

Interviewer: Alright, well, just as a reminder, we would like you to answer these questions in a complete sentence if you can. So like when we ask you your name, we'd appreciate if you could say, "My name is..." before. It just helps with that.

Robert Mueller: It helps your recording secretary.

Interviewer: Exactly, yeah. It just makes everything easier. Alrighty, let's get started then.

Female: In all honesty, why do we do that? Because the only part of the interview that we will actually preserve, we won't preserve the questions as much as the answers.

Interviewer: Right.

Female: So we'll kind of piece together.

Robert: Like Photoshop.

Interviewer: Pretty much.

Female: But it's audio shop.

John: There's something wrong with the camera.

Interviewer: Oh, there is?

John: Yeah.

Interviewer: Alright, could you start out with that story you were just talking about?

Robert: I'm glad to. I have to apologize because I can't remember his name, but he was the mayor during the war. And he came to speak at an assembly, an all school assembly. And during his speech, he said that when he was in high school, he started a "go to Hell" fund. And the reason was he had a job during high school, during the summertime. He and some other youths worked in the iron mines in Minnesota. And they used to go and get the beers for the workers at lunchtime. And like Dutch milk girls, they carried the beer in pails on sticks on their shoulders so you could carry a bunch of buckets. And some of the older boys taught him that you could sip a little beer out of each bucket and nobody would be the wiser. Well, one day he sipped too much beer from the foreman's bucket and the foreman caught him and accused him. He admitted it and the foreman made him a stoolie for a week, so he spied on all the other workers. And he quit the job because he couldn't stand being a stoolie. And from that time on he started his "go to Hell" fund, where he put enough money in cash in the bank so that if ever he felt he was in an untenable position, he could tell his employer to go to hell and he could support his family. So there's a good moral there. As long as we are talking about assemblies, we had Mr. Legg, who was the assistant principal, come in and have an all boys' assembly. And unlike today I think, we taught agriculture, we

had a metal shop, we had a wood shop. I had a friend that built a boat that he couldn't get out of his basement because it was too big. But anyway, Mr. Legg talked to us boys and he said, "I have one request: when you are at the drinking fountain getting a drink and some of the water dribbles out of your mouth onto your trousers and rolls all the way down to the floor without stopping, you know that your trousers are time to be changed. I think that point was well taken. Back in those days, we had one classroom that had screens on windows and a screen door. That was the agricultural class. He also taught remedial English. That was Mr. Main, but his nickname was Farmer Main because he taught agriculture. And as student we would make sure that when we came into his room, we did it one at a time. That way the door slammed every time. And he would get upset about that. So one day he wrote a beautiful sonnet on the blackboard and the last line that rhymed was "Damn it, don't slam it." And so we took him at his word and request and went in in groups and didn't slam the door anymore.

Interviewer: That's a great story.

Robert: Do you guys have student bodies these days?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Robert: We did. When I was a senior, we were trying to get Paul Jones elected. And one of the things I had heard (it was a rumor or something) was if you ran a flag, your flag banner of the person you wanted to be elected, on the flag pole at the stadium, he or she won. So I got up at five o'clock, got to school, put up our banner, and he did win. So I don't know how often that's true or if it is still tradition at Main today, but it is kind of fun to be up that early.

John: We've heard another guy talk about that, too. There were a lot of vigorous student elections.

Robert: Oh, very active back in those days.

John: So how did that work? How did you guys try to compete to win? I've heard you try to put your banner up early. And there was another guy; he got in trouble for that.

Robert: Well, we had banners all over the school.

John: Did you?

Robert: For all the elected offices. I got caught by Mr. Legg in the gym. Most gyms have two main baskets and they have side baskets for different gym classes. I was at one of the side baskets at the ceiling with no ladder, roll of tape in my mouth, and the banner. I had climbed on this pipe all the way out to center of the gym, and I was taping the banner as I went back. I had good upper body strength and it was nothing. I only got frightened when I was on a ladder. We divided the gym with a partition that went across. And I was on a

ladder that went up at a forty-five degree angle that went up to the ceiling. And they moved the partition. So instead of seeing a solid wall, I was looking down to the floor of the gym. That bothered me. But when the wall was there, it was a piece of cake. And when I was hanging from the pipe, I was looking at the ceiling and not at the floor.

John: Let's circle back and just get started from the beginning.

Interviewer: What is your name?

Robert: My name is Robert Mueller. My grandfather came from Germany and Anglicized the pronunciation. And the only two places in the country you have to not say it's Mueller is Wisconsin and Nebraska.

Interviewer: Where did you live during the war?

Robert: I lived at 317 North Merrill Avenue, which is on the eastern boundary of Park Ridge, right next to Chicago, south of Touhy. Though I guess South Merrill goes to Northwest Highway and North Merrill is north of Touhy.

Interviewer: Could you tell us about your parents, brothers, sisters, or anyone living at your house?

Robert: I had a sister, mother, and a father. My dad was a banker. My mother was a housewife. We were members of St. Luke's Lutheran Church. I was baptized Methodist, which is at the corner of Touhy and Prospect. But my folks didn't want me to walk there because Touhy Avenue was a busy street. So I could walk safely to the Lutheran church, which is two blocks further north. So I got confirmed Lutheran. The damn Methodists. But to put it in perspective, we used to walk from Lincoln Junior High School home at times when the buses didn't run. That is just walking through school or uphill both ways to go school. I was a Boy Scout. I should tell you about Boy Scouts. Today they are very strict on leadership and two deep leaders. But because of the war, we were lucky if we had a Scout Master and a Scout man. And I only recall taking one campout where we had an adult leader.

John: The other ones you did without an adult leader?

Robert: Yeah, just the kids.

John: And what was the oldest kid when you did the campouts overnight?

Robert: Might have been twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen.

John: Where would you go for your overnight campouts?

Robert: Well, if we did it around here, Camp Dan Beard, and that great. It had cabins and the cabins had old-fashioned wood burning stoves. Just camped out.

John: So all the dads were busy working?

Robert: Yeah, and your Scout Master had a day job, but a lot of worked in defense plants. The defense plants would say, "We need another shift. We need to turn out more torpedoes" or something, so you wouldn't see them; they didn't come home.

John: So you guys turned out okay even though you had thirteen year olds being in charge of you for?

Robert: Kit Carson was an Indian scout at thirteen. Give kids responsibility and they take it. But there was rationing in those days.

John: How did that affect your campouts?

Robert: Severely. Well, it was a learning experience. To buy ration food, you had to have stamps and somebody determined the stamp value of all the food. So first you had to go and develop a menu, and theoretically it was supposed to be well balanced. Today scouts (because I have been active in scouting ever since), if the boys do the meals, they get a little off-center in terms of wholesome. But because first we had have a menu, then we had to go to the grocery store and find out what that would cost in stamps, then we had to go to war ration board to present our menu to a bunch of old men, probably John's age. So we couldn't get by with potato chips. We had to be wholesome. We would put down margarine, and they would say, "No, no, you are young growing boys. Butter, you've got to have butter." And the margarine back in those days at the beginning of the war looked like a bar of lard. Lard was white and margarine is white until you put the food coloring into it. And because of the milk industry in Wisconsin, they wouldn't let you sell margarine that looked like butter. So every pound of margarine came with yellow dye about the size of an M&M. And you would break that and then you had to massage it until you got the color uniform. And you got something that looked like the color of butter. And you would square it up and cool it in the refrigerator and you would have something like a bar. So the war rationing board made sure that the scouts got good food.

John: So then you boys would go and buy the food?

Robert: Go and buy the food. Oh they give you a checkbook. You had to deposit the check in the bank and you got a checkbook. Then you would go and they'd say, "That's three hundred red stamps," so you would write them out a check for three hundred red stamps. So it was all...

John: That was a lot of responsibility. I think that was great for...

Robert: Yeah, looking back on it, it was great. It was a pain at the time that you had to spend all that time just to go out to have some food. But we learned.

Interviewer: And what would you spend your time doing on a campout?

Robert: Hiking or camping or skating on the Des Plaines River. Camp Dan Beard used to be an old Indian meeting place, so if you are out there you might find Indian heads. And some were along River Road. There used to be a POW camp. And I cardiac rehab with a young man whose father came from Germany and they had a farm in Hebron, Illinois. The POWs would be taken out there to work his farm. His dad spoke German and of course they spoke German, so it was a good deal. They got good food, they got out of the camp, and they worked. A bus or truck went back and took them back at night. Do you where Pesche's Flowers is in Des Plaines on River Road? There POWs used to walk to Pesche's. No guards, just walked down River Road.

John: Did you actually meet any of the POWs?

Robert: No.

John: Okay.

Robert: No.

John: Did you ever see one?

Robert: Just knew the stories.

John: Okay.

Robert: A buddy of mine got a job at Krogers at the war and he was making I think 58 cents an hour. And the kids that became 16- you know where O'Hare Field is? That used to be an aircraft manufacturing plant called Orchard Field. Douglas had a plant there and they made four engine transports, which during the war was known as C-54s and commercially they were known as the DC-6. And he was jealous because he thought the guys working at this defense plant were making \$1.28 an hour. Actually they were only making 98 cents an hour, or forty cents more than he was. But when the war was over, they instantly lost their job and Darryl kept his, so then he was happy again. He tells his grandchildren that he worked for 58 an hour, and they say, "What can you buy with 58 cents?" and he said, "Ten two-ounce candy bars." They were a nickel apiece and big, not these little wimpy things. What else can I tell you? During the war I worked as a lifeguard. It was a big deal because I lived at the country club.

John: You lived there?

Robert: I ate all my meals at the country club.

John: At the Park Ridge Country Club?

Robert: West Moreland Country Club in Wilmette.

John: Okay.

Robert: I got room and board and that helped at home. I don't understand the rationing, but when you went to a restaurant, you didn't pay coupons for anything; you just paid them for cash.

John: Did you live there during the school year or was this just in the summertime?

Robert: Just in the summertime.

John: Okay.

Robert: So I ate well. I was spoiled. Instead of milk in my cereal, I had cream. You know, it's all good stuff. But I was about as big as you.

Interviewer: You could use the extra.

Robert: Yeah, I didn't bulk up.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you remember about your neighborhood?

Robert: You know, we were pretty lucky. We didn't have blackouts and things like that, which they did in both coasts. We had gasoline rationing, so depending on what your job was, depending on what gas you could get per week or per month. We were always on the minimum, but I don't know that it ever created any problems for my father. But everyone was a one-car family back in those days. You didn't have cars that go here and there. We all rode busses; we all had a pass. We took the city busses. I don't think there was such a thing as school busses; it was city busses that delivered your kids. Our rifle team used to ride the public busses with their rifles. People would scream today if they saw that. None of them had licenses to carry or a FOID card; they just had their rifle. "Where are you going?" "Going to school. I'm on the rifle team."

Interviewer: So when your parents would drop you off at the country club, they would take the car with them and you would just stay there all summer?

Robert: Yeah. I'd hitchhike home. Oh yeah, we used to hitchhike. And during the war because of rationing and because the climate was different, you didn't worry about hitchhiking. You didn't worry about pedophiles or anybody. You just did it.

John: Was it very common among the students to hitchhike?

Robert: It was common among everybody that didn't have transportation.

John: Really? And was it common to pick up hitchhikers?

Robert: Yeah. See somebody on the side of the road with their thumb out and you were lonesome, wanted conversation, whatever, stop and pick them up. Say, "Well, I am going to Des Plaines." "Okay, I'll go that far. That's a few miles farther toward McHenry." And that's how we did it. And we didn't use telephones. That cost money; it was a nickel.

John: When would you use a telephone, like in the house at all?

Robert: Well, in emergency I guess. I mean, when I went away to college, we never called home. We wrote letters. If you got a phone call, it was pretty serious. Now you just reach in your pocket, take out the phone, and call, right? It's amazing. Let's see.

Female: Can you comment on the racial makeup of the student body?

Robert: Probably I don't think we had any Asians, no Blacks. We must have had Hispanics. I can't swear to it, but we had truck farms all around the area so their kids had to go somewhere. But I don't reckon that as even being mentioned. We had a Croatian home near us. When the fighting was in Yugoslavia, there was a lot of discussion about the Croatians and the Muslims and Tito.

John: Can you tell us what the Croatian home was?

Robert: Well there was some. We had a teacher, Mrs. **Kuclovich-Donlovich**. I forget what she taught now, but she went on to teach at Northwestern. And the band director left Main I think during the war and went to Northwestern to become the band director. And the athletic director (this probably shouldn't be in your thing, but you should be aware of it) was a monotone. I was in the a capella and Mr. Harley was the director of the a capella. He saw Mr. **Murzulla** just standing there during the singing of the anthem or any of the school fight songs with his mouth closed. And he said, "Sam, why are you singing?" And Sam said, "I can't carry a note." And Harley said, "Everybody can sing." So Mr. Harley got Mr. **Murzulla** and he found out what note he sang by playing it on the piano. And he increased his range and increased his range until when I graduated in '47 Mr. **Murzulla** was singing the school songs. So you can do it if somebody is there to give you encouragement.

Interviewer: Was there anything else that you spent your time doing at school: clubs, activities, etc.?

Robert: Well, I was on the swimming team. We were Huggy Bear's Bastards. Excuse me.

John: What does that mean, Huggy Bear's Bastards?

Robert: Mr. Bear.

John: Oh.

Robert: And he was a gymnast from I think University of Indiana. And Germans living in Indiana were part of a Turner society, which was a tumbling society. So we didn't have a competitive situation, but we had a lot of guys that could use the flying rings, the side horse, and all that. My experience in the side horse was embarrassing. One day I was vaulting, just running up, grabbing the pommels, splitting your legs out, and going over. The first time I caught my left toe and fell flat on my face. Went back and tried it again. Caught my right toe and fell flat on my face. Third time I caught both toes and decided the Lord had a message there, so I stopped vaulting.

Female: Do you recall where you were when you heard we were at war?

Robert: At home on a Sunday, but it was slow to sink in. V-J Day was a better deal. But by being at a country club, there are two things that stand out about the war. One was I registered a guy into the swimming pool because everybody who came through you put them down in a book to charge the member and so you know you didn't lose anybody at the bottom of the pool. You know, checks and balances. But I checked in a guy and it wasn't until much later that I noticed that his arm was missing from the middle of the forearm. But he held it against his side in a natural position so you wouldn't pay any attention to it. And he was an amputee from the war. I met a... this was '45, the war was still on. A graduate from Main of '41 or '42 had been a Marine and he had been wounded and almost died. He was paralyzed, but got through all of that. And because of his wounds, he was discharged. After he was discharged, after the war was over, another Marine went into his dad's office in Chicago and took a dog tag and said, "I took this off of Dick's body and I wanted you to have it." He said, "What do you mean? Dick's home. He's been home for a year plus." And he had been shot so badly that this guy didn't even check him; he knew he was dead. So he improperly removed the dog tag because he felt he knew he was going to get through everything and give it to his family.

John: Wow.

Robert: And the other thing I remember at the country club was a big dinner dance. No, a wedding. Excuse me. And they decided because there was a lighted pool and it is ten or eleven at night... I am asleep and I hear all this commotion. I get up and go out dressed, and they are throwing an officer of the Navy into the pool. He climbs onto the high board and jumps into the pool, having fun. I could have no control. I was a fifteen-year-old kid saying, "Would you please?" and they were beyond control. But they sobered up when somebody picked up a bridesmaid in all of her flowing dress; she must have had fourteen petticoats on. And they were going to throw her in. She would have sunk like a rock. But they decided that was improper behavior, so everything quieted down. Did you mention Ms. Parlino?

Female: Yes.

Robert: This probably shouldn't be part of your report either, but I will tell you the story because it is a good story. Teachers back in those days had a lot of power and you as students didn't. If you got in trouble in school, you got in trouble at home. There was no such thing as student's rights. You were wrong to begin with. And this young man owed Ms. Parlino some writing and we were on line to graduate.

John: In line at the day of graduation?

Robert: She plucked him out of the line and said, "No, you owe me a paper. You cannot graduate." And he did not graduate. And so thirty years later, we heard this story. And we made him a cap so that he could have a tassel that he could throw to the other side and feel he had been part of the ceremony. She was tough. But everybody that had her for English could still diagram a sentence today. They learned English from Ms. Parlino. She was very good. Any other?

Interviewer: Well, I guess about school. Was there anything outside of school that you spent your time with, like jobs during the school year or dating or friends?

Robert: I didn't date much. Jobs, I worked summertime for four years at the country club and the wintertime I worked for the Railroad Express Agency at the Northwest train station. If you take the Northwestern downtown, if you are walking between the tracks, you will see elevators every once in a while. Those go down to a lower level where all the trucks move. Any mail that comes in gets taken off the train and we sort it down under the ground. I took the first train out of Park Ridge on say Christmas vacation or Saturdays and came back after an eight-hour day. That was fun because you would run and meet trains. And back in those days they didn't have big things like Palatine, which is a mail distribution center. There were people riding the railroad all night long sorting the mail. They'd hang the bags by the railroad tracks. The train would come by and snap them off holder. And the guy would sort it because they knew where the train was going. He would sort it and by the time the train got to New York, it was sorted for all the little towns.

Interviewer: So after the war began, did anything change in your family?

Robert: No. My father was too old to be drafted. I had an uncle that was drafted just before his fortieth birthday, which I think was the limit of being drafted.

John: Wow.

Robert: And he was a short man and became a **balloter gunner**.

John: Really?

Robert: And he had a brother who was in the New York National Guard in 1939, so he immediately went into the service. Never saw a day of action in his life. Closest he got to combat was shipped to Hawaii, and then he was shipped back to the States for more

training. He kept on getting trained and trained and trained. His brother had I think 28 missions over Germany. Got shot down by a German jet, captured by German farmers, in a POW for thirty days, and released by Patton's army.

John: Wow.

Robert: When you got one brother with no war stories and another brother will all the war stories. So that's just the luck of the draw, you know.

Interviewer: Did any of your friends get drafted or people at school?

Robert: No, not that I... I have a friend that is 90 from Montana and he enlisted in the Marine Corp right after Pearl Harbor. He was shipped to Australia immediately after basic training. What we didn't know is that they put him on a tourist ship, one ship loaded with a division of Marines, no escort or anything, and there was a war on. And you go from San Diego to Australia. "Phew, we made it." So some of my classmates enlisted at Glenview Naval Air Station. I tried to do that, but my eyesight was 230. The enlisting man said, "Walk to that wall until you can read the eye chart." Well, I kept walking until I could read the eye chart and he said, "Sorry, you fail." And I said, "What do you mean I fail? I read it." He said, "Yeah, but you are too close. You see that pipe on the floor?" I said yeah. He said, "You've got to read it from there." So I backed up and I couldn't read it. Oh V-J Day, I guess I should tell you that. When that happened, I closed the pool down and walked a mile to a bus station in Wilmette. Then I got to the L and took the L downtown. Chicago was people wall to wall. The funny thing was I am all by myself and who do I run into by a Main Township classmate, football player. And we're talking and hugging girls and kissing girls and saying hooray. Everybody's having fun. And something hit us from behind. We thought somebody was looking for a fight. We turned around and there's nobody there. We looked down and there's a guy flat on his face on the pavement. So we picked him up and tried to move through the crowd. We said, "Excuse me, we've got a sick man here. Would you let us through?" And people turned, looked at us, and went about their business. And we started swearing. And it was absolutely amazing. Swearing was not common in the 50's and 40's as it is today. It was like the Red Sea. You could have driven a truck through the hole we made in the crowd because we got through their euphoria that there was something serious there. And we took him to the first aid station, which was in the first floor at the entrance of the Marshall Field and Company.

Interviewer: And he was okay?

Robert: Don't know. Just dropped him off. Just doing our job, you know. But civilians in the Midwest really didn't know that there was a war on. We had food. We had rationing. It was a pain in the butt. And if you didn't have gasoline you couldn't do this, you couldn't do that. But life went on and everybody's family was involved in some way. You had somebody who was in the service. There was a draft. No family escaped it. If you were a certain age, everybody had a number. They kept pulling numbers out of the hat and it was your turn to go. Today it is one percent of the families. So that you don't know there is a war on if you

didn't read the papers. And we would go to the movies. That's where you would see what is going on, newsreel.

Female: Where did you go to the movies?

Robert: Pickwick. And the favorite seat was 333, third aisle, third row down, third seat. And I remember the only significant thing there was I had a buddy sitting at the aisle. They've got lights at the edge of the aisle seats so you can see your way forward. He was screwing around during *Dr. Cyclopes* with the bulb and he shocked himself during a very emotional scene on the screen. And he screamed when the 110 hit his finger. And I mean the whole theater went up in... Same guy. We were walking back and there was a guy stopped at the stoplight across the crosswalk. So he opened the rear door of the car, walked into the car, opened the other rear door of the car, and we all followed him like sheep right through this guy's car. And then we left the doors open. Our favorite Halloween trick was the rope trick. Do you guys even know what the rope trick might be? You stand under a streetlight as a group of people. Then one of the group (you split in half) walks backwards across the street and it looks like you are paying out something. When a car is coming you do this. And when the car gets close to you, you all lean back like you are pulling a rope. And the car stops. We did that one night and stopped a squad car. "Where's the rope? Where's the rope, you guys?" "No rope!" "What do you mean there's no rope?" Well, they didn't like that. And the word got around so they were ridiculed by their fellow officers. So they came looking for us and put us in the Park Ridge jail for a couple of hours. "Lost the key, guys. Sorry!" Oh, the other thing we had (I just thought about it) was a youth center in Park Ridge back in those days.

John: Where was this at?

Robert: By Central School. Is Central School still there?

John: Central School, isn't that where the library is?

Interviewer: Yeah, Central School is now the Park Ridge Library.

Robert: The library used to be-

Interviewer: Across the street, wherever that hair style place and Allstate.

Robert: Anyway, it was a home. That was a very active place.

John: What kinds of things were popular to do there?

Robert: Just meet. I wasn't a dancer. But it was just a great hangout. And we used to go there and do things, but I can't tell you what. But it was friendly, non-threatening environment. We had fun.

Interviewer: Are there any other buildings that you remember in Park Ridge?

Robert: Oh, I loved the library. I was a book rat. I loved the smell of musty books. In 1946 (I'm rambling here), Bo O'Brien, Jr. won the state track meet for Main. One person, I think he won two races. And every other race was won by a different school, but they only won one race. So Bo being fast in two races and winning two races had more points than the other schools.

Interviewer: Do you remember the assemblies that the high school would have when a fellow student was killed in action?

Robert: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Some people have and some people haven't, so that's okay.

Robert: The only other assembly I remember was we had a Royal Canadian mounted policeman lecture. (Oh, I got another one for you.) And he mentioned chasing Desperados in the wintertime. And one of the students during question and answer period said, "Chasing these guys in wintertime, how the heck do you get bathed up there in Canada?" And he said, "You didn't." And the student said, "Didn't you smell?" And he said, "Yeah, but only for the first week," meaning you got used to it. We had another lecturer worked for the White House and his job was to summarize military intelligence reports for the President, which he did I guess for the entire war. And afterwards publishing houses said, "You've got to have a story. You were the one person that probably had more knowledge of what was going on in all of the theaters as anybody." And he said, "My problem is I spent four years summarizing. I can't expand anymore. My mind has just changed." You guys were using a tape recorder before. Before tape, there were wire recorders. The first recording device recorded on stainless steel wire about the size of ordinary sewing thread. And we went from that down to the ribbon. But the first machines were very small. I think I am running out of stuff.

Interviewer: Do you remember the assembly that the school had when they took all the kids down to Douglas Aircraft and showed the plane?

Robert: Just there mob scene. You are just a part of the whole thing. It was supposed to happen and you are a part of it. It's not that significant. That day doesn't appear to be significant in any way.

John: Just had a question about rationing. Do you remember did it affect your mom and what you ate or anything like that? Do you remember? Was there anything in particular?

Robert: I am sure it affected my mother. But women who cook learn to cook and they can substitute and they do quite well in adding bread to meatloaf or whatever. And you don't know. I was a growing boy in those days, but I don't recall being-

John: Deprived.

Robert: Deprived or anything.

John: Did you guys have a Victory Garden?

Robert: Oh, yeah. Most people had Victory Garden, fresh vegetables. Milk was in glass bottles back in those days. So Mother could ration the milk by looking at the milk in the bottle and knowing how much milk she needed tomorrow for whatever she planned to do or serve before she went shopping. When milk went into paper cartons, Mother couldn't see how much milk was in the carton. So if Erin asked, "Mother, could I have a glass of milk?" Mother would say sure and Erin would empty the carton so another carton had to be used to fill up the glass. You didn't have that when you had glass vials.

John: Where did you guys go grocery shopping?

Robert: Downtown.

John: In Chicago?

Robert: No, no.

John: Park Ridge?

Robert: Park Ridge. On the north corner of Prospect and Touhy, on the east side there was a National. I think there was a Kroger down by the Pickwick. There was a great ice cream store down by Pickwick whose ice cream was so good that Borden Milk bought them, bought the formula.

Interviewer: Was that Robinson's? Because I remember there was a soda fountain.

Robert: Don't remember. There was a drugstore at the corner of Touhy and Prospect that had a good counter with the soda jerker and all of that. We had a great bakery on Touhy Avenue on the street that goes out from Touhy to Lincoln School. I can't think of the name of it, but great coffeecakes.

John: You are getting me hungry.

Robert: There was a Chinese restaurant down on the railroad tracks just up on Prospect. And he had the greatest French fries. We used to go there and drink tea. Because he was a Chinese place, we didn't think we could get coffee. And ate his French fries. They were delicious. Might have been the salt, but geez they were good.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about V-E Day?

Robert: Yeah, it was fun being downtown.

Interviewer: The Europe day, Victory in Europe.

Robert: Oh, Europe? No.

Interviewer: It wasn't a big deal?

Robert: No, there's still a war on.

Interviewer: Right.

Robert: Everybody's going overseas. I mean, going to Japan.

John: Right.

Robert: Do I have your email address?

John: I don't think so.

Robert: Give it to me and I will send you a copy of the invasion plans for Japan.

John: Oh, that would be great.

Robert: It describes all of the stuff that was coming from Europe for the invasion of Japan because it was only half over. And nobody expected it to be over so fast. That would have been a long battle.

Interviewer: Do you remember selling any bonds for the airplane benefit?

Robert: No, just doing and buying... Everything was priced so that you could buy a ten-cent stamp, a twenty-five cent stamp. And you put them in books and when you got \$18.75 you bought a war bond, which when it matured was \$25.

Female: Can you describe that again? I hadn't heard that before.

Robert: The war stamps? Yeah, you could buy ten-cent stamps or a quarter stamp. Might have even been a dollar stamp. And you could paste them in your book. A page might be worth a dollar if you put ten ten-cent stamps on it. So you could go through a book that way. And when you got \$18.75, that was the value of a \$25 war bond, redemption value. And you get a bond and you get your name on it, the whole bit. That's yours.

Female: So you mentioned that your dad was a banker. Where was he a banker, and did you take your books to your dad's bank?

Robert: Probably. He took them. He worked downtown. He worked at the first bank that had a drive-in, Exchange National Bank at 130 South LaSalle. They are part of Bank of America today. But when he started banking, he was a teller at the Westside Preston Savings Bank at Holsten and 12th Street, which is right down at Maxwell Street. And when the Depression came, their bank was solvent because the immigrants were here to better themselves so they saved money like mad to buy apartment buildings so that they could have income coming in. That was their retirement. You own an apartment building, and you have a place to live, you rent apartments out, and the money comes in pays your taxes and all that. So it was a good deal. So the Westside Preston Savings Bank, when the First National Bank of Chicago had the run on their bank and ran out of cash, my dad's bank said, "We've got cash. We'll loan it to you." And did. And First National got through run so they didn't close. And when the run hit my dad's bank, they went to First National and said, "Help!" And the First National said, "What did you say? I can't hear you."

John: Wow.

Robert: So my dad's bank went bankrupt and he was out of a job.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about life right after graduation?

Robert: College. I had a roommate. It was interesting going to this school after the war was over because a lot of students were thirty years old. Prior to the war and probably during the war, the kids still going to school, a lot of hazing was going on back in those days. If you are a freshman, you are lower than a snake so we can tease you and make you do things so you can do it to the next freshman class. GI's didn't go for any of that, so hazing disappeared very rapidly. But I had a roommate that was a radio operator for naval transports in World War II. And he said, "Another five years, there'll be another war." And the Korean War started in 1950, five years. And that was interesting. Prior to the Korean War I think we had one or two or maybe five overseas bases with military attached. And after the Korean War, we had five hundred. It's been the same ever since.

Interviewer: Do you have any advice for teenagers today?

Robert: Study, study, study. But follow your heart. It starts with studying. And you don't know what you're going to learn. I discovered at the age of 50 I guess that I could draw. Now, I scribbled a lot. But I can copy. I retired in '92 at 62. Two years later (I volunteered at the Botanic Garden in Glencoe) we wanted to find out how healthy our oak woodlands were. One of the ways of doing that is to study the mushrooms in the area because the mushrooms are an indicator of an oak woodland. And so we spent two years digging up mushrooms in specific plots of ground that were randomly chosen. And then I and two ladies identified mushrooms. We didn't know a darn thing about mushrooms until we started identifying. And I sketched most of the mushrooms we discovered. It was a skill I didn't know I had, but I started doing it. Botanical sketches. So don't hesitate reaching for a dream. You want to be an architect? The only suggestion I can give you is that when you're doing architecture drawings, your teacher loves real sharp, straight angles. Okay? It's good

for drawing a building. But if you are designing a piece of equipment and there is going to be any stress on the equipment, you don't want sharp angles. You want curves to reduce the stress. If you ever look at a sickle, it's got a big curve by the handle. The reason is if that was at a right angle, you would get one blow out of it and then it would break right there at the sharp angle because it is concentrated all it's stresses. You've taken chemistry at all?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Robert: Ever cut glass rods, tubes?

Interviewer: No.

Robert: You can't do it today because of the OSHA or something. But we used to take a triangle file and you scratch it. Then you can just put a little stress on the crack and you've got a sharp crack right across the glass because of the stress concentration.

Interviewer: Well, that's all I have on the sheet.

John: Great!

Robert: The scribe have anything?

Female: Yes, I am well pleased. I am curious. What did you go on to do?

Robert: I became...