HARVARD AVENUE HIGHLIGHTS

celebrating our 60th anniversary

To celebrate our 60th anniversary, we invited everyone from first-timers to long-timers, via our Storytelling Stations or email to our storygatherers, to share a Harvard Avenue Highlight:

- a funny moment; or
- a special event, class, or song; or
- a person (now or then) who influenced you; or
- a significant worship moment; or
- how you were helped in a time of need; or
- a lesson that sticks with you; or
- just a nod to someone that makes this place, and your faith, what it is.

Here's what we heard.
My Happy Place
Forty-five years ago, I started attending Harvard Avenue. A couple years later, there was a painful period of transition in my life.

I could always depend on a friendly 'hello', an encouraging word from scripture and pulpit, and singing a joyful melody as I continued to worship at Harvard Ave. It became my 'happy place' – and still is!

Carolyn Buchan
member since 1975

Fair (Hair?) Warning
During Hanging of the Greens, during Pastor Robinson days, which I'm guessing was 80s, Colin Robinson, the pastor's son, lit my hair on fire with his candle. This is back when the youth did the ceremony ...

Caren Gerkin
member since 1976

I Want to Join
The first time I ever visited HACC was for a funeral. A friend's mother had passed away and I think Mark did the service. I had never met the deceased but was in such awe of the sermon and by the end truly felt like I knew her.

Any church that cultivates such loving memories and hilarious moments while bringing together a diverse crowd for a somber occasion is something of which I really want to be a part.

To further explore this, I began trying out Sunday School classes and quickly realized the body of this church is service-focused, which is something I need in a church home. I hope to become a member this fall.

Cady Carlson
member-to-be!
Two Models of Faith

I feel very privileged to call HACC my church home and its members my church family. I’ve been so encouraged by how welcoming and understanding everyone is. I appreciate that we’re very diverse in our backgrounds and how we approach and navigate this world, but we all share an eagerness to live and love like Christ. There are many HACC people I could talk about, but two stand out in my mind.

I've always admired Cynde McAllister. She is a kind, Godly woman, and she's authentic with how she talks about her relationship with God. She's honest about the struggles and the joys and the tears and her spiritual growth and the nitty gritty of this life, and I think she's a great example of a genuine Christian.

The second person is Charlie Bennett. Charlie might be one of the wisest people I know. If you’re even in a class setting with him you can see Charlie taking in the conversation (he's a great listener). But before class is over he'll usually contribute something profound that will sit on your heart for the rest of the week. If you get a chance, visit with Charlie; you'll probably walk away more enlightened.

Hannah Lollman

member since 2015

Dr. Donald G. Farrior

Rev. Dr. Don Farrior was a minister, hospital chaplain, and the interim pastor at Harvard Avenue Christian Church for a few years prior to Mark Briley.

Just as Mark does so effectively, Don Farrior also used humor in his work, his sermons, and wove it into his spiritual life. His book, I Did Not Burn the Church Down...I Only Started the Fire! speaks to the importance of humor in our daily lives, even in dealing with tragic loss.

Several long-time members have commented on Don’s effectiveness as an interim and the caring way in which he prepared the HACC family for their new minister, Mark. Don remains a HACC saint to long time members and was one of the important building blocks in creating the HACC we know and love today.

Mary Magee

member since 2012
Legacy

When I think of HACC, there are three specific words that come to mind: authenticity, legacy, and family.

These words apply to the space and to those who have and currently occupy it, as well as for generations to come who will fill its halls. From the very first visit, I was greeted like the prodigal son by folks on which I had never laid eyes. The genuine warmth of their greeting and welcome was with unrelenting kindness. As I continued to journey there, the degree of acceptance and welcome stayed the same. The authenticity and freedom to be loved, believe, and become who Christ has called you to be in a place of such grace, was as close to Heaven as it gets.

The precious souls I have journeyed with there demonstrated the very essence of hospitality and friendship. Whether times of happiness or sorrow, the joy of the Lord shone through each person. When loved ones would pass on, the legacy of Christ they left behind was immeasurable to not only their family, but those who were like family ... their HACC family.

The spirit and memory of those individuals remain alive and strong and each life touched is better for the journey we have been on together. We press on towards the goal that is heavenwards in Christ Jesus, knowing we have a large and beautiful cloud of witnesses that cheer us on from the heavens.

My hope and prayer for the next 60 years for HACC is that the legacy of faith from the saints continues to encourage us in living our authentic self to be the brothers, sisters, mothers, daughters, fathers, and sons of Christ to each other in love.

Thank you for being the face of Christ to me and mine. Here's to you and yours.

God bless you ... and the best is yet to come.

Jessica Dyer
former member/spiritual development director
Bob Peake’s Last Sunday
During the early years when Bob Peake was HACC’s minister, he always ended his sermons with "In summary and conclusion..." Bob’s last Sunday before retirement was bittersweet. On that final Sunday many church members showed up wearing t-shirts that read in bold print “In summary and conclusion”, a tongue-in-cheek tribute to Bob’s well-worn remarks, AND his invaluable service to HACC from its inception.

Hilarious HACC Dinner Parties
During HACC’s first ten to thirty years, the membership was small and the fellowship was robust. Church dinners were a regular occurrence and became more and more fun as time progressed. One example: Pastor Bob Peake wore a tutu to one of the dinner parties and he wasn’t the only one. Becky Young taught the men’s group a dance. They performed during dinner to cheers, sneers, and uncontrollable laughter.

The Case of the Bourbon in a Baby Bottle
At one point during the Peake’s early years, both Bob & Harriet came down with dreadful cases of the flu accompanied by nasty coughs. My husband, Joe, told Bob the best cure for a cough was bourbon and honey. Bob & Harriet didn’t drink, so had no bourbon in their home. Wanting to help, but not wanting the Peake’s neighbors to see him carrying a bottle of bourbon into the pastor’s house, he transferred the bourbon into a baby bottle and discreetly delivered the cough-curing contraband to Pastor Peake’s home. The coughing subsided. Joe to the rescue!

Doris’s Way
Back in the days when dress codes were much more strict, people were expected to dress in business attire for interviews. The HACC search committee was hiring a new youth choir director. Doris Allen applied, wearing a bold unusual red and white polka dot suit. Doris’s interview demeanor matched her suit. (Nancy Wells was conducting the interview.) Doris enthusiastically shared her thoughts which included Youth Choir rehearsals on Sundays at 8am before the 8:30 service. Doris was hired with skepticism regarding her choice of rehearsal time. Not only did the youth show up early on Sunday, Doris’s years of choir directing were a huge success.

In the Beginning...
In 1959, there were several Disciples of Christ Churches in Tulsa; First Christian Church downtown was the largest. First Christian was a prosperous church with leadership that encouraged the start of another Disciples church in south Tulsa. The Tulsa Area Christian Missionary Society (TACMS) was comprised of 5 FCC men who began a search for a church location on S. Harvard as well as a minister. They hired Bob Peake who had been to Harvard Business School, worked in Tulsa real estate, and was finishing a degree at Phillips Seminary. McClure Elementary agreed to host the newly forming congregation in one of their classrooms, where they met the first two Sundays. TACMS bought land at 55th & Harvard for $5,000 where HACC stands today; a prefab was moved onto the property. Both Sunday School and worship were conducted in the prefab until a permanent building could be completed.

Nancy Wells
charter member / member since 1959
**First Women Elders**

Bob Peake, HACC’s first minister, was an early supporter of women’s rights (before it was a catch phrase). He didn’t necessarily press the issue, he simply lived it. One Sunday morning, without fanfare or drama, two new Elders were at the communion table ... two women, Shirley Stark and Joyce McNichol.

At that time, there were no women Elders in Tulsa and, of course, none had ever served at HACC. Nothing was announced in advance. Joyce and Shirley simply appeared as though it was totally natural and normal and performed their duties admirably well. If there were objections to women Elders at HACC, the opposition never surfaced. We can thank Bob Peake for his encouragement and help initiating this fine, most inclusive, ahead-of-its-time and leading-the-way tradition.

Mary Maddox  
*member since 1977*  

Nancy Wells  
*charter member / member since 1959*

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**Reporting In**

One year, Gearl Laughlin, who had a wonderful sense of humor, served as Treasurer. Because of a vacation in Hawaii, he would miss the monthly Board Meeting, so he mailed in his report on a postcard. It read:

*By now, you have discovered that the church treasury is empty. I have fled Tulsa with this lonely, grass skirt clad beauty, Tootsie. (see image on reverse) From the bottom of our coconuts, Tootsie and I say thank you!*

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**Proud Grandma**

The HACC memory I cherish was the Palm Sunday my young daughters, Tara and Taylor Carman, were baptized. However, I almost missed the events by the bright flashes of my proud mother’s camera. I’m not sure who was the most excited about their baptisms, but I am glad both my parents were with us to celebrate.

Bette Petersen  
*member since 1979*
Adoption: HACC Style (& a tribute to Glenda Womack)
As Todd and I approached the birth/adoption of Duncan, the whole HACC congregation surrounded us with love and necessities needed ... we wanted for nothing. After Duncan came home, our family complete, choir practice still marched on. With Duncan being just days old, Glenda Womack volunteered to come and just hold our little miracle. And the church still holds him in their arms.

Christina Maxwell
member since 2006

Tribute to Elizabeth Palmieri
I must give a special nod to Elizabeth Palmieri. She has served this congregation in so many roles. Over the years, particularly in the music program. I owe her a special debt since she helped me find my gift. As the children’s choir director in the early 1980’s, Elizabeth suggested to me and my parents I might want “to do more of this singing thing.” She got me to sing my first solo in worship on Christmas Eve. I sang “Away in a Manger” standing on a box behind the pulpit since that was the only available microphone in the sanctuary at that time.

Todd Maxwell
member since 1978

Night Group Too!
My mother-in-law, Jo Ann Gilpin, had a great love for the church, for children and youth education, for family and for community. When I was a relatively young wife and parent of two small children, she wanted me to become part of a small group of young women. She organized what would become known as Night Group Too! Knowing we were busy moms, working and caring for our families, she made it as easy as possible for this group of 15-20 women to get together. We met at her home every week, where we found a home cooked meal waiting, a lesson prepared or a speaker invited, and a space to connect, share, learn and grow. Friendships were formed, faith was deepened and life was lived together. I will forever be thankful to her for this selfless gift.

Bendy Gilpin
member since 1982
Not Soon Forgotten

I’ve heard it said that what is in one’s obituary doesn’t really matter for, in any case, the remembrance of a person is lost in two generations. Harriett Peake (as in Peake Hall) was not one of those persons who will soon be forgotten. She was loving, thoughtful, a hard worker and will be remembered for many years to come. One event in which I remember Harriett is:

Our son Lee was 12 or 13 years old when HACC sponsored a Colorado ski trip for the youth. Kathryn fixed him up with sweaters, a jacket more appropriate for Oklahoma than Colorado weather, a sandwich, bought him a new pair of gloves and gladly drove him to the church parking lot for the upcoming long bus trip. In order to see that the kids had a good time and remained relatively safe Harriett went along as one of the adult sponsors.

The following week, after 5 days of exhausting skiing, the parents were to pick the kids up in the parking lot at around 6 o’clock. A couple of hours before that Kathryn got a phone call from Harriet about Lee. Harriet started out the conversation with, “Now, Lee’s alright! He’s not hurt!” When you get such an unexpected call about one of your kids there is an instantaneous lump in your throat ... so the “he’s OK” idea is the best way for such a call to be started. Did I say Harriet was smart, too?

Harriet went on to warn Kathryn that Lee didn’t always wear sunscreen on the ski slopes, that he was slightly sun-burned and for us not to be surprised when we saw him. When Lee got off the bus he was smiling, but his face looked like two pounds of freshly ground hamburger that had been wearing sunglasses. His forehead, cheeks, and chin were painfully red, swollen and covered with flaking scales like you would expect on a lake trout. Harriet was unnecessarily apologetic. She had done everything she could, but Lee just wouldn’t listen. He hurt a little, but he was happy.

Harriet was a most memorable person. Though not officially in charge, with a smile and a laugh in her insistent voice Harriet saw to it that the youth of the church was always considered, that the congregation did the right thing for the community, and that HACC gave appropriately to Indianapolis.

What the Dills Did

In the late 80’s, Bruce and Debbie Dill formed a Sunday school class for young adults. For a year (or more?), Bruce and Debbie planned lessons and facilitated discussions each Sunday for this group. They helped us build relationships and friendships and guided us as we navigated through our journey of faith. We developed many life-long friends, and the class that named itself The Genesis Class continues today, with some of the same people that came together because of Bruce and Debbie.
Trouble in New Orleans

Bill and Doris Allen moved to Tulsa from New Orleans where they had lived and raised their children. Wanting to share her former hometown, Doris, HACC choir director during the early 1990’s, took the youth choir to New Orleans with enough chaperones to separate the young folks into groups according to age. During free time one afternoon, they toured Bourbon Street with their chaperones. Scott Maxwell and two of his friends (high school juniors and seniors) found an opportunity to slip away and explore on their own. Doris called Scott’s parents, Tom and Pat Maxwell. “I can’t find Scott, but when I do, I’m sending him home on the first plane out of New Orleans.” Tom didn’t argue. He agreed. The boys were found and sent home early. Happy ending.... well, except for Scott and his buddies.

Tom Maxwell
member since 1978

In Gratitude

It’s been just over 31 years since a young couple and their toddler son walked in Harvard Avenue in search of a church, but for more than just a church to attend once a week to sing hymns and hear a sermon. Their need was a church family, an extended family, to would love and nurture them and receive the same love and nurturing from them. The warm welcome and uplifting message that fall morning was truly a seed sowed by the grace of God, as in scripture: “accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” (Rom 15:7)

With time, the couple was blessed with a long awaited 2nd son, and their family of 4 grew exponentially as their church was “family” in every sense of the word. When relatives could not make the long journey to Tulsa for special events, church family lovingly filled the void. And when the stress and strain of everyday life would become overwhelming, it was church family that encouraged and nurtured them back to full strength. It was this church family, commonly referred to as HACC, that filled them with the love of Christ, and taught them the real joy of giving.

The couple is no longer young, no longer has children at home, but is still active in this loving community. The decision to walk in that Sunday was and continues to be a tremendous blessing! They were the recipients of a faith family with members that walked the faith journey with them & for them, as Christ did for ALL.

And it is with great joy that they enter this church, seeing young people visiting and looking for that same church family that they searched for and FOUND some 31 years ago. Most of all, they hope that in some small way, they can love and nurture them just as that extended church family so lovingly did for them!

The Cargill Family (Bruce, Barbara, Kevin, Chris)
members since 1988
When Baby Jesus Waves

Lots of memories when you’ve been around for a long time—one of ours is from December of 1982. The Hanging of the Greens service was always held on a Sunday evening with all of the youth participating. A regular feature of the service was a tableau/scene showing Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus, using live actors (no spoken lines) from the congregation. Some committee was probably charged with choosing which HACC family best represented the “holy family” each year. Competition was fierce but the final selection usually came down to which family had the most recent “newborn” baby, whose parents would be willing to dress up in “Bethlehemic” garb, and hold their baby in front of the congregation, guaranteeing that their baby would act just like Baby Jesus for approximately five minutes while some seasonally appropriate music was presented.

In 1982, the Bennett family was asked to depict the Holy Family in the Christmas tableau since their first (and only) child, Laurel, was the newest (nine months old), available baby (who also really looked and acted the most like Baby Jesus). The evening came, the costumes were donned, volunteer make-up artists held the parents’ eyeglasses, attached Joseph’s/Charlie’s beard and swaddled Jesus/Laurel. At the designated time, the Holy Family took their places on the “stage” atop the baptistry (in our current sanctuary). Joseph/Charlie stood guard (holding a long stick), Mary/Dyann sat and held Jesus/Laurel.

Then the music began—a cello player, sitting just below the Holy Family, began to play Greensleeves. Apparently Jesus/Laurel had never seen a cello player nor heard a cello, certainly not one that was playing Greensleeves. Jesus/Laurel began to wave, a little Queen-Elizabeth-type wave, in time to the music. The congregation was laughing, the cello player kept playing (without a clue about what was causing the laughter), and the parents were praying that no more than ten verses of “Greensleeves” would be played. Truly a special memory for our family.

Charlie and Dyann Bennett
members since 1962
A Really Good Feeling

[My grandson] Dylan and I came to Harvard Avenue in 2016 after Community Christian Church closed. It had become a challenge getting him to Sunday School. The youth activities of a smaller church had dwindled and he was bored. By Easter Sunday that year we had been attending for three months. Dylan had met Colt and Jess and did not want to try out any other churches. When we left here that Sunday, Dylan said to me, ‘I get a really good feeling when we leave here – not the kind where you can’t wait to leave – but where you can’t wait to come back.’ Dylan and I are both enjoying being a part of all the wonderful things that happen here at Harvard Avenue. Grateful for the welcome, the friendship, the encouragement and all the prayers.

Carrie Kitterman & Dylan Henson
members since 2018

A Welcome Happened

When we first visited Harvard Avenue, shortly after moving to Tulsa, we had really enjoyed the Rising worship service and thought the preaching was excellent. With just that, we had decided already that we would certainly visit again. However, as we were leaving, we happened to walk by the welcome desk (without really an intention to stop there). We were greeted and welcomed by the couple at the desk who not only started up a conversation with us, but gave us a tour of the children’s area and the main part of the church. We continued talking and realized that they lived just down the street from us, which was surprising as we don’t particularly live close to HACC. They filled us in on our new neighborhood and gave us their contact information. That encounter likely was what confirmed that this was the church we wanted to call our home here in Tulsa. From our first day, we felt welcomed and cared for, and still do each Sunday and all the times in between!

Diana Booren
member since 2016

HACC Shack

I remember when we grew out of the education wing, and the HACC Shack [portable building] showed up! What an upgrade, and how cool it was that we had our own building and youth space. Oh, how far we’ve come!

Sarah Langenheim
member since 1984
The Early Days

Jeannette Foster and her husband, George, moved to Tulsa where George started a plumbing supply company, Heatwave. They enjoyed an active social life and soon joined a square dance club. It was through square dancing they met Bob and Harriett Peake. The Fosters had been ‘church jumping’, looking for a church home, and decided to try ‘Bob Peake’s church’. It was a match made in heaven. In those early HACC days, their small Sunday School class of about 20 people became their primary social group in and outside church. Varying faiths were often involved: Catholic, Methodist, Episcopalian, Disciples of Christ, etc. They square danced together, had dinners, traveled to Eureka Springs for annual Banjo Festivals, skied, sailed, calling themselves the Rendezvous-ers. More than 50 years later, Jeannette’s children are grown, George is in Heaven, and Jeannette still calls HACC home.

Tribute to Darlene Martinez

Recently Jeanette Foster, a long-time member of HACC, was a Children Worship and Wonder volunteer during the Traditional 11am service. As Jeanette helped with the 7 to 11 age group which Darlene taught, her appreciation, respect, and admiration for Darlene’s ministry grew to ‘awe’ proportions. Jeannette spoke of the loving, caring way Darlene interacted with each child, the effective way the hour was organized, and the weekly repetition of imparting thoughtful Christian teachings.

First each child was asked individually to reflect on the Gifts of the Spirit (love, peace, joy, etc), then asked, “Are you ready to go into worship?” Jeannette was impressed with Darlene’s calming influence on the children as they listened intently and learned. Worship concluded with giving time, during which those who didn’t bring a monetary gift moved their hands from their hearts to the offering plate. Jeannette firmly believes that Darlene (and Colt) are positively touching young minds and hearts in ways that will sustain them the rest of their lives.

Jeannette Foster
member since 1979

Right Away

Rob and I have only been at HACC for a little over 2 years. We love, love, love this church, the staff, the people and all this church represents.

We had been searching for a new church home for over a year when we finally came to visit HACC. We knew right away that we had found the place God had intended for us. We joined the second Sunday we were here. We are so thankful for our new church home.

Rob & Sharon Sparks
members since 2017
The Case of The Missing Communion Cups
I joined HACC in 1963 with my family when I was a senior in high school. A year or so later my mother served as a deacon tasked with overseeing the schedule for preparation of the communion elements. At that time only glass cups were used in the trays and the deacon assigned for that week would wash and dry the cups, place them in the trays, fill the cups, and leave the trays covered and ready to be picked up in the kitchen by the serving deacons on Sunday. This was usually done a day or two before Sunday arrived. The bread was placed on the serving plates on Sunday morning by the serving deacons.

One weekend the assigned deacon called my home to explain that she would be unable to fulfill her responsibility due to a family emergency and that a substitute would be required. This message was given to one of my younger sisters (who shall not be named). Unfortunately, the message was never delivered.

On Sunday morning the trays were picked up and carried to the altar as usual during the Communion hymn. When Bob Peake lifted the lids he looked somewhat startled and spoke quietly to the deacons beside him, who immediately whisked the trays back down the aisle to the kitchen. Then Bob faced the congregation and announced calmly that we would sing another hymn so the deacons could be sure there was an adequate supply of cups for the whole congregation. He did not announce that there were no cups at all in the trays!

My mother, who was not seated so that she could see the trays well, appeared puzzled; but my sister, who had failed to deliver the message, realized the problem and looked absolutely mortified. As we still were a fairly small church, the congregation sang energetically, the trays were quickly filled and the communion service was completed reverently. However, Bob, the deacons, and my family members enjoyed this inside joke for many years.

Dyann Bennett
member since 1963

So Blessed
The Pogues joined HACC in 1974. We have been blessed ever since. We honestly don’t understand how anyone makes it through highs and the lowest of lows without God and God’s family. The prayers of the congregation got Dennis through that awful car wreck now 25 years ago. We are so blessed.

Thanks for being so open to accepting all – even those who are different!

Paulette & Dennis Pogue
members since 1974
HACC Welcomes Laotian Refugees to Tulsa

In the late 1970’s, following the end of the Vietnam War, many Vietnamese and Laotian refugees entered the United States under the direction of Church World Service. They were relocated throughout the country to thousands of local churches who sponsored them through CWS. The local congregations took on the responsibility of paying each refugee’s travel expenses, CWS administrative fees, initial housing and living expenses, and assisted in finding employment, learning the language, and entering into American life.

My husband Charlie and I were the coordinators of the HACC Refugee Relocation Committee that prepared the way for our congregation to sponsor the Khamvene family from Laos and made it possible for them to settle in Tulsa. The family consisted of Khamvene and Vansana Nasaath and their two children, a girl Viengkham (4), and a boy Khamphachanh (18mo). They arrived in March of 1980.

A very large number of volunteers, at least 75-100, in our church came together to assist with tasks both large and small, many provided financial assistance. Others helped with clothing, meals, grocery shopping, errands, household items, medical and dental care, transportation, specialized services like banking, job placement, apartment hunting, and English practice.

One of the most important responsibilities was to provide housing until the refugee family could get acclimated to a new city, a new language, and a new life. George and Jeanette Foster hosted the Khamvene family in their home for a month or so, until the family became familiar with Tulsa and Khamvene could obtain a driver’s license. They were also able to provide a car which was critical in terms of being able to find employment. They immersed the family in the English language, and even more important, provided a warm and loving environment as a launch pad into American life.

Khamvene found a job at T.D. Williamson Company and worked there his entire career. Vansana remained a housewife until her children were older, then worked in housekeeping at St. Francis Hospital for many years. They have recently retired and enjoy fishing and taking care of their 6-year-old grandson whose mother, Viengkham, is employed at Southern Hills Country Club. Their son Khamphachanh runs a lawn care business.

Charlie and I worked closely with this family over about a two to three-year period. A couple of years ago we were honored to be invited to attend the ceremony when Khamvene and Vansana became U.S. citizens. To see their joy and pride was very rewarding. For us and for the Fosters the experience of introducing the Khamvene family to America, as well as the opportunity to see our congregation express the love of Christ in such a meaningful way was one of the most memorable and satisfying events in our lives.

Dyann Bennett
member since 1963
Gossip Column

For over 15 years (1978-1993) I was the ‘gossip’ columnist for our church paper, The Welcome Mat. My family joined Harvard Avenue on Palm Sunday, March 17 1968. When our minister, Bob Peake, learned of my journalistic background, he enticed me to write ‘news’ of the members. We were a much smaller church then, but everyone was interested in others’ vacation travels, new babies, graduations, visitors – and I learned to know most of the congregants by making hone calls to get the ‘news’. One time my friend Mildred Moore, now deceased, said “If you ever quit writing that column, I’m going to cancel my subscription!” After worship service on Sundays, as I walked near a group conversing, I might hear “Look out, here comes Jean Jolly.” I was surprised and honored when I was presented a plaque, as I decided I’d had this enjoyment long enough.

Jean Jolly
member since 1968