

ANDREW ERHARDT

I: For about the Roos Company and you mentioned the fact that you actually spent it was like a blink of an eye at the Roos Company?

AE: Yeah we worked it one summer some of the guys I went to school with in Forest Park. We worked there for about 2-3 weeks in the planeing department-that's where they have these big logs and they plane and they plane up 16" pieces of cedar (They made Cedar Chips-unknown female voice), Yeah. There was an accident there one day, one of the fellas slipped and lost part of his body in that planer and I got my paycheck that night and so did a couple of other guys and I decided that wasn't the place for me to be working. It was a good location, nice, well-built place maintained very good. They must have made millions of cedar chips in that place up until they sold it to the Fisher guys. It wasn't Fisher, who was that pen company? Fisher?

I: Fisher. What year would that have been Mr. Erhardt? That had to be; didn't they close up about '47 or so? (Female voice, That's when you were in high school?)

AE: That had to be when I was in high school, '41-42?

I: During the war?

AE: Yep!

I: And how can you talk about the company here for me, like the internal structure? How many floors did they cover?

AE: Cedar chest was on 4 floors. The basement was, if I remember way back then, was delivery area and shipping area down on the 1st floor and they had their machine, it was set up in such a way that where the logs started the cedar chips came out so it was a continuous movement. There wasn't a lot of handling of the equipment. And the interior cedar lined, wood lined that type of thing, but they were a good organization. I would

say that you asked me about the makeup of the clientele working there it was about well balanced between light and dark and things like that. It was a good place to work.

I: During the war years, how many able bodied men were around? I mean, were these all seniors and kids who were too young to be drafted?

AE: I left as soon as I graduated. I graduated in April and I was drafted in August, so I didn't have too much time to stick around town. (Female voice-When I started high school it was 1941 and December was when the war started so all my years in high school there was a war going on.)

I: Well, you're likely to be the only person that I can locate who actually was in that factory that's why I just wanted to, I know you only spent a short while in there, but just as much as I can pick your brain on that stuff.

AE: Yeah well they, I'm trying to think about it a little bit. Let me sit here and think I maybe I can come up with some others that worked there to help you out. (Female voice-Do you mean you want to know what nationality, or?)

I: No, I actually I was asking him about the elevated and it's run almost entirely by African Americans today. And back then I wondered it seemed to me that I remembered that still even as a child that there were a lot of black folks that were, but there were also some white folks that worked there, that's what I was asking.

AE: There was a lot of Irish on the train at that time, and most of those people lived on the West side of Chicago, I guess you could call it in the Cicero area that was a pretty high Irish group. (Female voice-Well people would take the El to go to work.) People worked at Sears and Roebucks in that area and that type of thing so it was a pretty good mix (Female voice-well that was Homan Ave. Sears), yeah Homan Avenue (Female voice-that's not there anymore I guess) No, that's not there, but the candy factory came in

right about then at that time. (Female voice-is that still there? Do you know that candy factory?)

I: Well, see my recollection of that was first that was

AE: Borden's.

I: Well before it was Borden's it was Bowman's

AE: (Female voice-Probably.) Yeah, it was Bowman's because Borden's was down further South on Circle Ave. South of Roosevelt Road.

I: OK, 'cuz what I remember was that there was a Bowman's North on Circle as you went around towards Des Plaines where it met, was it Lathrop, by Lake St. and there was also a Bowman division by where the factory is that became Ferrara Pan and then Borden took it over for a while, and then do you remember what year the candy factory actually came in?

AE: No I don't. That was (Female voice-it was there when we moved) That's where they started making cinnamon I can tell you that (Female voice-yeah because we could smell the candy. Is that still there?)

I: Yeah.

AE: In fact I think it just got a national award not long ago, didn't they? (Female voice-For what?) -For some candy features or something? It seems I read that somewhere. (Female voice-We come into Forest Park every now and then because we know the CooCoos, they live on Marengo.)

I: Are they still there?

AE: Yeah, they're still there.

I: OK. And aren't the one family, the Ziemans's-who was the guy who had Gus and Elsa?

AE: (Female voice-Oh, they're still there.) And Blocks are still there. (Female voice-They're still there would you believe that? I think he's dead.) Mrs. Block is still there.

I: Who were the Blocks now?

AE: That was the one that was kiddy corner from us. (Female voice-Ray Block) He had the old gent that worked at the candy company. (Female voice-Dressler) Mr. Dressler.

I: He was about, 3 South of you?

AE: (Female voice-he lived almost right behind us, he worked at Mars.)

I: There used to be a girl there older than us, Mary Anne, and I don't know who her parents were.

AE: (Female voice-Oh yeah, I think in that stucco, right by Coocoos or something all on that side of the street.)

I: Yeah, she's been gone many years but I remember when we were growing up, and then are the Fitzgerald's still there?

AE: No, they're gone. (Female voice-Oh, you mean Paul?) Yeah. Paul, they're gone. They are out of there. (Female voice-a lot of people, that block has changed a lot. It's still a nice block though, I mean nice, kept up real nicely, and we have African Americans, which is fine, because they keep their homes up nicely and everything. Of course, Helen and Edgar are not, what can I say they were German's.) Yeah, they came

after most of this was done. (Female voice-they still don't care too much about it, but that's their background, so..., but she's not very well. Edgar still walks a lot and he does a lot of exercising and everything)

I: Yeah , I never knew them too well, but I knew the couple next to them, the Zieman's and she still walks everywhere.

AE: (Female voice-all the time, that woman, I used to see her walk up that bridge, and I mean she walked!)

I: I saw her this morning at Lake Street and Circle, or Harlem and Circle, and she was out just cruising along.

AEL (Female voice- She used to have her, I used to look out the bedroom window and I would think I wonder what the heck time does she get up because she would have her laundry out there at 6:30 in the morning.) She still does! (Female voice-and I think she just left it up at night and put it up at night and just left it so the rest of us would feel like we were pretty lazy) We used to kid her about having it in the washtub and strung it up every week-the same laundry!! (Laughter) (Female voice-But Elsa, I think, is dead, she had a lot of mental and health problems, and I don't know where Gus is and I think her husband is dead. But she still lives there.)

I: Is that right?

AE: (Female voice-Like Hal said, she still walks like crazy.) Then across the alley from your old home you had the Lang's..

I: Fire Chief.

AE: And next to us was...

I: The Woodchuck! Who was there, I don't know you used to have a guy there who used to wear coveralls all the time and he would saw logs.

AE: That was 2 doors down from us. (Female voice-Lamberts?) Lamberts.

I: OK, I only knew them as the Woodchuck because that guy was always out there..

AE: I don't think that guy ever quit cutting wood. He never used coal in the furnace; he never had it ever delivered. (Laughter) (Female voice-again we had that couple that remember, next door, Kooger?) Krueger. (Female voice-I hated that guy! I almost hit him!)

I: I don't remember him very much.

AE: (Female voice-Real old guy, never smiled.) He drove a big green Pontiac. He had a daughter. (Female voice-and a son) and a son a short guy, where did he work? (Female voice-but he came up the driveway once because he said that our logs had touched his fence. (Laughter) And he was sick and I was in no mood for this kind of crap so when he came up I told him, "I said, One more step, you get it!" He went back or I probably would have hit him even though he was old. He never smiled, I called him Smiley, he never smiled!) Do you remember we had the Sisterns at the corner, and the..

I: Miller's.

AE: Yeah the Miller's-their boys I think are in Colorado somewhere teaching skiing, last time I heard about them. (Female voice-she had the twins. They moved out.) I don't know if Sisten's are still there or not. (Female voice-I think Mrs. Sisten is sill there.)

I: Yeah, and she's still there and is in actually fairly good shape-she's out there taking care of the place. How about the ones that used to live next to my grandparents on the North side-the Samuels?

AE: (Female voice-I didn't know too many over there.) Didn't know too many outside of the block.

I: Well, you would see him all the time, Pop, her father. He lived with her, her father, her husband, and her son. And I didn't know for many years...

AE: (Female voice-Oh, he was a mama's boy, wasn't he? I mean she took him to school and she-I remember him.)

I: Yeah, because I didn't know that that was husband, son, and father, I thought that the father was her husband and the two guys were her sons.

AE: (Female voice-the grandparent's lived there and then they lived there, &..) Then the Sully's lived there too. (Female voice-but the neighborhood has changed, but it's still nice.)

I: And the old man, Pop, used to stand out there with a Pekinese with a pipe and he would hold that dog..

AE: Yeah, he would hold that dog all the time.

I: "Toughy", would come out there. And Al, I think he worked for the village didn't he, I believe?

AE: Yeah, I think he did. Well I'm trying to think but I don't think it was cemetery work he worked for.

I: I don't know where the son worked.

AE: The only one that we think worked the cemeteries that was Zimmer, down there next to CooCoo's . (Female voice-he worked for the cemetery?) Yeah, he was a bricklayer for the cemetery he used to put the foundation for tombstones and stuff. (Female voice-but she worked at one of the factories.) She worked at the factory, the pen factory.

I: Is that right?

AE: (Female voice-Yeah, because I would see her go to work. And she would walk no matter snow, rain, no matter what.) She was always walking. (Female voice) She is a staunch German. She's a German lady and they are strong.)

I: And in good shape too.

AE: Oh yeah!

I: Well, if you can't think of anything else about the Roos factory then I think we can pretty much wrap it up here.

AE: Let me think about this a little bit Steve because seems to me I had something written down somewhere about the Roos factory. (Female voice-so are you making some kind of a thing about Forest Park?)

I: Well, the Village hired me to do, to go around and interview old time Forest Park residents because they want to know because in a couple of weeks I'm supposed to talk to the woman who operated the Torpedo plant.

AE: (Female voice-Oh yeah? Yeah that was on Roosevelt Road. That had a lot of people working there.)

I: Yeah and many years ago after the Torpedo plant left they wanted to develop the place but they found out that during the war they built it to be bomb proof and it, they just can't knock it down. They have to disassemble it and it was going to cost them more to tear it down, then it would to build something new on it. So, it's still in it's original, and it's been gutted, turned into a mall, but it's a ghost town.

AE: Is the Navy still over there?

I: No, they've been gone for a long time, because they've got a Walmart back where all the homes were-that's been gone.

AE: (Female voice-Yeah, times change.)

I: And there's, let's see who else did I talk to? I talked to Mrs. Popelka, and I talked to Cora Sallee who ran the library for many years.

AE: (Female voice-Does Lorraine still live there?)

I: Yeah she lives on Circle, she's still there. And as I told your husband, I think she was 4 terms as Mayor and then Anthony Calderone, Tony Calderone who's Dave's age defeated her for Mayor and he just won a re-election as Mayor, so there.

AE: (Female voice-Yeah, she was pretty active Lorraine.) Are any of the Mohr's around anymore or are they all gone?

I: Where were the Mohr's?

AE: X mayors.

I: No, not that I'm aware of.

AE: Howard. They had that cement and concrete place over there in Oak Park.

I: That's still there.

AE: Is it?

I: And I think Mohr Oil is still across from what was the pen factory and Roos factory there, that's still there.

AE: They had some pretty good records at one time too because they've been in politics in that community for years. In fact the grandfather, I think, was in politics before Roy got into it, and Howard. (Female voice-the Mohr's were always in something or other.) Yeah. I was trying to point out places you might get some more information. (Female voice-OK, well are you through with me?) Wait a minute, how much do you want on your check? Laughter. (Female voice-Oh, that's OK, I'll donate it. I don't want to step on anything important, oh, it's warm in here.)

I: It is. OK, let's see I'm back again.

AE: At that time we came back the railroad had been moved over to the South and the CTA was running on those tracks at that time.

I: Why don't you set up the original layout for me. What did it look like? Where in Forest Park, we know where the Expressway is, but what was that originally before the expressway was there?

AE: That was a residential area. It was older homes, they used to call it, I want to think what the heck that was, I can't remember. They had a name for it at that time. But it was between Harlem Ave. and Des Plaines Ave., between Harrison Street and Madison Street in that area in there. At that time most of the manufacturing in Forest Park was along Harrison Street between existing railroad and Harrison Street. At that time there was a

Bowman dairy, and Borden's dairy and Roos Chest Factory, the candy factory, and then Fisher came in and took over where the cedar chest factory was.

I: Let's talk about the 600 block now, on the South end of the 600 block where the expressway went in, what was there before the expressway went in there?

AE: On the East side of the street there were probably 9 homes, 8 homes in that area.

I: We're talking about Circle?

AE: On Circle, yeah. And on the West side there was probably about the same. Most of those homes were moved. There were a few that were destroyed and carted away. But, most of them were moved in the Northwest part of Forest Park. They were put in around Brown Street, Des Plaines Ave. in through there. In fact if you knew what they looked like you could ride through the area and pick out where they were at.

I: And I know at one point when you talked about this you pointed out one of them to me that exists on Circle today-on the 500 block of Circle

AE: Yeah that was a 2 flat that was moved in there. I don't remember the exact location it came out of but let me see, it was probably about 6 or 7 houses down from the corner on Circle Ave.

I: Now before they cleared all this area out, how did-it didn't run through. The streets that run North and South, you've got Elgin, Marengo, Circle, Hannah, Thomas, Beloit,. Did all of those run through North South?

AE: No, they were stopped by the trains. You had Harlem Avenue, and the station on Harlem ran west to the next street so you could go either way. Circle Ave. station was Beloit, not Beloit, Hannah to the next street east, that was a station there. And then you had the station from Beloit to Des Plaines.

I: OK. Now we see that this was in a dug out area. Was that down in a dug out area or was it ground level?

AE: No, that was ground level. Had crossings across those various locations. If you wanted to get to the park, you had to go to Hannah or Des Plaines to get to the park, that type of thing.

I: Now at the end of each block, let's say Marengo, Elgin, how did these blocks end? Before the buildings were raised or moved away before they developed all this area with the expressway, was there a cross street that ran east to west?

AE: Yeah, Lehmer Ave. went through.

I: And what bordered the tracks there? Was it just open, or what was up there?

AE: You had the tracks and the fence and that was it.

I: A fence?

AE: Yeah, along the tracks.

I: OK.

AE: To keep people out of going through there.

I: But you could drive from east to west along Lehmer?

AE: Yeah, all the way to Des Plaines Ave. at that time it was the tuberculosis sanitarium down near Des Plaines Ave. You would ride all along there to Harlem Avenue.

I: OK.

AE: You would cross Harlem Ave. and go all the way to Oak Park Ave. at that time.

I: Also, I think when we talked before, before you were on tape, didn't we talk about the fact that when they developed our area with the expressway there that and, you know, I think one of the things that nobody seems to remember is that it wasn't originally called the Eisenhower, was it?

AE: AH, now you threw me a curve.

I: It used to be called Congress, remember?

AE: Yep. It was Congress Expressway going through at that time. Eisenhower came during the war type of thing, it was extension.

I: I know, where, they put this in, I know they didn't just build it out from the Loop all the way out to Westchester.

AE: It was done in sections.

I: OK, where were the previous sections put in, how far east did it come before they started working on the section that ran through our area?

AE: They started at the Chicago River and they went all the way to Harlem Avenue.

I: Now that was one big segment.

AE: One big segment of it, and as they were completing that then started the section from Harlem Ave. to Des Plaines Ave. And they relocated the Des Plaines Ave. station for the CTA and rerouted the railroads, then they started that section through Maywood,

because at one time the El ran all the way out to Westchester. And that was the Great Western Railroad that went through there and Zoo line was also using those tracks at one time so they had to do some rearranging of that. And then, that section opened up. And then the Maywood section started at First Ave. and went all the way through to 25th Ave. if I remember correctly. And then from there they took that section and went all the way out through Westchester and out that way, Hillside, in that area.

I: OK, and, what, I think we also talked about this before, the bridge that you lived at, I should say 628 Circle, which was at the very bottom of the bridge. You were the last house on the east side of Circle.

AE: The last one who survived it.

I: So, you and your wife and the kids went through all of the construction.

AE: We had our share of dustpan wear outs!!

I: You saw all of this go in and that's why we're talking with you about this. The Circle Bridge seems to be higher than any of the other bridges that span the expressway from the Loop all the way out west. Why is it that the Circle Bridge is so much higher?

AE: Well the railroad tracks and the CTA to bring them up to level, I say level, what the tracks needed to be at Des Plaines Ave. they started their incline from Harlem Ave. maybe a little bit east of there. So that's why you had a little raise in the Harlem Ave. Bridge and then when you get to Circle you had to get up again another height and then when you got down farther it leveled out for the railroads and the El too.

I: In other words the railroad tracks ran through that dug out area but they had to rejoin the ground level.

AE: Right they came up about boy they started getting up the level again.

I: And was there something about the water table there as well?

AE: Well that was, there was a big argument about putting the bridge up that high. They wanted to take it down, and like I said, the incline and all that kind of stuff. But they went down much deeper with it then the incline was longer and farther down. So there was a lot that went into this configuration in that area.

I: So, in other words, what you were saying was they didn't want to build the bridge so high originally, they wanted to dig the area where the expressway ran a little deeper but they found they were going to be under the water table.

AE: Well approaching the water table, and that meant flooding, which later on they had big sewers they had to put in because of that-not the water table but the flooding. I think there was talk about 6-8 feet difference in the height of that bridge if I remember back. I keep trying to remember some of these people that lived around there that are still around that took a lot of pictures when that was going on. All our pictures were ruined with a basement full of water once that we had from the bridges and everything they did there. And, maybe sometime in the future I will think of some of these people and when I come up I can get back to you with them.

I: Do you remember, Dave always tells the story and I don't remember this, but he tells a story about you, and he, and Steve walking the beams before they poured the concrete on the bridge.

AE: I used to inspect the rivets all the time, go out there at night and walk them.

I: Oh yeah?

AE: There was small planking it was down below the bottom of the beam so when they dropped something it wouldn't go through onto the highway or construction area. Oh yeah, the beams were up there for a long time.

I: Well. I remember him talking about the fact that you'd taken a rope and tied the three of them...

AE: Oh yeah, I tied the kids so they wouldn't go out, we'd go out about 8 feet and quit. No that was quite a piece of construction there.

I: He always tells the story that the two of you, or three of you were walking along the bridge and you look up and coming on the beam coming the opposite direction on the beam next to you was me on my bicycle.

AE: That probably was true. You were always all over the place too you know. Laughter. It was an entertaining thing because there was always something new going on. If it wasn't a house going down the street, it was a guy in a bulldozer, our dog used to ride with him all the time during the day because he liked to sit up there and have a good time.

I: Was that "Tammy" the cocker spaniel?

AE: Yeah, poor soul.

I: There was a lot of heavy equipment down there though almost all the time wasn't there?

AE: At one time McQueen had I think half his force working there. It was all his bridges because he did Harlem, he did Circle, he did Des Plaines, he did a couple bridges west of there, and I know he did some big work down in the Loop area.

I: McQueen?

AE: Yeah, McQueen.

I: I remember that being the name on all the equipment over there.

AE: Kenny McQueen, the Irish construction man.

I: We used to get in the cement mixer. They had the blades in there and we used to sort of bunk out on the blades inside there.

AE: Yeah, he was quite a man.

I: How about, also I know they had a lot of raw material there-nails and lumber all the time and there were spikes and there were times when they were laying the concrete molds but I know that at least part of their material got “borrowed” from time to time.
(Laughter)

AE: They did pretty good protection work on most of it. They had it pretty much sealed under things, you know.

I: Well, I was just thinking of the tree house that you built and that we altered every day.

AE: I thought of doing that with some of the equipment, but Mr. McQueen has stencil all over a lot of it at the time and tree houses, you drive nails into the trees and you ruin them. So, I got to thinking that my dad used to holler at me for driving a nail in a tree so I used straps instead. Laughter. I look back now, we ran our dogs that we had at that time in that nice lot next to us, then they put the park across the street for the kids at that time.

I: Yeah that was after everything had been developed there. I remember specifically when that segment of the expressway opened, do you remember this that the governor, I think it was Kerner, took a there was a big caravan that officially..

AE: There was a parade down there too at one time and I could see if my pictures didn't get ruined that I would gladly turn them over to you. When that opened up, they cut the tape and I think the Mayor was out and the Governor was there, our local Mayor was there, cut the strings and away they went.

I: Was your father-in-law the mayor at that point?

AE: Yes, I think he was part of that time, yeah. Bill Meyer.

I: Because I think I remember he always had Steve and Dave on the trucks with him when he was going, and the cars.

AE: He was a good baby sitter. Yeah, poor old soul.

I: And I remember also when they laid the sod on the embankments there Steve, and Dave, and I, we would take off our clothes, run around in our underwear, and they had a guy with a water cannon that would water that place and he would shoot us and we would run all over the place.

AE: Well they were doing all that grading along there, we got our house washed every night. They'd get the dust off and they would sprinkle with hoses and wash off the roofs.

I: Is that right?

AE: Yeah. They would do the garage and everything, sidewalks, every night they would get washed down.

I: Was that by agreement with you specifically or was that just something they did out of consideration?

AE: They did it for the Village to keep the dust down, keep things clean. And, when you stop to think about it, it was a good idea to keep the sewers open and everything else that way so it was kind of nice. It was a very neat construction job as far as I was concerned and I saw it every day I worked riding down on the train every day and that type of thing. And same way the construction going through Maywood and those places, they were local people doing the job out of Forest Park, but yet they maintained a quality of work that they were used to doing. When you think back, the only way to get to some of those places was the old bus that used to go through Forest Park, or what do you call them, the streetcars. Back when we first got there, we had a streetcar on Madison Street, a streetcar on Harlem Ave., a streetcar on Des Plaines Ave.

I: Before my time.

AE: Yep, way before your time. They had a streetcar that went down that came from Oak Park, down Harlem Ave. down Oak Park Ave., on to Madison Street, on to Des Plaines Ave. and down into Riverside @ 55th and Des Plaines there. Yeah, that's going back a long time. I think that's the way Carole used to go to school was on the streetcar.

I: When you went to Proviso, there was only one Proviso right?

AE: Yep, there was only one. Then they split it and got the big one out west, and at one time they were talking about taking east down and moving everything out west but I think the growth in the neighborhood got to be too much so..

I: Well I was just wondering, anything else we can think of in Forest Park? When you were in high school, was the other movie theatre?

AE: Yeah we had the Little and the Forest Theatre, in fact the Forest Theatre had the bowling alley associated with it at that time. Forest Bowling was in there, right there at the corner of Des Plaines and Madison. And the tavern downstairs at one time, my uncle ran that right after prohibition areas.

I: Was there a bowling alley upstairs?

AE: Yeah, upstairs right on the corner.

I: And what do you remember about the Little?

AE: The Little was a little tiny theatre, let's put it that way. It was kind of stuffed in there because they needed some place to put another theatre because the competition was so great with Forest. The Forest Theatre, the Little theatre, the Melrose, they were all fighting with each other to get the people. The Little was a nice little theatre. Today it would be a compliment to some of these things that they have converted, like the one here in Lombard that they are trying to convert now that's a very nice theatre, that would be about twice the size that the Little was.

I: Actually, you may be interested to know that the Little is an antique store and the projection booth still exists, and the projection booth, the projectors are out of there but the booth, the windows, etc. are still there and they've kept it in tact and there was a lot of ornate plaster moldings there and the guy who owns the antique store kept it all in tact.

AE: That's nice of them.

I: It is, that's sort of nice. I remember, didn't there used to be a booth there, like a terrazzo doorway I think?

AE: Yeah, right in the middle outside the double doors. And that's where we used to get all our dishes at that time when we first got married they had Fiesta Ware they gave away

every night or Saturday night when you came to the show. I think at one time Forest Park had half Fiesta Ware in their kitchens-pink, blue, orange, and green.

I: Well, I think I put you through the wringer and they may have you ready to eat.

AE: Well, I'm not worried about that. You know you saying the other day, Dave said to me the other day about you had some questions to ask, I started thinking 45-50 years is a long time to think back, you know, because a lot of things have happened since then, but I miss Forest Park, I have to say that. It was nice and what I really enjoyed more than anything else was we drove by there the other night and the little pine trees that I planted along side the house, they were a foot and ½ high, they were 18", I got them from the forest preserve people that time in River Forest, and today they're what, 30 feet high? I think there's 4 or 5 of them left out of 10 that we had in there.

I: And the maple tree is still back there isn't it?

AE: Yeah, there's 2 maples back there. We used to have a pear tree back there and we had some junk trees, but it was great when I was.. a nice location. It was great when I was working in the Loop. I could roll up the hill at night and roll down the stairs and it was pretty nice.

I: Yeah, I remember that pear tree, that was the place where the tree house was, boy we spent.

AE: And the garbage men used to come through there and it was a great place to stop for lunch. Laughter. That was a nice home. It was a good home. That home had 16" brick walls in it, exterior walls.

I: Yeah, I remember that being a very nice house. And then when you finished the basement that, I remember, maybe it was just the memory of a kid, but it seemed to me that like you, one year, you did half the basement with a train layout.

AE: Yeah, I still got some of those trains Steve. They're in the garage at home. We had trains, we had ping pong, and pool and we put the little fresh bar in there where the old coal bin was cleaned out a long time before when it went to oil. They converted a higher furnace that was coal, to oil, to gas. And when I moved there I converted to a new furnace because it was getting pretty expensive, operating in the modern times.

I: I remember in the basement when you put in that bar I guess that beat having your kids run out from bar to bar, everybody was down in your basement.

AE: I remember there was a party there one night from the swimming pool that was quite a sensation at that time. Laughter. I got up early in the morning to go down and help clean up; I already had helpers there from over on Hannah and a couple of other places. There was an awful lot of water melon seeds. As long as everybody was there, nobody was driving at that time, it was a safe place I thought, we always had a bunch of kids from the neighborhood, a good bunch of kids from the block, really.

I: Yeah that was interesting over there. And I wouldn't have even been over there except from my grandparents living over there.

AE: They don't have that place over there anymore?

I: Pardon?

AE: Your grandparents don't have that building over there anymore?

I: My grandmother, you know the Bambers owned that building, and my grandmother, somehow she and Mrs. Bamber had a falling out and she moved down, my grandmother moved out down to the end of the block right across from CoCo's. You know Tricocci's had that across the street there, and she moved in there the last 6 years that she

was alive. And then my mother moved out to Rochelle before she past away. So, neither house...

AE: So where are you at now?

I: I live on the north side of Forest Park. I live, I don't know if you remember this street, Berkhardt runs north ½ block , I'm at the very end of Berkhardt.

AE: You've got some re-moved houses, houses were moved over there on Berkhardt, a couple of those brick bungalows over there.

I: On the west side you'd say probably?

AE: Yeah, over there near the Lutheran church over there in that area.

I: OK, because I remember..

AE: Berkhardt was where the liquor store was on the corner of Madison Street.

I: Right, so you're saying the houses on the west side of the street down there some of them?

AE: Yeah, I think they were. Down the block there or turn the corner, I think, one block over. I remember some of them there.

I: OK. I remember there was, at the end of Berkhardt when I was a kid there was Patch garden, somebody had a big vacant lot that they planted and the Kreiger's and I would go to the "Y" and when we would come back we would cut through that garden. Because I never ran up in that area, it wasn't my territory.

AE: Where are the Kreiger's now, are they still in the neighborhood?

I: Rich still lives in his family's house. And, I think, Moose went out to St. Charles last I heard. I don't know if he's a high school coach or a college coach. And I don't know what Rich does, but I see him around town all the time. You know, I always see him in the gas station and we say hi. But, I don't know what he's doing. I know he's got at least one daughter, may have 2 or 3 kids, but he and his wife live there still in the same family house, and I think his grandfather had that house.

AE: I remember his folks had it. I haven't been over there in a long time. His sister too, didn't they?

I: Yeah, I don't remember whatever happened to the sister. The mother died years before the father died. And, was it her father, his father had a blacksmith shop at the corner of Madison and Thomas.

AE: Yeah, I remember the old shop there.

I: Do you remember that? Yeah? It was before my time again but I remember them talking about that there.

AE: When I was in high school I used to do a lot of work in buildings in Forest Park, my uncle had the Mailand? Electric company and we used to deliver material in there all the time. God, that's going back, I was still in grammar school, I used to bicycle and bring stuff over, take a streetcar and bring stuff to Forest Park. That's when they had stores there too. Yeah, you had one of the last stores at that time in the neighborhood, think about it.

I: Woolworth's, Ben Franklin. Yeah, as a kid I remember 2 dime stores. One was a Ben Franklin which was across from..

AE: Trage's there.

I: No, wasn't it originally a Woolworth's?

AE: Maybe it was.

I: And then Ben Franklin's had a small store by Hannah and Madison and then they bought the bigger dime store that was further west on the north side of the street there and that's what I remember anyways.

AE: That's pretty good remembering.

I: Well, when you're a little kid, when you're I guess when you're a parent you are busy with other things, going to work, taking care of kids, etc. Well, thank you very much for taking the time and if you..

AE: You can cut out what you need to cut out.

I: Okee Doke. And I appreciate you taking the time to do this.

AE: If I think of something Steve, or if I run across, I'm going to go down and clean out our warehouse one of these days and if I run across something you can always do a little "ad libbing" there, add a prefix to what you are doing.

I: All right, maybe we'll snare you again.

AE: I was trying to think of people in town that are still around that could probably come up with some things for you, but most of the people I know either moved away or passed away.

I: The mayor suggested that I go talk to the woman who runs the senior citizens club and said that there's probably a lot of stories there that..

AE: There's a lot of stories that you could probably dig out of the VFW hall so, if they still have all the books. Because everyone kind of wrote a little resume when they were commander and stuff like that and there's been a lot of that with that post out there which are now with the American Legion.

I: That's not a bad idea at all because I remember that a lot of WWII background going to Maywood isn't there with the baton death march and ..

AE: Yeah, well they moved most of that stuff to the Lido Theatre at one time. In fact I went to school with a lot of those guys who were in the 92nd Tank Corps.

I: Is that right?

AE: From Maywood, played with a lot of them.

I: On sports teams?

AE: There was just a write up about the 92nd Maywood Tank Corps too not long ago in VFW magazine, mentioned prisoners of war, and something like that because most of those boys were in prisoner camps for a long time.

I: And you know these guys in high school?

AE: Yeah, these are guys in the neighborhood that I grew up with.

I: And did you manage to make contact with the guys that survived afterwards? Did you see them?

AE: I saw a few of them because like I say we moved away from the area here and most of them were prisoners of war for 5-6 years before they came back. There was a fella I

grew up with, name was George Wall, in Maywood, he passed away here a few years back, and there was a few others that came back but they didn't like to talk too much. They were happy to be home I think and that type of thing.

I: Yeah.

AE: But I do think that you could get some information out of the posts Maywood or the VFW either which has the scratch on paper type of thing. You might bump into a couple of guys there too that have been around.

I: I think that's a good lead and I should follow up on that.

AE: Go over on meeting night or when the guys tending bar and he can half soaked up and you can get a lot of stories out of Forest Park. How about the old postmaster? Is he still in town?

I: Well, I don't know if he's still around or not.

AE: Calcagno's.

I: Calcagno-I could track that down. You know the mayor knows a lot of these people and the woman who ran the Forest Park Review column, Jackie Schuytzt has a lot of contacts too.

AE: I remember her. I would say real estate people too. They're probably all changed now.

I: I know Mr. Reicht died a number of years ago.

AE: He had a couple of guys working for him too who were very knowledgeable.

I: Well, all right!!

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