

Bill Amundsen: I look like that most of the time.

First Interviewer: Okay. And what's your name?

Bill Amundsen: My name is Bill Amundsen.

First Interviewer: Alright. What was your address during the war?

Bill Amundsen: Well, we had 2 houses, at 322 Talcott Place, which is the corner of the Talcott Place and Vine, and then 8110 North Merrill, which was a block north of Oakton Street. And I think at that time, it was considered Park Ridge, but it was county. But I did go to Maine. And when we moved to Merrill Street, then I had to buy a car so I could go to school. My first car was a 1930 Ford coupe, 5 window coupe. Cost me more money, because everything was going wrong with it. But that's...

First Interviewer: When you moved, how old were you when you moved to your second house?

Bill Amundsen: I might have been 15, maybe 16... 15. So that would be about 1942.

First Interviewer: Tell us about your family life while living in Park Ridge.

Bill Amundsen: Well, I had one brother, and my mother and my father, and then my grandfather lived with us as long as I can remember – my grandmother died right before we moved to Park Ridge from Chicago, which was at... she died in 1935, and we moved in 1936 to Park Ridge. Rented a house on Columbia Street – I think it was 215 Columbia Street for a year until my folks bought that first house on Talcott Place. My brother was 4 and a half years younger than I, so I used to, I went to Roosevelt Grade School, and then out to Lincoln Junior High, and I used to ride the bus out there, or ride my bicycle, one or the other, if the weather was good I rode my bicycle. And **my father was an executive – he was the export manager of Swift & Company, which was at that time the world's largest meat packing company, and he and the mayor of Park Ridge and a couple other men bought a car together, and they would ride it from Park Ridge to the stock yards 5 days a week. And that's how they got back and forth. And then during the war, as I say, I can't find my gasoline ration stamps, but they were for a private car, they were A-stamps. And I think each stamp was worth I think a gallon. I don't remember exactly, it's been a little while.**

And then my father and the other men had what they called C-stamps, and they had quite a bit more gasoline because that's the only way they could get to work. And my father used to garage the cars, especially out on Merrill Street, and he opened the garage door and you'd get a whiff of the stock yards. It was a very pungent odor. But we had a very nice life, a very good life. Fortunately my father had a good job well through the depression years, and those were depression years. I think he had two 10% cuts in salary, but he kept his family alive, and his sister's family alive too for a number of years. Then when we moved up to Merrill Street, as I say, I bought this Model A, it was a perfectly good excuse to have a car. I paid \$65 for it, and I used to drive it around town. And one time I ran out of gas stamps, and there used to be a paint store on Main Street, Oscar E. Carlson Paint Store. I went in there and I bought... filled my gas tank and my Model A with benzene. It was sold as a cleaning agent and a paint thinner, and I drove my Model A around on a tank of benzene, and it ran very well. One of the fellows in school had a beautiful Cord 4 door sedan, about a 1931 or 1932, and he heard that. So he went and put benzene in his gas tank and burned the valves out of it, destroyed the engine.

First Interviewer: Oh, goodness.

Bill Amundsen: So the Model A was built, I think you could run it on water if you had to. A screwdriver and a pair of pliers was all you needed to repair the thing, and they were pretty nice cars. But when the war broke out, are you interested in that?

First Interviewer: Mmhmm

Bill Amundsen: We lived at Talcott Place, and I remember the house had a living room, and then on each side of the living room there was kind of a sun room. And they were all windows. So we had a radio, and that was our only means of... and nobody ever heard of television. We had a radio, and I was listening to Gracie Fields, who was a British singer, and she was singing *The Greatest Aspidistra in the World* when they broke into her song and announced that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. I found out a few years later what an Aspidistra was. Do you have any idea what it is? It's a tree. I don't know where they grow, but it's a tree, and somebody wrote a song about it. So I worked for Northwest Awning Company in the summers, hanging awnings for a couple of years – they had a Model A pickup truck that they had modified for their use, and they had a rack on it to put the ladders on it, and I hung a lot of awnings in Park Ridge and Chk 7.15. We used to make, during the war, you couldn't have frames made, so what we used to do is go and buy black pipe, and I would have to make the frame, I'd cut the pipe, thread it, and put the corners on it, or the hinge piece on it, and that was the way they made the frames for the awnings during the war. I made a lot of those, threaded a lot of pipe.

In those days, of course, radio was the only means of news, except if you went to the theater, they'd have these Pathé News, where they would show, before a movie, they would give you maybe 5 or 10 minutes of news of a war or something like that that they had filmed, and it distributed to all of the theaters. It was called Pathé news. And that was our only visual type of way of learning what was going on in the war.

First Interviewer: You said your family was coming off of the depression, but since your dad has a job, you guys were pretty well off for that time. Is there anything that changed that benefited your family after coming out from the depression? At the start of the war?

Bill Amundsen: Did the war benefit the family?

First Interviewer: Yeah, because when the depression ended, usually people...

Bill Amundsen: Did it help my father's job?

First Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Amundsen: No, because it was pretty much a job that was very necessary. Everybody has to eat, so Swift & Company did very well during the depression. People had to buy meat to eat, and my dad, of course being an export manager, had a very good salary, and then he was promoted to, and Swift & Company had an international company they called International Packers, and my dad got the promotion to be the general traffic manager. And he shipped frozen meat all over the world, from South America, Australia, I think some from Ireland, to all points of the world. And then when he was 60 years old, they gave him a book to read, and the president of the company said "Well, you're going to be in charge of all the insurance for the corporation too". So he was general traffic manager and corporate insurance representative for International Packers. So the war didn't really help his income in any way, it's just it was pretty much standard for the business he was in.

First Interviewer: You said that you heard about the Pearl Harbor attack on the radio. Before this though, the war in Europe was still going on. Did you hear about that as much?

Bill Amundsen: I'm sorry, what?

First Interviewer: Before the Pearl Harbor attack, the war in Europe was still going on.

Bill Amundsen: Oh, yes.

First Interviewer: So did you hear about that?

Bill Amundsen: Oh yes, oh yes. Yeah. A lot of Americans went to Canada to join the Royal Canadian Air Force, and they did a lot of contract flying, delivering planes and so forth to Europe. And of course we had the war between Japan and China in Burma, and a lot of Americans were flying airplanes over there, and that preceded the World War. But Hitler was having quite a successful time until the US got into the war with them with Britain.

First Interviewer: When the war started, did anyone in your family, or a relative, join the military?

Bill Amundsen: No. I was too young, my brother was of course too young, my father was, let's see, my father was born 1897, so he was 48 when the war broke out, and they started the draft, and everybody had to register for the draft, including my father, and he was concerned for quite a while that he might be called to go into the armed forces, in one of the branches. He'd been sitting at a desk all of his life, so he wasn't really in condition to, I think, go into the basic training that they would have needed. He would have had a difficult time. But he was never drafted, and then I was too young to draft, and I had to finish high school. And the war, the VJ day ended in August, VE day was in, it was April of 1945, so everything transferred to the Pacific from there. So none of us... my brother joined the army later on, he was in the army security agency, but there was no war at that time. I don't remember when he went in, but then I joined the navy reserve, and I spent 2 and a half years in the navy reserve, and then when Korea broke out, they called me to active duty, and I went up to Great Lakes, and I was up Great Lakes for 18 days, and ended up with a medical discharge, so I never did serve.

I used to get terrible headaches, and the only thing that would help was a **cup of chamomile tea**, and a cap of Bromo-Seltzer and just sitting in a sofa with my head back for 2 hours. And I found out later on that I was allergic to chocolate and dairy products, isn't that terrible? Allergic to chocolate.

Second Interviewer: I'm sorry.

Bill Amundsen: But not now, and I've stayed it from it long enough, and I'm a chocoholic. I can eat all kinds of it. As a matter of information, you know your football **field is** out here on Algonquin Road? Well we used to skinny dip in there. You know what that is? That was a quarry, it was a sand quarry. And there must have been a little spring at the bottom of this thing, and on the way home from school, we'd go for a swim. And then north of the road where Murphy Lake is, and there's a lake on the other side too that they dug, isn't there? Well there's a little spring-fed creek that ran through there, and we used to go swimming in that too. So we did our swimming before you had any lakes over there. And a bunch of that would always do that on the way home from school. And it was fun. We talked about Ms. **Perolini**, who was the English teacher, about the strictest teacher I think anybody could imagine. When she had a test for us, we had to take 5 newly-sharpened, or freshly-sharpened pencils, because if we broke a point, or we dropped a pencil on the floor, we couldn't do anything about it, we had to take

another pencil, because she figured that we'd have some way of getting an answer to the test, and there was no way in the world that she was going to let that happen. She was strict, but you learned grammar, you learned English.

And when I listen to television today, and I hear the grammar the people are using, it really bothers me, because I think they're not being taught the grammar that we were taught.

First Interviewer: You said that, on your way back from high school, you and your friends would go and swimming. What other activities did you and your friends do after school?

Bill Amundsen: Well, in the neighborhood we played. You know, we dug forts in the lots around us. Now where we lived in Talcott Place, you could go from Devon Avenue, all the way down to a riding stable was down just north of Montrose without having to go around any houses except for a farm house. There were no houses over there. The whole east side of Vine Street, it didn't have a house on it. There were some on the west side of Vine Street, and we used to cut the fields out there and make baseball diamonds. We played baseball. In the evening after supper, we would go out and play "kick the can", and just neighborhood playing. I developed a friend that lived up on the north side, one of my classmates Ray Moss who died in an automobile accident in 1969, and I used to ride up there on my bicycle from Vine Street. And whatever we did, play, I don't even remember what we did. I'd go up there and see. Most of the time it was just play, baseball and I used to do a lot of work around the house, like keep the grass cut, and wash the car for my folks, and do things like that, help my mother run the house at times.

First Interviewer: And this was during the war too, also? Like hanging out with friends, and cleaning around? Did the atmosphere of the war, or the atmosphere of your house or high school change when the war started or was going on?

Bill Amundsen: No, the only thing was that my dad, they came up with block captains. You heard about that? **The US was very afraid that the Nazis would attack the US. And every neighborhood would appoint a block captain, we used to call them block head. So my dad was a block captain. They gave him a flashlight and a hard hat, and every once in a while, no specific interval, they would have a blackout. Everybody would have to turn their lights out, all of their outside lights, darken the windows, and then my dad would have to go out in his helmet, his hard hat, and the flashlight, and look around to see that everybody had darkened their homes, just in case they would be flying over to bomb us.** And of course we were never attacked in this country, we haven't yet, thankfully.

First Interviewer: At school, did you do any volunteer work, or any kind of work at all in school?

Bill Amundsen: No, I didn't do any volunteer work. There were a lot of kids that the bond, selling it, I'd buy a few every once in a while, I had a part-time job after school. Used to be a... well I worked for the awning company, and then I worked for Eagle Food Mart, which is around the corner, well, I don't know, what's around the corner by the Pickwick theater at Northwest highway in Prospect? Used to be Henderson's drugstore. And I used to work there. I had a lot of jobs in town. And cigarettes were rationed, and I was working there at the time, and when cigarettes would come in, the people would hear about it, and they would line up at the cash register, and my turning around and getting cigarettes and taking them out, I was getting dizzy. I was having to do it, it was just so fast. But cigarettes were 15 cents a pack. Today they're, what is it in Chicago, \$10 a pack now?

Second Interviewer: I've seen \$12 a pack.

Bill Amundsen: Have you really?

Second Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Amundsen: Yes. Around the corner from that was an Eagle Food Mart, and the **owner's name were Eaglemoose**, and I used to drive their delivery truck for them, I delivered groceries, do some work around the house, I mean around the store. And on Saturday morning, they had a man that used to make the donuts for them. And unfortunately, he was an alcoholic, and I'd have to go out – he lived in a little shack on Oakton Street – and I'd have to go out there and bang on the doors until I got him out of bed and get him in to make the donuts in this world, and I was dumb enough to never get his... Chk 23.17 just run out of my.

First Interviewer: Recipe

Bill Amundsen: Recipe, thank you. But they were wonderful, and Eagle would buy everything that he made, and he made them all by hand. And my first real job was the Jewel on Edison Park, I think I was 15 years old then. I used to ride my bike down there. The Jewel had a store, it was about the width of this room, a strip store, and that was when they were just starting out. Bagging groceries, filling the vegetable bins and just general clerk work for the Jewel. But the war, you know, we had the rationing of gasoline and foods, but we were never lacking. I mean, we ate well, we had victory gardens. There was a vacant lot next door to our house at that time, and we, along with a neighbor on the other side of the lot, had a victory garden. And we raised corn, and all kinds of vegetables, you know. We had chickens in the back yard in Park Ridge. They were mortified to hear that there were chickens in somebody's backyard. But we'd get eggs from the chickens, and they never hatched into chicks, so we didn't have any chicken from that, just eggs. But we had a little coop in the backyard, a little fenced in area, and had the chickens in there. Across the alley from us, it was all vacant, all along Talcott Road. And there would get a lot of water in there, and it would freeze and we'd ice skate back there. There's a house there now.

First Interviewer: So you said you when you worked at the store, there was cigarette rationing, and you also talked about gas rationing. Was there any other kind of rationing that affected you or other people you knew?

Bill Amundsen: Well, yeah, when you ran out of gas you couldn't drive anywhere, but there was, down at Nagle and Northwest highway, there was a gas station, you could get black market gas down there. And I visited them a few times. And you had to pay a premium of course, but there always seemed to be a way to find gasoline for your car, and when I didn't have any more gas, definitely I tried the benzene that one time, but then I'd go down to Nagle and get gas. I got pretty good gas mileage on that Model A.

First Interviewer: Going back to your high school experience, Maine high school had some assemblies for students that were killed in the war. Do you remember anything about that, or experiences?

Bill Amundsen: Well, I lost a couple friends, I don't remember their names anymore, that were killed during the war. One of my best friends was over in Europe, he was 3 years ahead of me in school. We developed our friendship after high school, actually several years after that, but he was in Europe. Some of our classmates were killed during the war, or some of my friends. I don't remember if there were any classmates that were killed in the war, during the war from our class. There might well have been.

First Interviewer: You're the class of '45?

Bill Amundsen: '45. The war was, I think there was pretty well over. Some of the guys in the class might have joined before they finished high school, and probably may have finished when they came back, I don't remember. I think a couple of them did.

First Interviewer: The war bond drive to buy C-54 Douglas Aircraft, Douglas Aircraft happened in 1944, 1945. You remember anything about that?

Bill Amundsen: My father-in-law built airplanes at the Douglas plant. He worked there for a number of years. I don't remember the bond drives. I didn't even remember our class to buy an airplane, but apparently we did; I heard about that at our meeting preliminary to the interviews here. A lot of things you forget. I have a good memory, but it's short. You know how it is.

First Interviewer: You graduated almost at the same time at the end of the war. Could you tell us anything about your life after graduation?

Bill Amundsen: Let's see. I worked for the awning company that summer, and I had not intended going to college, I didn't go to college for a diploma, or maybe I did, I don't remember. But our pastor came over on a Tuesday night and started promoting college. And on Friday, I was on my way to Saint Olaf College in Minnesota, I had 2 days, you know. I was not ready for anything at that time, and I had really no plans. I had signed up, I think I'd signed up in the draft, I'm not sure. No, I wasn't 18, you had to be 18. So I was just kind of biding my time until I was 18, and working for the awning company. Just nothing special. I had a girlfriend. We'd go down to Lake Michigan and have beach parties down there, and just have dates and go to the show, or...

First Interviewer: How was dating in high school? Tell us about any experiences about those.

Bill Amundsen: Well, I ended up with a pretty steady girlfriend, and she was, I think, in the class behind me, and I have no idea where she is today, but when you have a steady girlfriend, there's never any problem getting a date. So you're always... On Saturday night, you had somebody to go to the show with, and it was just good company. There was nothing really special, it was always fun, and of course having a car made it a lot easier too, because I had no problem where we could go or anything like that. We used to go down to Riverview, which was an amusement park in Chicago. I remember we came home when I had, let's see, 4, 7, I had 8 kids in the front seat of that car with me. 4, 3, and 1. And the girl I had a date with had to do the shifting for me, because I couldn't even reach the gear shift lever. And we passed a squad car in Chicago, scared me to death if he had seen how many people I had on that front seat of that Model A. But that's what we used to... we used to do a lot of things with the church too. It was a Lutheran Church in Edison Park there at Avondale and Olivet. And they have a lot of activities. So chk 32.54 spend a lot of time on that too.

But dating was easy, it was nothing complicated, you'd just go to the show and maybe go out. There used to be a place on Touhy Avenue, just east of Prospect on the Northside called "The spa", and it was an ice cream place. And we used to go in there and we'd get a sundae or a soda or something like that. Then they move The Spa over onto Touhy Avenue near... It used to be Touhy Avenue Motors out on the other side of the railroad on Touhy. But that's where we used to date, you know, movies and maybe ice cream after that. Or some church activity.

First Interviewer: Can you tell me more about your involvement and your experiences with the church?

Bill Amundsen: Well, I belong to what was called The Luther League, and then a few years later, I sponsored it for several years until the church got an assistant minister. And then he and I worked it together, and we'd have parties and we'd go to different places, you know, there'd be a bible camp up in Wisconsin called Lutherdale, it's up near Lauderdale Lakes. And a few years later, we started a young adults group and it's all single, unmarried, single naturally, people in the church, or whoever wanted to join it. And we played a game where they'd blindfold you and then they'd have cotton balls on the floor, and you had to pick them up with a spatula and put them in a bowl, and you're blindfolded. I was looking at these pictures and then looking at them, and I said "Who's that bald guy down there? I don't remember him being at this party." And I looked again, I said "Oh my gosh, that's my sweater" I said "That's me." I had no idea. 22 years old and I was bald. But I did a lot of church work. I sang in choirs, a number of choirs. I love music. I can't read it, I just enjoy it. Learn it and then sing it, as long as they had the words written in front of me, I'm alright.

First Interviewer: Looking back on your experience as a teenager, and just generally during the war years, do you have anything you want to tell today's generation of teenagers about your experiences back then?

Bill Amundsen: I'm sorry, the what? I have my hearing aids, and I'm...

First Interviewer: Once again. Looking back at your experience as a teenager and general during the war years, would you like to tell anybody of today's generation about your experience during that time?

Bill Amundsen: Well, we were always very concerned about the war, and about the loss of life of not only the Americans, but any of the allies. We were as familiar with what was going on as we could be, because I say the only thing we had was the radio. And we'd listen to the news on the radio, or if we went to a movie, then you would have the Pathé news between the films. In those days, they'd have maybe 2 movies, when you go to the movies, you'd have 2 movies for the price of admission. And then in the middle, they'd have Pathé news, and they started going to 1 feature film, but they'd still have the news. And we were moderately concerned about being attacked by the, well initially by the Axis, the Nazis, but then we were very concerned more on the west coast from the Japanese. We didn't think the Japanese would be able to get inland this far from the west coast, but we were always concerned about that. But we were kind of insulated from it. We just went on with our lives. We went to school. And whatever normal activities you'd have in a childhood, we were lucky, American was lucky. We didn't suffer the pains of war that they did in Europe and in Russia, or even, well, Italy is Europe.

We had good lives, and I remember the guys, you know, well the guys in those days in the armed forces, they would get a cake from home, or get cookies from home, and they always got their mail. And that never happened with the enemy, with the Axis. They were all intent on delivering war goods to their people. So as a teenager, it was really not a type of a thing where you're constantly afraid. We were concerned, but it was a normal life.

First Interviewer: That's good. So those are all good... good interview on that. I like those follow-ups.

Bill Amundsen: Oh.

Third Interviewer: I get confused.

Bill Amundsen: Something we used to do during the war, we would collect all of the grease, and they'd pay us, I don't know, 10 cents a pound for grease or something like that, and the cans that the food

came in, we would flatten them out and we would donate them, I think we donated the grease too, and sometimes they'd pay for it. But the grease all went for ammunition, and of course the metal from the cans went in to armament.

Second Interviewer: Grease from, like, fine meat, or...

Bill Amundsen: I'm sorry?

Second Interviewer: What kind of grease?

Bill Amundsen: Just any kind of cooking grease.

Second Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Bill Amundsen: You know, bacon, or anything that gives you grease. We learned cursive writing, I don't think there's cursive writing today, is there?

Fourth Interviewer: I learned.

Second Interviewer: Elementary schools

Bill Amundsen: Are you learning cursive?

Fourth Interviewer: I already learned it a while ago.

Bill Amundsen: Did you? Well we used to have to do the circles and, I think they're not teaching it today, are they?

Second Interviewer: In elementary school we did, but they said we'd use it for the rest of our lives, and I've never used it since 5th grade, so.

Bill Amundsen: Yes, but if I wrote something in cursive, would you be able to read it?

Second Interviewer: Yeah, I'd understand it.

Bill Amundsen: Okay. But there are a lot of young folks today that had no idea it would be like trying to read Chinese.

Second Interviewer: I'm not sure my brother... my brother is in 5th grade right now, I'm not sure they did cursive, but we did, so.

Bill Amundsen: Okay, the Park Ridge School?

First Interviewer: Yeah.

Second Interviewer: Yeah. Chk 42.12

Bill Amundsen: That's Park Ridge...

Second Interviewer: I went to Lincoln.

Bill Amundsen: Oh did you really?

Second Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Amundsen: Oh, good. Good.

First Interviewer: I've got a few questions Bill. Do you remember VE day, or VJ day when it happened?

Bill Amundsen: VE day was not the great celebration. But VJ day, my cousin day was up here from Mississippi, and he and I went downtown in the loop, and we were, I think, on State Street. And it was just shoulder-to-shoulder people. And some of the navy guys were down there, and they were kissing everybody they could get their lips on. The girls. But it was just one big celebration. Everybody was so elated that it had ended. And the years after the war were the best years of our lives. 1946 maybe to '75, it was just really, really good. And then inflation really began to take hold and different attitudes in everything, and music changed.

First Interviewer: Sure. Can you tell us a little bit about your friends you lost in the war? So you said one was, who was an older friend.

Bill Amundsen: Yeah, he was, I think he was a year ahead of us.

First Interviewer: So he was the class of '44?

Bill Amundsen: I think so

First Interviewer: Okay.

Bill Amundsen: I think he had a nickname of "Knobby", and I can't remember his name, it's out of my head now. But I remember he was killed in Europe. And we felt very badly. And I don't remember the names of the other people that were lost.

First Interviewer: So now you graduated in '45. When did you join the navy reserves?

Bill Amundsen: In 1946 or 1947.

First Interviewer: Okay, okay. After the war.

Bill Amundsen: And we used to have "training exercises" down at navy pier. And at that time, it was still basically a free terminal for steam ships, or for shipping export/import.

First Interviewer: So you mentioned that occasionally we'd get black market gasoline. Did you do anything... tell us about anytime that you kind of got in trouble or would do any things that were kind of... we've heard stories about people siphoning gas, or just any troublesome activity, you know, statute of limitations is over. So anything you got in trouble with?

Bill Amundsen: No, I never siphoned gas. I know some guys did.

Second Interviewer: They'd get in trouble for it?

First Interviewer: Yeah.

Fourth Interviewer: Yeah. I've heard couple stories.

Second Interviewer: Did they get in trouble for it?

Bill Amundsen: If they got caught. IF they got caught. Yeah, that's stealing.

Second Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Amundsen: No, if I couldn't buy the black market gas, I didn't have gas. I know that one time, I say, I went to benzene. Normally there was gas available, and it's just for driving around town, driving out to school and back, which didn't take a whole lot of gasoline. So I never got into trouble with anything like that. And I don't know of anybody that did, actually. I know siphoning went on, but I don't know of anybody that did it.

First Interviewer: So you didn't have any cousins or anybody else you knew went into the military?

Bill Amundsen: Oh, just my brother.

First Interviewer: Just your brother?

Bill Amundsen: My other cousins were too young, were younger than me.

First Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Amundsen: And he enlisted in the army, and he went into... I don't know if he was drafted or if he enlisted, I think he enlisted to get into something that he wanted to. He would head into the Army Security Agency. And he went to Framingham Massachusetts, and went through some intense training. Ended up at Clark Air force Base in the Philippines as a sergeant of the motor pool. With all of his training, he was in the motor pool. So he was over there for 2 years, and then came home.

First Interviewer: So did you family buy any war bonds, or do you know anything about that?

Bill Amundsen: I don't remember, I'm sure they did, I'm sure they did. I don't know, I don't remember the quantities or anything. I know people tried to buy as many as they could. What my family bought, I don't remember. It's a long time ago.

First Interviewer: Sure. Chk 48.13

Second Interviewer: I have a few questions if you don't mind. Most of them are curiosity questions. You kept mentioning the shows on Saturday night. What is that?

Bill Amundsen: The theaters, movie theaters.

Second Interviewer: Okay. So like movies. Obviously not color, but they did they have sound yet, or no? Or was there some...

Bill Amundsen: Oh, they had sound, but the films were black and white.

Second Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Amundsen: We didn't have the color until, well, they were beginning to come in color.

Second Interviewer: Oh, really?

Bill Amundsen: Yeah.

Second Interviewer: Okay. Another curiosity question: Did you guys have a lot of homework, especially in high school? What was the homework load like?

Bill Amundsen: Yeah, I wasn't great on homework. I'd get it done, but... There was a fair amount, not the amount that you get today.

Second Interviewer: Yeah. Because nowadays we don't sleep.

Bill Amundsen: Yeah. Our homework was nothing to what you get.

Second Interviewer: Okay, lucky you. Okay, so Park Ridge, was the layout about the same as it is now, like the roads were, like if you listed a few main roads, did they look the same as they do now?

Bill Amundsen: Yeah.

Second Interviewer: So, obviously there...

Bill Amundsen: North of Oakton, there are some new streets up in there. Oh, I remember one thing. You know where Michael John Terrace is?

Second Interviewer: No.

First Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Amundsen: Okay, well that's south of Oakton, and it's a pretty nice...

Third Interviewer: It's near the country club area, right?

Bill Amundsen: Yeah, it's east of that. It's east of Prospect, and where Merrill and Wisner and East Avenue and everything goes up against Oakton Street. Well, there used to be a farm in there, and there was a little creek that ran through there, and when I wanted go and visit my buddy that lived on Elmore Street, I'd go through the farm and drive across the creek, and drive onto Elmore. And I remember my brother used to go over and visit the people that owned that little farm, and in order for her to make bread, she'd shoo the chickens off the table. You know, they managed to live.

Second Interviewer: On Oakton, there's an ice rink now, if you classify it. But yeah, that's not important.

Bill Amundsen: An ice rink?

Second Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Amundsen: Really? Where?

Second Interviewer: It's like if you go on D, like where D and Oakton intersect, if you turn right on Oakton, it's right there, it's really close.

Bill Amundsen: Oh really? Oh.

Second Interviewer: Yeah. So I skate there, well I used to. Anyway, you mentioned that the Americans sent planes to China and Japan before the US got into the war. What did they do that for?

Bill Amundsen: Well the Americans were helping the Chinese in fighting the Japanese.

Second Interviewer: Yeah, but they were... before they got involved in the war, were they just sending them...

Bill Amundsen: Well, no. Americans went over there, they joined on their own. I mean, they were not sent by the government.

Second Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Bill Amundsen: They were pilots that wanted to go over there, and they used to call it “flying the hump” over the mountains in Burma. No, that was never sponsored by the US. They had American planes, but I think the Chinese bought the planes. But it was all... I’m trying to think, there’s a John Wayne movie, what’s the name of it? I can’t think of it right now.

First Interviewer: What was it about? What it’s about?

Bill Amundsen: About the war between China and Japan, flying the hump. I have a copy of it at home that I taped. I can’t think of the name of it. But a lot of Americans were over there in the early ‘40s. And I remember Chiang Kai-shek was the premier of China. He was a Christian, he and his wife. And they left China proper and went to the island, it’s out of my head.

First Interviewer: Taiwan?

Bill Amundsen: Taiwan. And he died in Taiwan, but he... the communists then took over. After VJ day, General Douglas MacArthur, who was the general of the armies, wanted to go on through... Well this was the Korean War, I’m sorry. But he wanted to right on through North Korea, and just all the way on through China. And he had a big battle with Harry Truman, who was the president. Truman didn’t want to do it. And he retired MacArthur and I remember I was working for Armour and Company, and we all stood at the Vice President’s office and listened to MacArthur’s farewell speech. But if we’d have gone through China, it would have been a whole different story over there. But what we did for Japan after this war, you know, we could have made them a territory of the US, but we didn’t, and we helped them to get back on their feet, manufacturing and... of course you know in those days, right after the war, everything was made in Japan, like everything now is made in China. But MacArthur helped Japan to get its country back in order. And they don’t have an emperor that rules Japan like they had at that time.

But you have to give MacArthur credit for helping the Japanese get back on their feet. Germany, they’re very industrious people, and they worked very hard after the war, West Germany, to get back on their feet, and they got their manufacturing back very quickly to a useful type of production. But America helped them to some degree, and if it hadn’t been for America, the Nazis would have won the war, because the minute that we were attacked in... when we got into the war, I don’t remember when we got into the war with Germany, but we instantly went onto a war footing, because we had the manufacturing in this country that we don’t have now. And we went to building anything we needed within a couple weeks in some cases. And then when the Japanese struck, we were already on a war footing. But there was a lot of ignorance, and a lot of very serious mistakes made before the attack on Pearl Harbor. I used to wonder about Roosevelt, whether he was involved with that all, and I still wonder.

Second Interviewer: How do you mean involved?

Fourth Interviewer: Other than that as well. Like the attack in Pearl Harbor. Remember we watched the video?

Second Interviewer: Oh yeah, yeah. Okay.

Bill Amundsen: Yeah, Franklin Eleanor Roosevelt was president when we were in war. And he didn't make very good decisions, and he had some people working for them that were... I can't say not intelligent enough, but they just didn't believe that anything would be happening. They refused to believe the possibilities of being attacked. And they were warned, and they were warned, and still they disregarded.

Second Interviewer: Did your parents ever share their thoughts on whether or not the United States should engage in the war, considering what they experienced during World War I?

Bill Amundsen: You know, I don't remember they were ever discussing it. We knew that the war was going on in Europe between England, and France had been taken over, and of course they were beaten back by the Russians. And I don't think the US ever figured that we were going to end up in kind of a war. They were concerned for the outcome, but then we began to get involved with Britain, we were helping Britain. If it hadn't been for America... You know, I had a newspaper article, and I've lost track of that, but we had what we called a Lend-Lease program. And we supplied Russia with hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of war material, and they were supposed to pay us back. And they and Britain... And I think, of all the countries that supplied with war material, very few ever paid us back. I think one was Norway, and either 1 or 2 more that repaid the US for what we had sent over during the war for them. And I think if the Russians ever paid us back, we would have no problems with our economy.

First Interviewer: Anybody have any other questions?

Second Interviewer: I do. Oh, chk 1.01.13

First Interviewer: Okay, just one thing about the C-54 plane they raised money for. Did you actually see that in person?

Bill Amundsen: No, I never did.

First Interviewer: Oh.

Bill Amundsen: I don't know, was it ever on display? The airplane that the...

Third Interviewer: They had that assembly where they bused you all to see the plane get dedicated.

Bill Amundsen: I was never there.

Second Interviewer: There's a picture in the 1945 yearbook we saw.

Bill Amundsen: Oh, I was not in that. I don't know why.

Third Interviewer: It might have been there...

Bill Amundsen: It might have been out in **Left Field** somewhere.

Second Interviewer: Okay. You said your dad shipped meat basically all over the world, and it was frozen. So how did they do that back then? Was it by plane, or by boat?

Bill Amundsen: No, by ship.

Second Interviewer: Okay.

Bill Amundsen: By ship.

Second Interviewer: Would it stay fresh?

Bill Amundsen: Oh, it's all frozen.

Second Interviewer: Yeah, okay.

Bill Amundsen: It was all frozen.

Fourth Interviewer: It was in container ships.

Bill Amundsen: They have what they call reefer ships, refrigeration ships.

Second Interviewer: Okay.

Bill Amundsen: And it was all frozen, all frozen. And there was also canned goods that came from Argentina particularly, but from Brazil. They would can beef. They had a lot of lamb and mutton from Australia. This country had refrigerated rail cars, it would be, you know, like you make ice cream at home with salt and ice? Lots of ice? Well that's the way they refrigerated the rail cars in those days.

Second Interviewer: Okay.

Bill Amundsen: And it was quite a business making ice for, these big blocks of ice, and until they got mechanical refrigeration, that was the way it was refrigerated, frozen.

Second Interviewer: How did you make ice during the summer then?

Bill Amundsen: Oh, they had regular plants that made ice. As a matter of fact, there was 1 on Avondale Avenue, just east of Edison Park Lutheran Church. There was a big ice making plant there. And during the war, we didn't have mechanical refrigeration, we had ice boxes. You heard about them?

Second Interviewer: Yeah.

Bill Amundsen: And we put a sign on the window, 25, 50, 75, 100, how much ice we needed. And the ice man that came around our part of Park Ridge on Columbia Street had a horse-drawn wagon, and he would chip the ice off to whatever size piece of ice we wanted. And while he's in delivering, we were out there picking up pieces of ice off of the bed of the wagon and eating the ice. Of course it wasn't anything – it would melt if we hadn't done it.

Second Interviewer: What did the numbers stand for?

Fourth Interviewer: Number of...

Bill Amundsen: How many pounds of ice we wanted.

Second Interviewer: You could get 100 pounds of ice? Wow.

Bill Amundsen: If you had a really big ice box. It's a big hunk of ice, but... The ice went on the top, and all of the refrigerated products would be on the bottom. My mother would go to the store every couple days to buy meat, because it was very difficult to keep meat in an ice box. And she'd buy her vegetables fresh, and they didn't have the canned stuff that we have today. You had to buy most everything fresh.

And I remember we'd be snapping the beans off, you know. All the vegetables would be raw from the store.

Second Interviewer: That was really good.

Bill Amundsen: The first refrigerator my folks got was a Coldspot, Sears. Well that was wonderful. It had an ice cube tray in it, and we'd get ice cubes out of it, you know. It didn't have freezer compartments like they have today. And my parents kept that refrigerator, they moved out to Biltmore Estates, which is now North Barrington, and they had that refrigerator, they must have that refrigerator for 25 years and it was still working. So those were the days when you got quality products.

Second Interviewer: Do you remember where your mom shopped in Park Ridge?

Bill Amundsen: I'm sorry.

Second Interviewer: Do you remember where your family shopped in Park Ridge?

Bill Amundsen: Well, let's see. I remember it was a **Cherry Food Mart**, and that might have been, I think that was in Edison Park. It was a butcher. And gosh, I don't know what. I can't remember what stores were in town. I remember we used to buy 10 pounds of cottage cheese a week, and I ate most of it. It was 10 cents a pound. This cottage cheese was kind of a leftover thing that they could use, and they'd sell it for 10 cents a pound. During the war, I ate a lot of cottage cheese. It's a good way to fill up, you know, and not use stamps

Second Interviewer: 10 pounds though, like how big of a container of cottage cheese is that?

Bill Amundsen: Oh, there were 5 pound containers.

Second Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Bill Amundsen: I bought a couple a week.

Second Interviewer: Oh my gosh.

First Interviewer: Well thank you very much Bill.

Second Interviewer: Yes.

Third Interviewer: Thanks. Very informative.

Bill Amundsen: Well I hope I had something that would help you.