

## PARK TOWER HISTORY PROJECT

Park Tower Condominium, or Edgewater Beach Plaza as originally named, celebrated its 40th birthday last year. We are constructing a time line, or chronology, of how life in this building has developed since it was constructed in 1973. Do you have materials filed away - or memories - that inform and give perspective to our history? Tower Talk is taking the lead in this project, so if you have something interesting to contribute, please call or write [parktowercondo@dkcondo.com](mailto:parktowercondo@dkcondo.com) - attention Tower Talk. Thanks!

### Our First History Project Submission...

MRS. MARIAN SHAW, AN INTERESTING AND COLORFUL RESIDENT



My conversation with Mrs. Shaw occurred on a recent wintery morning, in her bright but spare living room overlooking the Lake. Marian's rather astonishing recall touched on many subjects, starting with her early experiences in our building.

Marian and her late husband Daniel moved to Edgewater Beach Plaza, as the building was first called, shortly before Thanksgiving, 1973. "They were still laying carpeting," she remembers, and then went on to talk about those early years.

Our building was the first to be built on land previously occupied by the Edgewater Beach Hotel. The Hotel had been an entertainment mecca prior to the 50's, with its own radio station, seaplane service from downtown, and roster of big bands. But when the City extended its park land and Lake Shore Drive north to Hollywood, direct beach access was

lost and the hotel's popularity languished. Marian's mother had celebrated her 45th birthday at the Hotel, and early residents here swore to hearing ghosts of those Woody Hermann band concerts! By the way, she adds, "the pink building" at the corner of Sheridan and Bryn Mawr never was part of the Hotel. It was then and still is Edgewater Beach Apartments, now owned and managed cooperatively by its residents.

Marian recalls that the hotel had taken three years to demolish. Since our building was but the first of three modernistic towers planned for the site, many in the neighborhood were concerned about slicing off their view of the Lake. Some also worried about becoming a "high-rise jungle," thereby attracting a less than desirable tenant. For this reason and others - likely including cost - the remaining two towers never materialized.

Our building took its present name, Park Tower Condominium, in 1979 when it converted to condos. Other nearby apartment buildings did likewise, and Marian believes the FHA loans used for purchase promoted a stable and diversified set of residents. She and her husband were a case in point.

Marian and Daniel met in Hyde Park and married in 1964. They were rather an extraordinary couple, she being the daughter of a Jewish father and Irish Catholic mother; he being Chinese by birth, an Evangelical missionary and, at the time, a professor. Given that University of Chicago did not grant tenure to foreign nationals at the time, Daniel's career at the University would be limited. So after a few years he and she began a home-based printing and publishing company, moving to Edgewater to be nearer their customers.

Prior to meeting Daniel, Marian had been a correspondent for the Chicago American newspaper, taught grade school in the inner city, worked as a paralegal, and had a real estate broker's license. Now in the printing business, her role was to prepare, edit, and occasionally contribute to publications. She was early to word processing, first with a 70's vintage Wang Text Processor, then with new equipment up to and including the modern computers at Newberry Library and the Apple Store (where she catches up on email, having only her trusty Brother typewriter at home)!

Daniel was a good deal older than Marian, and when he died in 1990 she inherited the business. There are still occasional book orders to fill, and she pursues a wondrous variety of activities: election judging for our precinct; attending seminars and research at Newberry Library; being a docent there and at the Art Museum and Chicago Historical Society; playing piano while feeding the homeless at Society for St. Vincent DePaul; appreciating opera Saturday afternoons on WFMT... and the list goes on.

In 2008, Marian fell while downtown and broke her hip. She has downsized from a two to a one bedroom condo, and she minimizes clutter by carefully ordering her furniture and materials. She works with a physical therapist and moves about as efficiently as possible.

But Marian Shaw is a trouper, no doubt about it. We are fortunate that she and so many other fascinating residents have chosen to live here at Park Tower Condominiums.

- by Bob Shamo