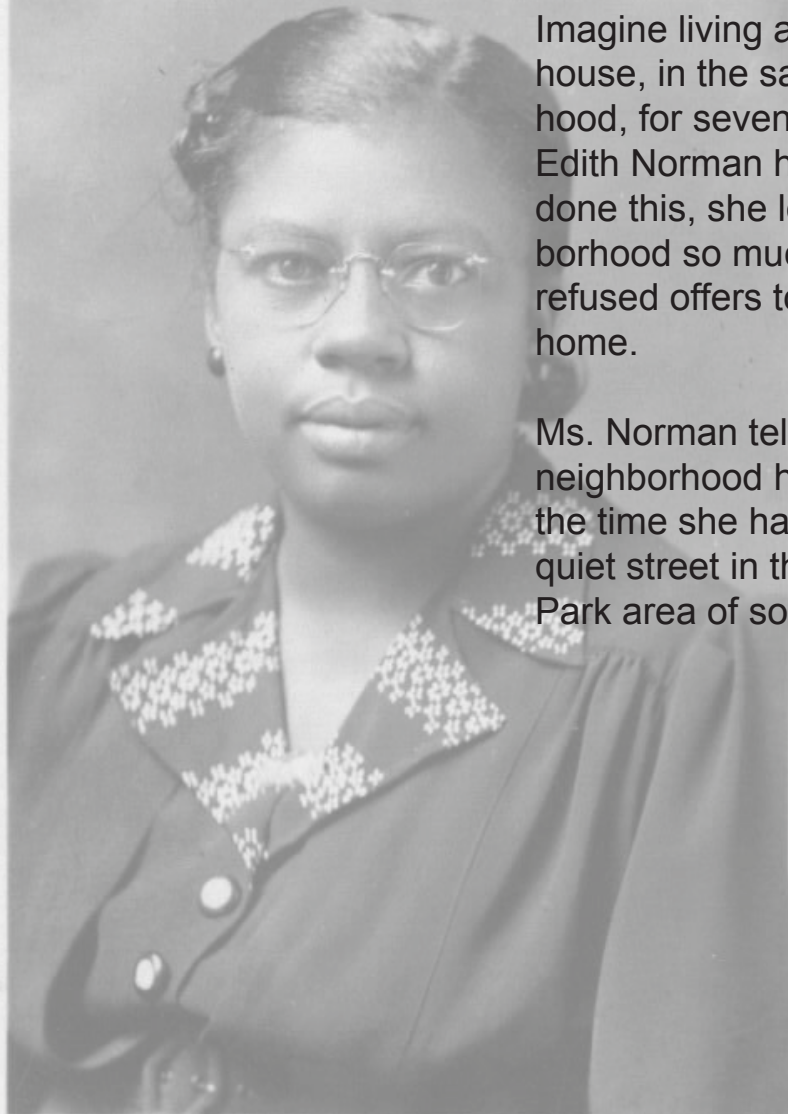




## *Edith Norman*

### Hillsborough Remembers



Imagine living in the same house, in the same neighborhood, for seventy-five years. Edith Norman has not only done this, she loves her neighborhood so much, that she has refused offers to buy her home.

Ms. Norman tells of how her neighborhood had changed in the time she has lived on her quiet street in the Old Hyde Park area of south Tampa.

*This is an interview with Edith Norman (EN) of, uh, Tampa, Florida. This interview is being conducted on August 8, 2001 in Ms. Norman's home in Tampa. Uh, the interviewer is Steve Szekely (SS), representing the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System's Oral History Collection Project.*

**Steve Szekely:** *Ms. Norman, we were gonna talk about changes in the neighborhood. Uh, your home is midway between the Crosstown and Swann Street, Swann Avenue and uh, you've been here for seventy-five years.*



**Edith Norman:** *Seventy-five years, since 1926.*

**SS:** *Can you explain some of the changes that you've seen, uh, over, over that period of time?*

**EN:** *Yes, there's been a great, lot of changes they made this ( ), because in the beginning, uh, when I first came here, the street I livin' on was just a sand bed. Cars used to come by and get stuck in the sand. Get the, peoples used to come and dig 'em out and haul 'em, haul the cars away, sometimes they call the uh, AP, or AP and P,*

*whatever it is, to come and get 'em out. And then, uh, and then right in the middle of, in the middle of the street was bushes so tall, the palmettos, that you couldn't even see the houses on the other side of the street.*

*It was just, uh, a sand bed and the only way they could travel, they had a, had a trail over one side of the bushes and one on the other side of the bushes. And that's the way the cars would come through. And then finally*

*, they come through and, uh, they dug*



*up all of these uh, palmettos and these bushes and cut 'em down clean and then left just a, a soft, sand bed. And the cars would get stuck in there and the young boys would come by and get boards and, and prop the cars up and help them to get out and they'd give them a little change to help them to get out. And they', and, uh, from then on, and finally, they come by in later years, I guess about, I would say around about two years later and paved the street. So we still got this little paved street. It's narrow, but it's still here.*

**SS:** *Uh, when did, when was it paved?*

**EN:** Uh, I don't know exactly what, you know, what year it was, but it's, it must've been around in the 40s or, uh, the early 40s, I think, it must've been somewhere up in there.

**SS:** *When you first moved in here, what was Swann Street like? Was it a commercial area or residential?*

**EN:** It was still, uh, it was a residential, all the way down Swann and finally, they went to building in, uh, different uh, stores and finally the last few years ago, they built this shopping center down there.

**SS:** *When did the stores first all , start goin' in there?*

**EN:** Uh, the shopping center, it's been about twelve years.

**SS:** *Yeah, but how about the little stores before then, before they put the fancy one in?*

**EN:** Well, they had on um, I think it was Newport, they had a little grocery store down, down there and, uh, was down on, uh, on Orleans and, and uh, De Leon, they had a store there, little, little grocery store. And down on, and further on 'round, on Oregon, they had another little grocery store.

**SS:** *Uh huh, all neighborhood stores, huh.*

**EN:** All neighborhood, just little neighborhood stores and finally, years later on Platt, they, they built, uh, I don't, I don't know what you would call it, but it, we always called it the Big Orange. It was a big, round building, made like an orange and they sold, uh, sandwiches and drinks and, you know, in this particular place, right on the corner of Platt and Willow. And, and, on one side of, uh, Willow was the A&T Store. And on the other side was the, we called it the Margaret Ann Store. It was two stores over in, in... and then on, on, on Willow, on, on Willow, on this side of uh, Platt was another store, uh, can't remember the name of it right now, but there was grocery stores all, all in this neighborhood. But finally they start moving out and moving out and we don't have any, any grocery stores at all in this neighborhood now.

**SS:** *Yeah, where do you have to shop?*

**EN:** Uh, over on, uh, down on um, Dale Mabry, I shop at the U-Save. Or either, on Swann to the Kash-N-Karry, whichever one, you know, I get to.

**SS:** *And what did the, the Hyde Park Village, how did that change things around here?*

**EN:** Oh, it, it made a big change. That, that, the shopping center down there, they, but everything's so high in it that I don't go there.

**SS:** *It's pretty, though [laugh].*

**EN:** Yeah, it's pretty. I think I been in, they had a, um, a sundry store, you know, where they sell ice cream and all. I think I went in there once or twice and bought that, but other than that, the clothes was too high.

**SS:** *Uh, the neighborhood, can we talk about the Crosstown a bit? When did that come in? About fifteen years ago, wasn't it?*

**EN:** Yes, it was, uh huh. 'Round about fifteen or sixteen years ago.

**SS:** *And how did that change things?*

**EN:** Well, it changed, made a big change, because it cut off so many streets that you, where you could go completely through and made dead ends out of 'em. You can't, you got to go all the way around before you can get where you want to go.

**SS:** *Do you feel a little isolated in this neighborhood?*

**EN:** Uh, no, I feel at home because [laugh] I don't, I don't want to go nowhere, ever. I just, I like this neighborhood. It's, it's, it's quiet. You have no, we haven't been havin' no problems, you know, like a lot of neighborhoods, you know. And I just, I just like where I am, 'cause it's, I've had so many offers want to buy my home, I told them, "No, I'm here to stay. I'm not going anywhere."

**SS:** *And you said this, this uh, street was a black neighborhood, when you first moved in and now it's becoming, mixed?*

**EN:** Almost, it's almost all white, now. I think, on, on this side of the street is, uh, one, two, three, four, five blacks on this side. On that side, there are two black families on the other side of the street.

**SS:** *And, are people tearing down houses in the neighborhood and putting up new ones?*

**EN:** Yes, mm hmm, 'cause this house next door right here, was a house just like this one. They tore it down, built that. And then the one next to that was a house just like this and they tore it down. Uh, Ferman Motor bought that one down there and he built this house for the girl what used to work for him, but

she still stayed, I mean, she stayed.

**SS:** *Now, you say that these houses were all built by one man, long, long ago?*

**EN:** Yeah, long years ago. What was one family. It was, 'cause this was the Watrous subdivision and the Watrous family owned all of these houses.

**SS:** *And they're all pretty much the same.*

**EN:** All of 'em, down on the little end is, it was, uh, three was built different from this house, but all of the rest of them, from the third house down, all the way around on Azeele and down on Oregon was built, all of 'em was built just alike.

**SS:** *Mm, hmm...and they've been torn down little by little.*



**EN:** Torn down, torn down, torn down or remodelin' different, you know, it was, you know, than what they was. But my house and the house next door is just about the same as the original house. Y'know, 'course, as I said, now, just like

I had a little, you know, the cement porch added on. In the back, I had a room added on. So, other than that, the house is the same as it was when it was originally built.

**SS:** *Interesting.*

**EN:** Yes.

**SS:** *You don't see many seventy-five -year-old or a hundred-year-old houses around.*

**EN:** I don't know how old it is, because I don't know how old it was when I moved in. But I've been here seventy-five years myself. And other than that, the houses were just maybe 'bout four or five years old when I moved in. I'm not sure.

**SS:** *Do you think, uh, some of the quiet in the neighborhood's because the Crosstown cuts off the streets? Is that, is that a real benefit to you or it doesn't really matter?*

**EN:** It doesn't matter, because this always been a quiet neighborhood. Always, we never had too much problem, you know, in here.

**SS:** *Well, I think this should do it.*

*[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A, END OF INTERVIEW]*