

Interviewer: What is your name?

Anita Stewart: My name is Anita Lipp Stewart.

Interviewer: And what was your address during the war?

Anita Stewart: I had 2 addresses. The first one was when I lived in Chicago, on the very outskirts of Chicago, and that was on Harlem Avenue, 5246 Harlem Avenue, and that is Chicago, and then I moved to 581 Des Plaines Avenue, now called River Road, in Des Plaines.

Interviewer: Tell us about your parents, like what did they do for a living?

Anita Stewart: My dad had started out being... he followed in his father's footsteps, a German immigrant who started a tile businesses, like bathroom tile walls and things like that. And so my dad started with him because he had gone to high school and had done classes with arithmetic and things like that, where he went into helping with all of the numbers, you know, figuring out what they needed and what it should cost and things like that. And then he went on later on into... he was a purchasing agent later on for a large company.

Interviewer: Did your mom have a job?

Anita Stewart: My mom stayed home for quite a while because there were 4 children, so she was home, and then she did work as a temp, secretarial temp for some companies in actually Des Plaines. She was for the savings and loan, which was on Centre Street over there.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about your brothers and sisters?

Anita Stewart: Yes. I had 2 older sisters. One was 4 years older than I, one was 2 years older than I, and my brother was 4 years younger than I.

Interviewer: Did you get along with them?

Anita Stewart: Yeah, my brother was a little bit of a problem. He was a goer and a doer, and he was feisty, you know. But my sisters were very good, looking back now, you know. They guided me in the right way, and when my mother was busy, my older sister was kind of in charge, and she took us like to the pool and things like that in those days, and we helped her try to get dinner ready when my mom would get home so she wouldn't have to do it all, and we just all helped each other I think was the biggest thing I look back on now

Interviewer: Did you have anyone else living with you?

Anita Stewart: No, never did have anyone else living with us.

Interviewer: What was your neighborhood like when you were growing up?

Anita Stewart: I would say, in the city? It was always in a nice neighborhood, a school neighborhood, very friendly. we all had close friends in those days, we were very close, and one of the things I remember about our friends, boys and girls - it wasn't just girls in those days, it was boys and girls - and where we lived there, across the road from us was a farm, and the farm grew corn, and they called it, in those days, they called it horse corn. It wasn't the kind of corn you would buy to eat for your family. I guess they grew it for maybe, I don't know, animals I suppose. And some of the boys that were in our little clique, one of them, his uncle lived at that farm, and so he would go over and he'd get a bunch of corn for us to have, and my dad would make a little fire in the ground, sort of a pit kind of a fire, and we just thought that was like wonderful, because my dad had a huge victory garden there, and I was the one that helped my dad with the victory garden. So we had a lot of fun.

Interviewer: That's amazing. It's funny to think of the house up at... there is a farm off of Harlem Avenue.

Anita Stewart: Harlem and Higgins

Interviewer: Harlem and Higgins, okay. Okay, that's where... okay, I've got it.

Anita Stewart: Real busy, you know.

Interviewer: What year did you move to Des Plaines?

Anita Stewart: It would have been '44, the end of '44.

Interviewer: Okay. So most of the war you were in Chicago?

Anita Stewart: Yeah, in that area right there. Well in '44 is when... I'm not sure.

Interviewer: Okay.

Anita Stewart: I think '44 and '45 were very busy war years, yeah, because my dad had worked at what is now O'Hare Field. At that time, they had a huge company on that property, which later was sold to the Air Reserve, and why my dad had worked at that company, the company moved because they were going up to work on the Alaskan gas pipeline, and they asked my dad to go with, but he couldn't see leaving 4 children here and going on. But then that Air Reserve then turned into O'Hare field.

Interviewer: Was that possibly the Douglas Aircraft Company?

Anita Stewart: Yes, Douglas was there, right. Huge.

Interviewer: Was that where he worked at then?

Anita Stewart: Yes

Interviewer: And what did he do?

Anita Stewart: He also had to do with numbers in there.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Interviewer: So what was the neighborhood like when you were living in Des Plaines?

Anita Stewart: In Des Plaines? I was right on River Road - behind my house was the creek that came off of the river. So we had a very huge backyard you might say, and then it went down to the creek. And so we would always, one of my neighbor boyfriends, he had a kayak, so we would do a lot of kayaking on the creek. We usually didn't go into the river, but we did the creek, and that was fun, and I was not used to that, so I had to be very careful.

Interviewer: Is that still there, the creek you're talking about?

Anita Stewart: I think so, because now they've put in a river walk I understand in Des Plaines right off of, what is that? Miner Street? No, Northwest highway. Northwest highway, and then it goes in along the river that way, and I don't know if it went by the... it wouldn't go by the creek I'm sure, but the creek was down there, and on the other side of the creek was a large hospital. It's still there now. I think it was owned by the Catholic... **Maryville, Maryville**. At that time it was a private hospital, but the creek was very long and very vegetated, and there was nobody else down there.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewer: Is there by any chance where there, like, you... Okay, so there are 2 roads and there's like a fake waterfall built in. Is it like... if you know what I'm talking about.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, the Rosemont waterfall?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah. No.

Anita Stewart: No

Interviewer: **You don't know what I'm talking about? No, okay.**

Interviewer: So the country was just coming off of the depression when the war started. What was the economic situation of your family?

Anita Stewart: Well that's why my mother was working, because things were very, very tight, you know, and my dad not having gone to college or anything, and then the tile business - that's when he switched over. So he made a fair living, but with 4 kids and everything, it was pretty tight. Although, you know, as a child, you didn't know you were poor, you know. You were happy, and you didn't know you didn't have much. So we didn't look at it that way. But we had plenty of food, we had a lot of friends, family, had a lot of family around. So nothing seemed out of the ordinary for us I would say. We didn't miss anything, which is today not possible. Kids would miss everything, you know.

Interviewer: I have kind of the same things so I mean like...

Anita Stewart: Really?

Interviewer: Yeah. I have all of the food I could want. I have everything I could want, so...

Anita Stewart: Yeah. You don't think about not having it. I mean, no one brought it up, nobody said you were poor, nobody... it just wasn't mentioned, it was your life, it was how you lived. It was how you lived, and we had no problems. We were good kids, no one ever got in trouble, so I guess, you know, things that way helped my parents to get through everything.

Interviewer: What were you like as a teenager?

Anita Stewart: I was a very quiet teenager. I was very mousy I would say. And I did make friends very easily though, and when I moved to Des Plaines and I went to Maine then, and we went to Maine East of course at that time, and we all lived within a radius of each other, even though it might have been... I was close to downtown Des Plaines, so that's a long way from Maine. So there was a bus, but when the buses went on strike a few times, we all had to walk to school. So that was a hike and a half when we did that, going and coming home. But we all walked to our friends' houses and we became close friends, stayed overnight with each other. We had boyfriends not as a "boyfriend", but just as a friendship thing, because where I lived on River Road there in Des Plaines avenue, right down the other side of the railroad tracks - I was north of the railroad tracks, and they were south of the railroad tracks - the mayor lived right... it was the first house, and he was on the river, and right now there's a big dam there and everything. Well there was no dam, I don't think, in those days. But he lived there, and in the winter, it was absolutely great. We would all get all of our friends, we'd walk over there, and nobody had a car in those days, everything was walking. We walked over to his house, he had the door open to his basement, the lights were on out, he'd bring some kind of lights on outside, and then we would go there and he had donuts and hot chocolate in his basement, and then we could go skating on the river. We were all big ice skaters and roller skaters, that was very big in our day.

So we would go down and the boys would meet us there too, and we'd go down to the river, and if it had snowed... I can't think of the mayor's name, I wish I could remember it for you, I just don't remember it, but he would have shovels. And so if it had snowed, we all got out there with a shovel and we shoveled the river, so to speak. And so we could skate, you know, otherwise we couldn't skate. And then the boy would take you, you know, and you would go a little further and out of the brightness where they wanted to get you alone, so to speak. No funny business, there was none of that in those days, there was no funny business, but that was one of the

funnest things in the winter. And in summer we went to the pools and we met everybody at the pools. And from school too, I know one girl, Rosanne Carlson was in our class. She was a little bit of a thing - she was the best diver you ever saw, you know. And I muffed on diving. When I went to Taft high school, freshman year, I had a gym teacher - it just went out of my head - but she then, would you know, moved to Maine East. So when I started as a sophomore, she was my gym teacher again. So she knew me, and she knew I was afraid, you know. It was all so new and big and everything. And so she wanted me to try out for the swimming... acrobatic team or something, I don't know what they have now.

Interviewer: Sort of a dive kind of?

Anita Stewart: Yeah, well you did more. Like an Esther Williams-type thing, you know what they did in those days, like make a diagram in the water with your bodies or something, that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Oh, alright. So it's sort of like synchronized swimming but not.

Interviewer: Like aerobics sort of?

Anita Stewart: Yeah, sort of that, yeah, sort of that.

Interviewer: Sort of, yeah.

Anita Stewart: So she wanted me... I could get on there if I could dive. I was so afraid of diving in the water.

Interviewer: Same here

Anita Stewart: You too?

Interviewer: I like it.

Anita Stewart: I went in a couple of times and I flubbed it, and she said "I'm sorry Anita, you just can't make it". I've always regretted that, you know. But we didn't have private lessons in those days or anything, so there was no way I could do it. But we all were swimmers then too so. One day we met Rosanne who was like 2 years younger than I, I think, and she came to Methodist CampGround's pool, and she would go off that high dive and we just all watched her. So we did a lot of the outdoor things.

Interviewer: Yeah. What do you remember about the start of the war?

Anita Stewart: The start of the war... I don't remember the actual, I would say, start of the war, I remember the famous speech that Roosevelt gave. But I don't remember the actual start. I had 2 cousins that lived in Oregon, and they knew they were going to go in the war, so that summer before they hitchhiked all the way from Eugene Oregon - they were only probably 2 years apart, and they were probably 18 at the time - and they hitchhiked all the way from Eugene Oregon because the whole rest of their family was here. And so they wanted to see their family before they joined up in the army. And so they came and then they spent time with all of us, you know, and I remember them, and later when they were in the army, one of them was in Fort Sheridan, which was right here. So that part I remember really well, and I remember other things. Well I remember rationing and things like that were very evident. You know, we had food rationing.

Interviewer: Tell us about, you said you heard Roosevelt's speech? Tell us about that. Where were you and what do you remember?

Anita Stewart: Well I was home, yeah I was in my house in Harlem Avenue there, and we were sitting in... we had a living room dining room that went together, so it was like one large room sort of, and right between the 2 we had this standalone radio, you know, it was the old type

where it was a wooden... Zenith, I'm sure, was the name of it, and we would sit there because we apparently knew, or my parents knew something to listen that day. And so we were all sitting there, and then he gave this talk where we were going to go to war, and everybody just stopped talking, I know, in my family. And we were young, so it didn't hit us as hard as it would have hit an adult in those days. But then my folks had to explain what that meant, and that people would be going into service and things like that. And we didn't know what was going to happen, and it was all overseas. So again, it didn't touch us here. So it was unfamiliar, although my dad had been in World War 1 and he was on a submarine in World War 1, so he had told us his experiences on the submarine, and I have his diary actually at home, and he would write certain things when they left New York, or **Norfolk** I think, or somewhere in that area, and then they would go and they went overseas, and how he got appendicitis on the submarine, and that was a biggy for him. But he made it, and then how they get off. That was World War 1, so that must have been in 1919 or 1920, something like that in the war. He didn't get in any big battles, which was lucky, and he came home safe.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about Pearl Harbor, like where you were when you heard about it?

Anita Stewart: I'm trying to think, Pearl Harbor. I've heard about it all in the movies I know. I think I still... you know what year that was?

Interviewer: 1941

Anita Stewart: '41. So I was living at Harlem there. I can't say that I remember hearing what happened there, just later on.

Interviewer: Right, the Roosevelt speech

Anita Stewart: Yeah, and then when he gave that one

Interviewer: It's like the equivalent of our 9/11, chk 17.48. Yeah, I was really young, but I still remember that like **news**

Anita Stewart: For 9/11, yeah. That was horrid. That was... I remember that exactly. You don't want to skip to that do you?

Interviewer: No!

Anita Stewart: Because our high school group - I mean it's sort of relevant in a way. I was running our high school reunion committee, which was September 11th that year, and that morning I was rushing off to get my hair done, and just before I left I had the TV on for whatever reason, and they brought up about 9/11 and about the planes, and I took a look and I couldn't believe it, and I was out the door actually, and I got in the car, I went to my beauty shop and I got there and they had it on. And I saw all of those planes going in there, and then I said to myself, or to probably everyone, I said "My gosh, I'm supposed to go and meet up with my high school group. Nobody's going to be there", and this was a planned function, luncheon thing, and I said "I'll bet nobody shows up, because this was a disaster". And I thought "Oh my goodness", I said "I'll go anyway" and I got there, and they all showed up, every single person. And later, I think I'm going to cry because we couldn't have been in a better place with better people at that moment. That was very, very, very touching. And they all felt the same.

Interviewer: Okay...

Anita Stewart: Sorry

Interviewer: Oh, that's fine. So let's see. So I know that your cousins were in the military. Did any of your other relatives join up?

Anita Stewart: Yes, I would say. My brother did join up much later though, because he was younger than I, and he was over into Germany and they would bring trucks to airports and things for people to drive. So then he was in Germany, in Bavaria I think. But my cousins were in the service that lived here - I had 2 male cousins, they lived here, and they were in the service. And ah yes, and another cousin, a younger cousin, he was only 2 years younger than I. He was in the service, he joined the service. He was in the army. And just lots of friends, you know, by that time.

Interviewer: So Anita, you were mentioning there was like, you know, **the war**, there was a few stories or incidents and things like that you were thinking of in general **because we** started a war. So I was just wondering if you could elaborate or share with us any of those **ones** that you were thinking of.

Anita Stewart: What was I thinking of **John**?

Interviewer: You said, like, there were some war memories, and before we got to the questions, like when we showed you the questions.

Anita Stewart: Oh, okay. Let me see if I jotted that down. You know, there was, during the war, some of my classmates that lived in Des Plaines, there were a lot of farmlands real close to town, real close, and they would go help the farmers pick onions because it was the wartime, and they didn't get all of the help that they normally would have had. So high school kids would come in and help pick these huge onion farms, and they would go and do that, and actually **Marceline**, one of my committee members, she did that, because she lived way on the west side. And they did that. Other than that, let's see.

Interviewer: Did they get paid, or was it just voluntary?

Anita Stewart: Yes they did. I don't know how much, but they did get paid, and to them that was great, you know. They were with friends too, so it was a lot of fun alongside of working for them. I know at the school, by the time I started in my sophomore year, which would be '45, they had already begun the bond drive for the **bomber** that the school bought then with the bonds that art classes sold, and I remember some of that and getting together. I did not go to the field the day they had the big celebration, but I remember all of the kids talking about it, and how much they were shocked. They were just shocked how much they had earned, they had gotten to sell the bonds, enough to buy an airplane. I mean it was unheard of, it was unheard of, how could you do that? But people were, even though times were not really gratifying with big salaries, people donated, whatever it was, they donated, because they would buy saving bonds, you know - I still have saving bonds stamps with my coins and things because that's what you did, and it was part of what we did in those days. Yeah, the war years were a little bit earlier for me, so not real familiar with doing anything for it or with it other than being there, you know, and being quiet like I was too. I was not the go-get-'em kind of a gal, you know. Now I am, but I wasn't. Now I would do anything.

Interviewer: It's better late than never.

Anita Stewart: That's right, exactly right.

Interviewer: So they rationed gasoline and food during the war. How did that affect your family?

Anita Stewart: We did have a car, so that I remember was a problem, and my father usually just used it for work. And in the summer, he did take us out to the... we were big lake people, we would go to Lake Wauconda, Lake Zurich, and all of the little lakes around, and Lake Geneva, and that's where whole families would get together, where there might be 30 or 40 of us there and my one uncle had been a plumber, so he had one of the first little gas fire stoves I guess they called them in those days, you know, a little canister of gas under it and that. But we always had that, and the whole family, we're a very athletic family, and one uncle was on the White Sox farm team. And so we all played baseball together. Looking back now, nobody does that anymore. And we all swam together, and the mothers would always make the food at home, you know - deviled eggs and all of the food that you had to bring for a big picnic. It was just a picnic is all we called it. But we do things while we were out there, and that was forever, and I did that with my kids and my family, so that went on.

Interviewer: Did anything else change in your family?

Anita Stewart: Like?

Interviewer: Besides like rationing and stuff

Anita Stewart: The rationing, I know we were rationed, but apparently we made... well as I said before, we had a huge garden, and in those days you'd get canning too of apples and pears, and you did all of that too. My grandmother would always help and we'd do canning. So we survived well, I would say, with the food stamps, because we did a lot of gardening.

Interviewer: So tell us about your victory garden. How big was it? And all of the things you grew.

Anita Stewart: It was very large. It was, I would say, let's see. It was a full, really long block, it must have been more than a block, and there were only 2 homes on it, and they were sort of in the middle, towards Higgins Avenue more. So we had the whole rest of it, from sidewalk to alley was all garden. And my folks, my dad is really the one - we had at least half of that ground was our garden, and we had a lot of corn and we had tomatoes and lettuce and carrots and spinach, and one of his favorite things was cantaloupe. He loved to plant cantaloupe. And when my son planted his first cantaloupe a few years back, he was going to plant, I said "No, no, you have to have a hill". I remember it exactly you know, because I had helped my dad. I said "You just don't plant it flat on the ground, you have to build up this hill and then you put 4 this way, and then you keep them so that they would go down like that. So that was my dad's favorite thing to grow, he loved to grow, because cantaloupe, not everybody would have that in their garden, you know. It was kind of special, it was kind of special. And you'd have the green onions, and potatoes we had a couple of years. He kind of changed it now and then, but he always had the staples, you know. And he let me have a big flower garden of my own, and I could plant whatever. We'd buy the seeds though, you know, none of this buying the ready-made plants. So we started the plants inside in the basement and then we'd take them out and then he'd show me what to do, and then I had my own little flower garden. My other sisters didn't, and my brother. I don't know why, why I was chosen, but to this day I'm the one, I'm the gardener. My kids go to Europe, I go take care of their garden.

Interviewer: Who did the canning?

Anita Stewart: My mother, and I think my grandmother probably helped her, but then as the years went on, we 3 girls would help my mother. And we did a lot of canning. Off-hand

tomatoes, we did a lot of canned tomatoes because we had a lot of tomatoes in the garden. You'd get hundreds of those, you know, so you did a lot of gardening and a lot of canning with the tomatoes, and pickles, they did pickles in those days.

Interviewer: And what did you do for protein? So your dad grew lots of vegetables and chks
29.42 some fruit

Anita Stewart: Yeah, I would say we were big meat-eaters, and in those days chicken and pork, pork was very, very big in those days, in our family anyway. A lot of pork roast, a lot of pork chops - my mother made a lot of chicken soup and a lot of roast chicken. And then my grandfather, he raised some ducks, and so we always had a lot of ducks that my grandfather would grow, and then we had ducks, which were pretty special in those days. And we had beef, we had a lot of hamburgers and things like that, but I don't think we had a lot of today like beef roast and that. We probably did have some, but pork was very, very big, a big pork roast, I remember that especially.

Interviewer: And as far as you guys got that through the normal ration stamps, or is there any other way that you got it from other ways that you can, I don't know if you know?

Anita Stewart: No, not that I know of. I think it was just ration and no one else I knew had any cows or anything, so no, that would be about it, and stores.

Interviewer: So did the atmosphere of **your school** change at all when the war started, or like during the war?

Anita Stewart: You know, I would say that everybody was more helpful or more wanting to do things, wanting to do things would be my words for it. We wanted to do things, whatever it might be. If they were starting a club up, say, and they needed people to do something for that club, then it seemed everybody was much more ready to jump in and help out. I think it was just that period of wanting to help, everybody didn't mind helping, you know. Maybe before they'd say "Well, maybe", and then you wouldn't do it. Well now it was "Oh yeah, I'll be there, when is it going to be?" And then you'd go. It was an atmosphere of that, I would say, more than anything that I remember.

Interviewer: What kind of new clubs started up during the war? Do you remember?

Anita Stewart: Well, let me see. There were a lot of... I'm trying to think - the women, like my mother's age, would get together, and my aunts would come over, and I'm trying to think. We did something with putting together, what do you call it? If you had a sore and you wrapped it with...

Interviewer: Bandages? ACE bandages?

Anita Stewart: No, before ACE bandages

Interviewer: Tourniquets

Anita Stewart: Yeah, we would make the... you would take the gauze and make that into some type of bandaging that they would use, and then we'd turn that in. And I think it was through the church, I think it was through the church.

Interviewer: What were your friends like during high school?

Anita Stewart: I had the best friends. My closest friend was Connie, and since I moved there as a sophomore, and they had all lived there their whole life, so it was quite different when I came in alone. And right away, and we didn't live next door to each other or anything - she lived several blocks away from me, but I guess we must have met in classes and then it went from

there, and then she in turn, we went to the same church, which had a big thing to do with it - church was very important in those days too. And so a lot of the girls, they went to Immanuel Lutheran in Des Plaines, and Connie did also, then they got me going there, and then we all met, and we went to the young people's club at church too. I can't think of the name of it now, but you know they have. And then Connie was very outgoing, and I was more timid. So she was perfect for me, and that's probably why we got along like we did. And her mom and dad, her dad had been in the navy and he would take us over to the Glenview Naval Air Station, and we'd go swimming in their pool, and all of the sailors would be there, you know, swimming in the pool, a big pool, and we'd go. And by this time we were probably juniors, seniors, and we had so much fun over there, that was just hilarious, that we could go in there and we could buy things in the, what did they call it? You'd buy things, less if you were a serviceman.

Interviewer: Was it a PX?

Anita Stewart: Like a PX

Interviewer: chk 34.55

Anita Stewart: Yes.

Interviewer: It was for the food.

Anita Stewart: Right. And so we could buy some things there if we wanted to, not that we bought that much. We really went there just for the swimming. But her dad was a swimmer, so he would take us, and that was very cool. And then they started going on little vacations, so they would ask me to go with, and so that, well, started my travel life for me as we went to Mexico. That was after we were out of high school, but we did go together.

Interviewer: What was dating like in high school?

Anita Stewart: Since I was very timid, I was not the one that would go out with a lot of boys. I did go out, when I was a junior I went to a Ladies' Choice dance at the high school, and I don't know this fella's name, he was Ray, that's all I remember, and he was very tall. I probably came up to his armpits, he was so tall. But we had a lot of fun at the dance and we went out afterwards. And he was older, he was out of school already by that time. And so we had a lot of fun together, **well we were** with, like, 3 or 4 other couples, I don't think anyone ever went alone. Maybe they did, but I don't think so. So that was always fun. But we did a lot of the football games, and they'd have the basketball games in the auditorium, visiting teams and that. We would always go to all of those and cheer everybody on, that was very, very, very... that took up a good part of our social life too, going to the football games and the basketball games. That was fun.

Interviewer: Did you work or volunteer anywhere as a student?

Anita Stewart: I did work, I did during senior years 2 summers at Prince Castle in Des Plaines. Prince Castle was in... the latest one you might have heard is Red Robin, or **Cock Robin, Cock Robin**. And it actually was on Lee street, right across from the bank now, and it looked like a little castle - they made it out of the rocks that were, there's a name for them and I can't think of it, but they sort of made it a square building, small, very small, a square building, and it was very hot in the summer. And they had a little air conditioning inside, but it being so teeny, you didn't notice it if a lot of people came in.

Interviewer: Was it a restaurant or...

Anita Stewart: No, just ice cream.

Interviewer: Okay

Anita Stewart: All kinds of ice cream. And their special was that they were unique in that they had square ice dippers, and you'd push it in the ice cream, you know, and it would come out. It wasn't a ball, it was a square, and that was very, very different from everywhere else. That was one of the fun things about it. And I'll tell you the funniest story, even to this day, in my whole life that I think I ever had. As we were working, and it was probably 95 out that day, it was really, really hot, and everybody - it was a weekend, we only worked on the weekends - and everybody came in and the lady that was the manager of the store, she must have had 4, 6 of us, maybe 7 or 8 at certain times, working in there, but she would be there, and she was a real strong, tall, German woman, very that way, you know. So we all had to do exactly as she said. So this one day when it was so terribly hot, we were hurrying because the people just kept coming in and coming in, they were 4 deep, and the place wasn't very, very big, from that wall to the end of this table was it. And they all had to wait in front of our ice cream containers like you see them today, and then we made hamburgers too in those days, different like... oh, probably almost like...

Interviewer: Dairy Queen?

Anita Stewart: No, the other one, the little ones.

Interviewer: Oh, White Castle

Anita Stewart: White Castle. Like White Castle. So we even made hamburgers. But this night when it was just so terribly hot and she said, the manager said, "I have to go home for a little while. I'm going to go eat dinner, but I'll be back. And so just be careful with everything", and all of these people are waiting, and so we said "Okay, okay", and then oh, we were so busy, and you had to run back and forth because the malt machines were over here and everything else was here, and the hamburgers were here. So we're going back and forth to give them to all of these people, and the people, they were very nice, nobody complained in those days, you didn't complain. And so at this one point, I was walking from the malt machine to give it to someone at that end of the building, and another girl was there coming back, and she was carrying something, and the girl behind me was putting - in those days you put your malt cups, they were in big paper cups with metal tops on around the top of them, and you'd put them on the malt machine like this, and it would go up, and you'd put these big pillars, not pillars, big mixers would come down like that, and they were big metal mixers. So they would come up. And so this one girl did that. Well somebody said something at the moment she was going to do that, one of the people that were in there, and she missed getting it on there, and she hit the paper cup on the twirlers, and the malt well all over the whole store. All of the people had milkshake all over them, and everybody was laughing, and the people were laughing. And we all turned around when she did this, and the girl was coming towards me and she looked to see what happened, I turned around to look and she and I ran into each other, and we hit it all over the floor.

And Ms. Scraub chk 41.05, that's her name, was due back any minute. It was like the most hilarious... and the people were just wonderful, and they knew we were totally upset. I mean, we were scared. But we got over it all, but that was like... how could that happen again? That was funny

Interviewer: So what did you think of the war?

Anita Stewart: Well... see now I have grown up ideas from what we've all heard, but at that time I wasn't as serious about it when it started because I didn't realize what it all meant, and what was happening or going to happen, how big of a war it was and all of that. I really didn't grasp that as a young person, I just didn't. And as it went on though, we did, we all knew what was happening and I just felt terrible because I would hear about friends and relatives who died in the war, who died on the airplanes, who died on ships, you name it, you know, who were hurt, shot, whatever, and I did feel... I wasn't, I don't know that word's even - I was close to see it I guess is the thing, you know. We would hear about it, we would see it on movies, we would see it on news reels, we would see it that way, and we had friends that would visit us who were in the service. And my sister, the older one, she had 2 boyfriends that were in the navy, and then it started, as I got to be a senior and older, then everybody I knew had been in the service. You know, they all had to sign up and go in the service. So then it was must more a "real war", where before I didn't realize what war was I guess. Totally.

Interviewer: So you mentioned that some of your friends enlisted. What happened to them?

Anita Stewart: Actually everyone that I knew that joined up, they all came back. None of them were hurt dramatically, where they lost part of their limbs or anything like that, and they all went on with their life, and a lot of them went back to school. Most of them I would say went to college then. If they were planning on going or hadn't been in it before that, they all went to some kind of college when they came home, which was really good, really good.

Interviewer: Maine high schools had some assemblies when student soldiers were killed. Do you remember any of those?

Anita Stewart: I don't remember that.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. What do you remember about the war bomb drive for the Douglas Aircraft?

Anita Stewart: Well that was pretty much done by the time I came there, so I don't really remember. I didn't go out and sell, so I don't remember any of that, and I remember some of the other kids talking about it. And we had a lot of Park Ridge friends too, and they would... more of them, I think, were more involved in it. And maybe it was because some of those were in a year ahead of me, so they would have been more into it. So it wasn't a huge part of my high school time and remembering - I wished it had been, I wished I had been there my freshman year, but I was just, now looking back, I'm so glad I went there in my sophomore year and had 3 years there. I was in Taft high schools which, I don't know if you know, that's the furthest out of the city high school that there is. Yet when my son went to Taft, because we moved back, well after I married and all of these years and everything, we did live in Park Ridge and Edison Park before that, and when we lived in Edison Park for a little bit, he went to Taft. And he was the same age I was, he was going into sophomore year. And I went to a home study or something where we could go and talk with the teacher, and I was so upset because this teacher didn't have a handle on my son at all, and he said "Oh, the boys all hang out of the window, and they, you know, they hang out and Grant does too, and he'll hang out. He was a follower, and he'd go by this other boy," and then I knew this other boy, and he was an outgoing kid, and he said "But you know, they hang out of the windows, and then by the time I get there..."

And it just hit me like "This is the wrong school for this boy to be in. it just..." We got out of there, got in the car and I said "Howard, we're going to move", and we did, and that's when we moved

to Mount Prospect, and he went to Hersey. What a difference, what a difference. **They just said, well I said** "He really is kind of afraid with math", and my husband was very bright and we tried to help him, but Grant was a little bit **leery**. And so they got tutors for him, they did everything possible out there, which he never would have had at Taft.

Interviewer: Yeah, I have friends who go to Taft right now.

Anita Stewart: How is it now?

Interviewer: I'm not sure. I mean, they don't really talk about it really.

Anita Stewart: Yeah. See maybe it was just that one teacher, but it did enough to me - and we could live anywhere. You know, Howard was a builder at the time, he built houses and things like that - but I said "No, we're going to move, we're going to move right now. Start looking." And of course it was tough for Grant because he was a sophomore and a boy, and it was hard for him. But in the long run, it was much better for him, and he went on to college, so.

Interviewer: What do you remember about VE day? Victory in Europe?

Anita Stewart: I think I just remember more about hearing about it and all of the pictures, all of the news reels and all of that were about it. And I know, I just read the other day where the sailor that had the girl, tipped the over, he had just passed away.

Interviewer: He died, yeah.

Anita Stewart: You know, that was very big, and Time Square. You know, that was very big, and we saw that on a news reel and yeah, things like that.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about VJ day? Victory over Japan?

Anita Stewart: No, I can't. You know, I was working them. I just know more from probably movies than anything. I didn't have anyone in that war that went there that I can remember, that went overseas. A lot of my friends were overseas. My husband didn't go overseas, but a lot of his friends were too, and I can't just quite think of that right now.

Interviewer: So was there anybody in particular, did you have a boyfriend or anybody that you were... who was closest that you knew overseas?

Anita Stewart: I would say the fellas that were at the - I was a big roller skater - at the roller rink, and those fellas were people that had been in the war and were still maybe in the war yet, or in the service I should say. But as far as my own friends, well I dated some of them too **when I was at that age**, but see that's a little older, because I didn't date much in high school, so that kind of was...

Interviewer: Alright. And so you were the class of '48, correct?

Anita Stewart: Mmhm, graduate in '48

Interviewer: Right, okay. Right, it was a lot when you were in a younger class 49.35

Anita Stewart: Yeah.

Interviewer: So when VJ came, were you still working at the same ice cream parlor at that time?

Anita Stewart: No, I only worked there 2 years. Was that after...?

Interviewer: This was in 1945 when it ended in August

Anita Stewart: August

Interviewer: So it would have been the summer.

Anita Stewart: Well I probably was, yeah.

Interviewer: The summer after your freshman year I believe.

Anita Stewart: Yeah, probably '45 and '46 I worked at Price Castle, and those are the 2 years I worked there. And then I graduated, and then I worked downtown at that point.

Interviewer: Is there anything like that chk 50.19 probably that your thoughts or memories or feelings or anything from **back at that time** to when you were in high school that probably we haven't touched on, or probably that people should know or, you know, just thinking chk 50.35?

Anita Stewart: No. Living in Des Plaines, I just remember everybody being helpful. Even an older gal that lived down the street from me, she was at least 4 or 5 years older than I was, and she knew I liked to roller skate on the weekends in those... **if** I was going to school then, and she...

Interviewer: Where would you roller skate at?

Anita Stewart: Well first, we roller skated in the city in Norridge, and then Arlington Heights - they built one in Arlington Heights. Now it's a furniture store, but was out there. And then they had another one in Harlem Avenue. But she was an amateur and she was going - in those days, roller skating was very, very big, and we did all of the dances and everything, but she did beyond that, and she wanted me to go with her to where she skated, and she skated downtown right **near WGN**, near Tribune Towers sort of in that North Area, North Michigan Avenue Area - I forget what building it was called - and she skated there, and I went there twice I think. But for me at that age, it was too much. You know, I couldn't get there on my own, I had to go with someone, I couldn't go there all alone. I did later, when I was out of school and working downtown, then I did

Interviewer: When I was reading, it seemed like chk 52.25 roller skating was pretty popular, and there was a lot of roller rinks. Were there back then?

Anita Stewart: There were a lot of roller rinks. And they had some suburban ones here too, and Glenview had one, and then they had... in the city they had many, many in the city, in **Broadway** they had one. They had 2 right near Harlem and near **Gansett** I guess it might have been, and they had 2 in that area, and then Arlington Heights. And our favorite, where we started before Arlington Heights, was in Maywood, but Connie, my friend, her dad taught her, she was an only child, and he taught her to drive when she was 16, I think 15 she was driving already. And so she drove, they had a little car and he would let her take the car, and she drove me. I know we drove to Maywood, which was where our favorite, and right across from... now there's a big, well still was, there was a big Maywood racetrack was right there. And so we would go there and it was packed, packed with kids, just loaded. Every day, not just weekends. And so then Arlington Heights had this one, and that's where we **planted there**. And I taught little kids how to skate there on Sunday afternoons, you know. But that was later on, that wasn't in high school.

Interviewer: Did you have ice rinks as well, kind of like Oakton is now, or just roller rinks?

Anita Stewart: No, just downtown.

Interviewer: Okay

Anita Stewart: Yeah, we skated outdoors. Everything was outdoors.

Interviewer: And then of course you did the river skating.

Anita Stewart: The river skating was big.

Interviewer: I'd be kind of scared to do that.

Interviewer: Did anybody fall in the ice?

Anita Stewart: Never

Interviewer: Or it froze over completely?

Anita Stewart: Always. Well I don't know if it was every year. But whenever we would go, and I skated there all through high school, so at least 3 or 4 years. Maybe after that I was out of that because the friends are different now. You know, when you're out of school you make new friends where you work and things. But we never had a problem at all, nothing, nothing at all. Just happy-go-lucky and get that ice clean and clean up when you're through and go out with your friends and go downtown Des Plaines Sugar Bowl. It's still the Sugar Bowl, but it's different now. And yes, we'd all end up in the Sugar Bowl, and we'd all have fries and cokes, and that was a big deal. That's what we did.

Interviewer: Looking back on your experience as a teenager during the war years, what would you like to tell today's generation about your experience?

Anita Stewart: As a teenager? Let's see, my whole thing, I'm quite sure looking back now, was really that we had so many friends. We were all friends. It wasn't just 2 or 3 friends. We had groups of friends that would do everything together, and whatever someone mentioned, we'd all do it together. And maybe... well it was closeness that did that for us and we didn't drive cars in those days so we couldn't really... there were buses, we could take a bus, but I really think the ties that we had with our classmates, and to this day, like I say - when we graduated from school, a bunch of us girls started... well we would get together once a month. And though if we were working and maybe we couldn't make it, but we would get them **over** at someone's home. A lot of them got married very young in those days. And so we'd go to someone's house and just have coffee and cake or milk or pop or whatever. And we'd go and we'd get together. And there were 25 or 30 of us that would get together. So see what I mean? It still was a closeness even after graduation. And then they would start to have kids, you know. Well I didn't get married until later, I didn't have kids until 5 years later, so I was a later one. So when they had kids, it was a little harder, and they still might have it at somebody's house who had a bigger house and we could get together and do that same thing. And we'd talk about school and our friends in school, you know.

But then it changed, and then we started getting together for lunch, because now we were getting older, and the kids were gone, so then we'd get together for lunch, and we still **have a mom** that got together for lunch. And now, and really we had 20 or 30 of us that would do this, now it's down to 3 of us. So in all of those years, that's what happened. But we're still friends. That's what I mean. See, I guess that's my bottom line, is who you meet in high school should stay with you. And if you move away, but you can write to those people, you know. There's still reason to touch base with people. And then we would go to the, even though you were working, they would have the reunions like 10th and 20th and 40th, and I got involved in the 40th I think, and then from 50 on I started doing most of the computer work, not the pictures and that, but the typing part of it. But you still got... and everybody came in from out of town for a big one, and they enjoyed, totally enjoyed it. So after it slowed down, we started having a weekend one every 5 years, and they were still trying to come. This last 5 years was last year and so we didn't do that because a lot of people can't walk, they can't drive, they live too far or whatever it is, it doesn't work anymore. But that was... when they came, it was always amazing. And in our yearbook, I think we had a lot of pictures that had the get-together - not the yearbook, it wouldn't have been the yearbook. We had our own reunion book afterwards, and it would show the

couples. And then the couples, you'd see who married who, because some got married when they were seniors.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Anita Stewart: Yeah, there was a couple that got married when they were seniors. So then they'd all come to the big event and then we'd see each other again, and then we'd start writing to each other. And now guess what? Some are moving back. This year, I can't think of her name, her father was mayor, I think of Des Plaines, and she moved back - she'd been living out of town all of these years - now she moved back to Des Plaines. She was alone, had some family, and she moved back to Des Plaines. She wrote me a letter and said someone gave her my name because I had addresses of people. So then she wrote me and wanted to find someone, and then she said "Just so you know, I'm moving back", and I said "Oh!" I said "Well then you can come to our next get-together." And she said "Oh, I'll look forward to that." So small world.

Interviewer: Yeah. And a silly question: When you were **back then in** high school and you had a big friends that would get together, how did you guys set that up? Were you able to use phones? Did you have phones, and would you call?

Anita Stewart: We used our home phone, and I still wonder how my folks could let us. Because if Connie called me, for example, and she'd want to know what we're doing on the weekend or something, and I can see myself sitting down on the floor on the telephone talking to her for a half an hour.

Interviewer: Only a half an hour?

Anita Stewart: You know, so we did it in those days. And to think you just had to sit there, because it was in the wall.

Interviewer: Right.

Anita Stewart: And so we'd sit there. But we would call each other, yeah. We'd call each other, even if you had a boyfriend.

Interviewer: Okay. And did your parents tell you you couldn't stay on the phone because **it was so long?**

Anita Stewart: No

Interviewer: No? Okay.

Anita Stewart: I don't know what they charged in those days, and I had 2 older sisters and a younger brother when I was a teenager, so it could not have been much, because even in those years they were still pretty tight for my dad, 4 of us home and all of that. But yeah, I don't know. But we were on the phone getting together, or sometimes you'd be somewhere and you'd say "Oh, next week we're going to do this", that type of thin.

Interviewer: Okay

Anita Stewart: Or we'd meet people up at the Sugar Bowl or somewhere and do it.

Interviewer: Alright.

Interviewer: I have a few follow-up questions.

Interviewer: Yeah, well, that's what we're here for.

Interviewer: You said your friends enlisted, a few of them. Do you know where they were sent exactly? Were they sent overseas, or did they stay in the states?

Anita Stewart: Let's see. I know one of them was out east in Norfolk Virginia, with the Navy. He was here for a while at Great Lakes, and then they shipped him there after basic training or whatever they called it. And my cousin who was in the Army, he was at Fort Sheridan, and he lived here locally with other cousins from Oregon. They'd come back here for a while, but he also moved on. And Bill was out in California somewhere. I can't think, it was like Mid-California. It wasn't up in San Francisco or anything, it was like mid.... There's a big base there. I can't think of it now. And my nephew too later on, he was at that same base in California. I should remember that, but memory goes at this age.

Interviewer: This is a silly question: What kind of skates did you guys wear? Like, when you went ice skating, was it like figure skates, or like hockey...

Interviewer: They went roller skating mostly.

Anita Stewart: Yeah. For either one, we had to have figure skates if we were on the river, or any ice rink, we had to have figure skates. Not only regular figure skates - well it probably was later when I was making my own money that I went down to the, I think it was the **Hyde Brothers** or something were the big ice-boot makers. We went down there to try them on before they put the blades on them. I mean, that's how serious we were. You see, it was really a serious thing for us, and roller skates too. With roller skates, you had to have the special wheels, you know.

Interviewer: But they were like different boots for figure skating and roller skating, right?

Anita Stewart: They were the same boots, the same type of boots

Interviewer: Oh, so you just clipped on the bottom, or...?

Anita Stewart: No, they were on the bottom, stationary on the bottom. If you were a big-time skater.

Interviewer: Would you have a different set? You'd have one set of ice skates and one set of roller skates?

Anita Stewart: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Anita Stewart: I still have a pair of ice skates in my garage.

Interviewer: That's great.

Anita Stewart: This is the first year I didn't skate, it was so darn cold. But I've skated every year since, my whole life.

Interviewer: Wow

Anita Stewart: But year, roller skates were very big, and you had to get the special boots and the special rollers, you know. And then if they came out, they came with a change during those years, and I can't remember what they did. It was something with pressure I know, and they had special bearings in there. So you had to get those then. So anytime there was a change, you know, because we were in that elite skaters' group. We weren't just the ordinary go-there-for-an-**all-skate**, you know. We might sit down during an **all skate**.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Anita Stewart: But we did all of the dances and things like that, and that's how you met boys too, because the boys did the same thing. They were great dancers, even on roller skates, they were good.

Interviewer: I ask because I used to skate.

Anita Stewart: Did you?

Interviewer: And I really miss it, so yeah. And because I used to go to Oakton.

Anita Stewart: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's pretty modern now. And one last question - at the very beginning, you mentioned bus strikes in Des Plaines

Anita Stewart: Yeah.

Interviewer: Could you talk about that?

Anita Stewart: I was probably a junior at the time, so '47, '48-ish. They had a bus strike, and the bus would be the local city bus that would go from downtown Des Plaines and it would go **to the highs** past the high school - I forget where it all went - and then also kids that lived on the west side, and a lot of my friends lived on the west side - fewer lived on the north side where I lived - but those that lived on the west side, they had to take a bus from their area to town, and then from town to school. So then they had that bus strike. I can't remember how long it was, how long it lasted, but we did literally have to walk to school and walk home.

Interviewer: So you know why?

Anita Stewart: I don't remember why they had the strike, no. I don't remember that. But it was quite a while. I don't know, it was at least, I would guess, a couple of weeks. Yeah, and that was... but you know what? Nobody complained. We just said "Oh, well you know what? It's so how out, let's go to the Sugar Bowl as soon as we get home". Otherwise they would say "Well I've got to go right home, I've got to do this or that". No, on a hot day you had to just go to the Sugar Bowl and get whatever. But yeah, that was very... I don't know they struck though. That would be interesting to find out. Yeah. Fun days.

Interviewer: Well I want to thank you very much.

Anita Stewart: Well I hope you got 5 minutes out of all of that.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewer: Oh, we got more than that.

Anita Stewart: No seriously, because...