



# THE SPIRIT

Preserving the life of America's unique community

A publication of  
the  
Park Forest  
Historical  
Society

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## A Celebration of America's Original G.I. Town Park Forest History Video Launched

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### Interested in helping preserve

### Park Forest History?

We are looking for  
volunteers for Musum,  
Archive, mailings.  
Contact Jane Nicoll,  
708-481-4252, or via  
email on the website,

Connect on Facebook:  
-1950s Park Forest House  
Museum  
-Park Forest Historical  
Society



Join us from the comfort of home to watch on our YouTube channel the video presented November 9, 2024, "A Celebration of America's Original G.I. Town. Park Forest history video.

After an introduction by archivist, Jane Nicoll, Gregory Randall, author of America's Original G.I. Town, gives an illustrated talk, via video, on the planning of Park Forest. Then excerpts of the 1981 video, "OH! Park Forest: A Celebration" show architect Richard M. Bennett, ACB President, Philip Klutznick, and early pioneer residents speaking about design of the village and rentals and the very early days here. You will see and hear, President of American Community Builders, Philip M. Klutznick; Village Presidents Robert Dinerstein, Henry X. Dietch, and Bernard Cunningham; one of the first 3 residents, Ross DeLue; early resident Sue Sonduck; and interviewers Charles J. Shields and Mel Muchnik.

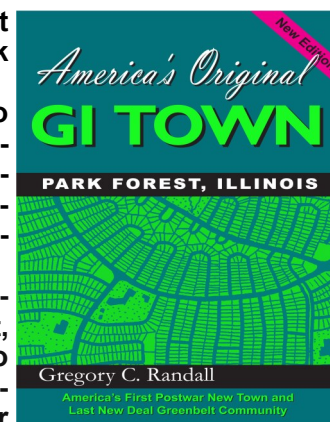
Then Myrtle Martin and Don DeMarco explain the earliest days of integration in Park Forest after the peaceful move-in of the first black family in December 1959.

Myrtle is an African American resident who moved to Park Forest in 1963, became a community activist and still lives here. Don DeMarco was Assistant Village Manager for Community Relations, 1971-1982, working on Integration Maintenance.

Part two of the video presentation, brief memories by people who grew up in Park Forest, was launched separately. Later, we hope to have the two parts merged as planned. Memories are shared by Erin Slone, Jennifer Goodrich, Peter Cunningham, Andrew Gladstone and Georgette Rosner Gladstone.

These presentations will remain on our YouTube channel, Park Forest Historical Society indefinitely, so you can watch them anytime. Share our channel with your friends and subscribe to it to improve our ratings.

While you are on our channel be sure to check out all the other videos we have posted, especially our panel and group discussions on Integration in Park Forest and our recent Hall of Fame Inductions.



### Thank You for Your Generosity

The Park Forest Historical Society extends heartfelt thanks to all of our members and annual fund donors for the generosity you have shown to the Society in this challenging year.

You really are the best!

In My Own Little Corner  
By Jane Nicoll

**The 1950s Park Forest House Museum Exhibits: "It's Spring at the Museum,," runs from March 22, 2025-May 3, 2025 and features vintage Easter and Passover displays.**

The Museum always tells the story of life here in the first five years, 1948-1953, and how Park Forest began. Museum hours are Wednesday and Saturday 1:00 to 3:30 p.m.; or at other times by appointment. Call or Check Facebook for a post if the weather looks iffy.

If you have not seen our spring displays, or want to see them again, call a friend and come on out to the museum. We think it is very special. If you have not seen the museum in the past few years, or since it moved to St. Mary's, you have NOT seen it! We will begin packing or disbursing the contents after the Spring exhibit. So come NOW!

**We Are Once Again Losing the Home for Our Archive, Office and for the 1950s Park Forest House Museum.**

On February 13 news broke on WGN Radio and on February 14th on WBBM Radio that the Joliet Diocese would close St. Mary's Catholic Church, merging that congregation and St. Boniface in Monee into one congregation in St. Liborius.

The news was not to break until a letter was read in those churches on Sunday February 16, but was either released early or leaked to the media.

As lessees of our space for \$650 per month, we expected better treatment from the Diocese of Joliet, as did the two congregations. being closed.

We had hoped that since the Diocese had originally said their decision would be released in late December, and they had then said it would be released in late March, that we might be accorded the courtesy of a few extra months to rent our spaces. We are told it is not likely, but we have asked.

Having moved parts of this collection multiple times, and in and out of storage, where the bulk of the Archive was unavailable to us for 5 years; and having moved the museum collection to three homes and in and out of storage, we were not preparing for a new location until we heard the final decision of the Joliet Diocese.

The Diocese was not going to show its hand until the final decision was announced, so we had no opening for negotiating with them about space in the "extinguished" church's building.

We are sorry they have made this decision. In December when their committee in charge of the choices toured St. Mary's they were impressed by what good shape it was in, that it was all on one level, and that it had ADA compliant washrooms and most entrances. The boilers had just been replaced and either sump pumps in the boiler room or sump pumps had extensive repair. The exterior steps to the boiler room and certain walls there had just been replaced. St Mary's had the lowest estimate of cost for repairs over the next 10 years. [We had attended the congregation meetings and had WRITTEN all of this to the committee when asked for comments.] We had reason to hope for a favorable decision.

Chris Janota, President of the society had been making inquiries into possibilities of support. He is now convening a task force to find a new home for hopefully both the museum and the Archive Office, and hopefully in one space. Our priority has to be finding a home IN PARK FOREST for the Archive of PARK FOREST HISTORY.

One of our volunteers mentioned what we have always felt and the reason that we started the museum--families will not come to visit the file cabinets and archive boxes to learn Park Forest history.

**The museum is what will attract people to come learn about Park Forest.**

I must add that either in-person or through email, Facebook, and phone requests, researchers and private citizens do get information from the Archive. The Archive has been used for extensive research and for images over the past few years by documentary film producers. Video footage, photographs and documents have been used over the past two years in preparing displays and history videos for the 75th Anniversary of Park Forest. Our YouTube channel runs a number of our programs on Park Forest history which are from videos we have had digitized. Our collection holds a large number of videos, both in Cable TV programs and our own taped panel discussions with pioneer citizens.

Our board appreciates that so many people, in and out of Park Forest, have expressed concern for the future of our Archive, Museum and for the future of the Society itself.

**On January 30, Park Forest Historical Society passed its 40th anniversary. We think we have done an amazing job of preserving the history of this village in spite of several hurdles put in our path. We hope all of you think so, too.**

Think positive thoughts for us as we go through this challenge yet again.  
**I always say, "It should not be this much of a challenge to preserve and house the history of a Village that is so important in Mid-Twentieth Century history."**

**Jane Nicoll, Archivist --**

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Park Forest Hall of Fame invitation should be enclosed in the envelope with this newsletter. The 31st Annual Hall of Fame Induction will be held April 13, 2025 at 3 p.m. in the Nathan Manilow Theater of Freedom Hall, 410 Lakewood Boulevard in Park Forest. The Induction ceremony will be followed by a reception in the lobby. Please make a point this year to attend the live ceremony to express your gratitude to the inductees for their contributions to make Park Forest a special place to live.

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**SAVE THE DATE May 18, 2025.**

**We are planning to hold a celebration for our 40th Anniversary .**



# It's Spring at the Museum Easter and Passover Displays



## **1950s Park Forest House Museum**

**March 22, 2025-May 3, 2025**

**227 Monee Road, Park Forest**

**(Inside St. Mary's Catholic Church)**

**Last chance to see the museum whole**

We will be packing or disbursing  
the collection after this exhibit.



**Wednesday & Saturday**

**1:00 to 3:30 pm;**

**Tours for groups by appointment  
at other times.**

**Call Jane Nicoll, 708-481-4252.**

**Donation \$5 for adults;**

**children 12 & under free**

A tour guide is available to tell Park Forest history,  
social and fashion trends of the time, 1948-1953.

**[www.parkforesthistory.org](http://www.parkforesthistory.org)**

**"Like" us on Facebook "1950s Park Forest House  
Museum" &  
"Park Forest Historical Society"**

**Park in the small lot, knock on the 2nd to last  
classroom door.**

**Opposite end of the building from Sanctuary!  
Accessible bathroom in the building.**

