

Bill Kramer

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Bill Kramer

Can you tell us your name?

Commonly known as Bill Kramer.

I understand that you have lived in Olathe your whole life, is that right?

I was born in Olathe in 1923. And the house I was born in is still being used. Mainly as a store room right now. It is clear up on then was east Park Street. It's almost out in the country. Probably one more house on Park Street east of us.

So what was it like growing up in Olathe?

Well, *(he laughs)* it's quite different than today, because it was...all the streets, literally all the streets were gravel except the main ones which were brick. And we also had the Strang Line and Urban which ran from Kansas City to Olathe. Went right down Park Street and that was the smooth part of driving your car was to get on the tracks and head downtown. We lived on Cooper Street which there is a stucco house 115 N. Cooper. And it's still standing and that's a block east of the deaf school. The smooth part as far as bicycles was concerned was to ride in the gutter. Cause the bricks especially the bricks around the tracks were a...pretty well broken up. And you get on there and it's rough. And we went...when I went to junior high school downtown in the old building we went home for lunch. That was seven blocks that you went home and you came back inside of one hour. So it was interesting.

So what schools did you attend?

Well when...we moved to Oklahoma when I was two years old and when my dad got killed in 1935...'34 we moved back here because I had older siblings that lived here. We figured it would be a lot better schools and the chance to go to work so we moved back to Olathe. And that was between my 5th grade and 6th grade. And I attended Washington Grade School in 6th grade. And we lived just a block across an empty lot to get to school. So I would most generally stay home until the bell rang. No sense in going early. *(He laughs)* That was my main experience there. And then I went to junior high school downtown in the old building. And went to high school in the John P. St. John building or high school which the only high school in Olathe then. Course today there are four high schools...looking for a 5th one. And another experience of mine was when I worked for the railroad and delivered calendars around to the elementary schools mainly. I could walk into an office and know everybody in every one of the schools. That isn't possible today. *(He laughs)* I walked into a...let's see what school was that...I was trying to think what school I was in just a...Tuesday...I went to California Trail Junior High School...nobody...*(he laughs)* I knew no one in there. I get around quite a little bit and see people and know people,

but I have been retired for over 20 years and I try to keep busy by going to school. We go to the 1st grade at Central one day a week and that keeps us on our toes.

What was it like...you grew up in the Great Depression right? What was that like? You mentioned that you lived in Oklahoma was there a big difference coming up from there?

Right. Quite a little bit. We lived in a little town of Afton, which is 200 miles south of us. But it had about 1200 people in it. Course back then the railroad was the thing and it was something else. When I went to grade school in Afton, I could leave home and check out all the alleys go to school and pretty well know everybody in town.

So what was it like for you to have to grow up during the Great Depression?

Well it was a little rough. We didn't think too much about it, cause everybody was on the same level. It's not like today where you've got the real poor and the real rich. They were literally all the same they were all looking for advancement. And a...my father worked on the railroad as a lineman and I think he made \$60 a month and there was five...six kids living at home...young ones. I had a family of ten kids and lost one and I and my brother are the only ones left alive. And he taught school at Hutchison 42 years and retired as the athletic director out there, he still out there in Hutchison. But I'm still struggling in Olathe.

As kids what did you do for entertainment?

Down at Afton we went swimming in the creek. Course we played ball and all that kinda stuff. Not too much, we had one small theater which my dad had wired and we just went places and did things. We had no transportation like most of them have today of getting in their own car and going someplace. But a...we managed to survive. And I grew up on the railroad and I worked for the Santa Fe for 43 years and retired from there. But back in the depression you didn't go a lot of places and travel you stayed pretty much at home. And then of course things started loosening up in '35...'36...why it made a little difference. And we always rode the train. If we came to Olathe we rode the train back and forth instead of driving. And when we moved back to Olathe we would drive back to Afton and the highway, 69 highway, still goes down through Fort Scott and Pittsburgh and all that and its 200 miles and it used to take us something like six hours. I believe that's right.

Where was the train station?

In Olathe we had two train stations. One was Frisco which back then was on the east side of town and the Santa Fe was downtown. And a...both depots are gone now, clear gone. Where the jail sits today is where the depot downtown sat, on Willie Street. And that was another interesting occurrence, when we moved here Willie Street it was it was half a street alongside

the railroad between Loula and Park Street. And you could go down there and turn down the tracks and the next thing you know a train would be right alongside of you (*he laughs*). It'd give you a funny feeling to have those box cars going by. And they had several accidents in that respect.

In Olathe, when I was in junior high school my brother worked at Knor Drug Store. And a...I got a job...we delivered by bicycle and we sold ice cream for 19 cents a quart and we would deliver that. Can you imagine that? Riding a bicycle on these dirt streets. We had quite an industry of Sunday chicken dinner. There was a place down by the depot called the Santa Fe House and they served meals on Sunday course it was a boarding house but they served meals, chicken dinners on Sunday. People drive out here from Kansas City for dinner and we were almost two blocks...the drug store was almost two blocks from the Santa Fe House and we would deliver quart of ice cream down to the place for them to serve up ice cream.

And we had another lady that lived out on North Walker that did the same thing and we'd ride our bicycles all the way from downtown clear out to where the cemetery is now block east...it would be pretty soft time we got there. And then by the time you got back to the drug store they'd call want another one. Instead...like today you'd get ice cream ahead...but they didn't.

Can you give us an idea the size of Olathe where the eastern most boundary, western most boundary?

Ok, the...how many of ya know where Dennis Street is? You know where Dennis Street is...was the south edge of Olathe. I mean of course not every lot in town had a house on it. You had some lots might have been a whole block...almost a half block...would be empty...have one house on it...maybe. So it wasn't saturated as such. And a then the west side was over on Parker Street or Highway 7 and everything west of that was farm ground. And north of it was cemetery was pretty much the north edge of town. And the east side course was about where I-35 is now...across there.

And a...I delivered groceries when I was in high school and we would deliver groceries on Saturday and I got stuck one day on Park Street about where I was born. It was just mud and I didn't think I was going to get out of there (*he laughs*) but I did.

And a...we had two newspapers in Olathe, *The Olathe Mirror* and the *Johnson County Democrat*. And a...I was in high school and I worked for *The Olathe Mirror*, and on Wednesday evening tying out the paper putting it in bundles to take to the post office. And a (*he laughs*) and a couple of times I didn't make it to school, because we had an old press mainly one of these circular press that you had to hand feed and it would break down you'd have to work on it. And then the folder...they printed this paper in a great big sheet then you had to put it on the folder, feed it through and it would fold it once and then it would go this way and fold it

another time and then go that way. **(He shows the movement with his hands)** They hand little bands to move the paper and those would break. It was a struggle to get it out. It's not like today where they got everything all fixed up and zip.

And then...I am trying to think...I worked in an ice cream store on the east side of the square for about...for about one year and that's when I when to work in the grocery store next door to it. And then....also it sometimes makes it interesting to know people...is I was...I graduated in '41 and I didn't know what I wanted to do, which way I was going. And a...one day the agent of the Santa Fe came in asked me if I wanted go to work as an apprentice, telegraph apprentice. Said sure if I could pass the physical. And that knowing somebody...he was the uncle of the girl I was going with. And so it...it has its advantages to know people and that's what I suggest to everybody to get to know the ones around you.

I had two children go through this school and two grandchildren. And they couldn't hardly tell me the names of the kids were in the same class with them. I mean they didn't know them. But my son did alright. He went in the air force right out of high school, actually he signed up before he graduated and he put in 25 years. He was lucky, but he paid attention to what was going on around him and he retired from the air force as a lieutenant colonel as a male nurse. And so he's not doing bad and course he's moved out to Las Vegas. So we have to go out to see him. He's working in a hospital out there. So...it's a...been a long grind **(he laughs)** but we try to keep busy both my wife and I in the church, and going to school. And a...Olathe has changed considerable. Anything else that I can cover?

Well you fought in WWII...

Well I went in to the service in a...let's see I was working as an apprentice on the railroad and they've got a deferment for me. Eighteen you are supposed to sign up, I did. They got me a six month deferment. And then one day I was talking to the head of the draft board and he said my name was coming up again what did I want to do? I said well there's nobody around town to do anything with all of them have been drafted or their working farmers and a...I said might as well go. So he...the next meeting why he put me on the list.

And we went down a...that day to go to Leavenworth and we had about 44 guys. And the regular bus was sitting there too and these guys all got on the bus and we didn't have any room to sit. So about five of us got on the regular bus. Of course there were some girls on there we knew going to work and a...we got down to the bus depot at 11th and McGee their bus was pulling out going to Leavenworth and they wouldn't stop and pick us up. So we had to take a regular Leavenworth line to Leavenworth. We got up there and they were all waiting on me because I had all the paper work. And a...we had to stay overnight and be processed the next day.

And a...we a...took us all and then we had two weeks at home and went back. With my telegraph experience they were a...sorta hanging onto the guys that had any connection with the air force. And so they shipped us out to Lincoln, Nebraska for basic training. And a...I spent eight weeks basic training. And so then they assigned you to these different schools and oh....when I took the AGCT test I had a score of 138 which I thought was pretty good considering most of them around 70. I wasn't smart **(he laughs)** I didn't think I knew anything. And a...so they asked you what school you would like to go to and I put down that I would like to go to cryptography. Go down for an interview and find out that my grandparents came from Germany and couldn't speak English and they said that's it. So they had this new program that just be instituted which is called ASTP. "Army Specialized Training Program" They asked me if I'd like to get into it. That was sending GI's to college. And a....sounded like a good deal to me.

So I...there was 26 of us on the shipping order that we went in to Lincoln, Nebraska to Nebraska University. And they had room for 24 at the downtown campus well...two of you are going to have to go out to Ag College. Ok...so I and another fellow they transported us out there. And about a week later here come those 24 guys walking they had hiked them out from downtown clear out to the Ag campus. And another little experience, we were there in the Star Unit and a...we got acquainted with some of the permanent party guys. And a...this friend of mine he said well we're on shipping orders. He said you are going to North Dakota and I am going to K State. So we go in and talk to the first sergeant to see if we could get that reversed. **(He laughs)** He said it didn't matter to him he said just bodies. So I ended up out at Manhattan and he went 65 miles from his hometown. And a...they put us out at Manhattan mainly as replacements.

They a...bunch of guys that were already there and they were asking the leaders who they would like to get rid of **(he laughs)** who had been giving them trouble. So they called those guys out and put our guys I went out there with in to replace them. Then they made up a Section 22 which I ended up in with all of those guys that had been called out. And a...we lived in Van Zile's Hall at Manhattan. I don't know if any of you know where that's at? That was a girl's dormitory. **(He laughs)** And a...ASTP was to help also the students that were already in school that were going to college and there were six fellows out there at Manhattan that there were a...veterinarian students. They only had about six months to go to graduate. So they left them in...and they lived in the basement of Van Zile Hall with us. Separated.

We were supposed...if we graduated we were supposed to be basic engineers. And a...course after about the first course they washed me out cause I gave the 2nd Lieutenant the wrong answer. And a...they sent me back to the service from wensst I came and a...that was back up to Lincoln. So they gave me two weeks leave at home on my way overseas. And a...I called this friend of mine up there that was going to school he said don't bother to come up they just closed the program out all these air cadets and ASTP programs all those guys were going to the

infantry. And part of them went to the South Pacific and part of them ended up in the Battle of the Budge. I corresponded with two or three of the guys and a...I read Bob Dole's recent book come to find out that he was up to Leavenworth about the same time I was. And a...he ended up in the ASTP. And a...oh yes his birthday is four days after mine. So that gives you an idea how old I am. **(He laughs)**

I...a...left here and went to Las Vegas, New Mexico for an assignment and we then went from there to Long Beach, California. They put us on a Liberty ship and a...they day we loaded I injured my ankle but I decided I might as well go anyway. And we spent 58 days on a Liberty Ship going from Long Beach to Khurai, India. And we stopped in Freemantle, Australia and that's a harbor of Perth on the west coast. And a...we about lost four life boats in a storm going around the lower side of Australia. We put in there to...to a...have those repaired and we were there...we didn't think they sail with us on the 4th of July but they did. We thought we'd stick around there and have some of the celebration. And a...we got to Khurai they put us in a...replacement boat and that's when they were bringing a lot of troops over to the China Burma India theater to haul supplies to China to help fight the Japanese.

I was at Malar **(either a town or a base)** and I got assigned to personnel at the terminal building in Khurai. Terminal building was about like the downtown Kansas City airport terminal building only a little larger. And alongside that was a dirigibles hanger they had intended to operate dirigibles between Berlin and Khurai. So they built this great big hanger to put it in. And a...it was there and these guys in the air force they would ship airplanes over in boxes and then they would haul them out there to that hanger and put them together and test fly them out of there. And they had their tents inside the hanger...they had that much room. They could work and live right on the job. **(He laughs)**

And a...it was interesting there at Khurai cause when we got there it was just the starting of the monsoon season. And it rained and it rained. About the time I got assigned why it quit raining. And there wasn't a cloud in the sky for six months. And a...but I was there for over a year and a...they shipped me to China to Lijiang was an airport around **(cannot understand what word he is saying)**. They shipped me up there to relieve a tech sergeant. I was a PFC **(he laughs)**. And we didn't stay long in Lijiang cause the VJ Day ended things and they wanted to get us out of China as fast as they could. So they flew us back to Calcutta I spend about a...oh almost two, three, yea at least three months waiting for a ship home. I only had 43 points and there were guys there that had 70 some. Which that is the way they were scaling back how you got on the list to come home by the number of points you had. Which is the amount of time that you spent overseas. And a...I forgot...if you had any medals different theaters, stuff like that made a difference.

I came home on the General Hodges, which was a troop ship and I lucked out in a way **(he laughs)** I wasn't down in the hole. They put us up in 1A which was right up in the bow of the ship where if it went down you got a good ride. **(He uses his hands to show an up and down motion and laughs)**. And a...the reason why they put us up there...when we came to Calcutta we had Air Forces MOS's. They decided they change them...the guys that had low number on the points they'd change them back to your primary MOS which I had 405 as a clerk typist and we would relieve those permanent party guys that were there on the...so they did and I worked in Atiskin's office.

Another little wrinkle was that I kept watching the shipping orders and if you came in on the west coast of the United States they sent you to Camp Carson in Colorado to get out if you come in on the east coast they sent you to Camp Chaffey down in Arkansas. But I kept noticing those guys in Missouri were being sent to Fort Leavenworth. So working in Atiskin's office I just change my home address to Kansas City, Missouri. **(He laughs)** And a...I got out I got out at Fort Leavenworth which was a lot closer than those other places.

And went back to work for the railroad. Originally I had considered going to work in construction. Because, boy you could get a good paying job \$250.00 a month. That was in 1946 and that was a good paying job then. But a...today they wouldn't even think...that's a half a day's work maybe **(he laughs)** at that rate of pay. So I went back to work at the railroad and stayed for 43 years and retired on railroad pension. Here I am.

How did Olathe change when you came back from the military?

Oh...oh...it was building. It was building. Even back then and of course the Naval Base was still out here. And a...different things like that were still going. It was still in operation, the Naval Base was. Lot of those guys that came out here in the Navy stayed. I had a neighbor that was born and raised in Boston and he came out here and he just couldn't understand it **(he laughs)** he decided to stay out here rather than go back to Boston. Course the opportunities were increasing then as far as employment and it has continued to grow and it's still growing.

What were the big industries, job employment things in Olathe right after WWII?

Well...of course we still had two boot factories. And a...I'm trying to remember what all did go on back then. But a...well most of the people worked in the courthouse downtown. Had a pretty vibrant downtown area, which we don't have today.

How many stores do you think were downtown?

Oh well...when I worked in this Thrifty Market, which was a run by a Jewish boy and a...we had a Safeway on the south side of the square. We had A & P across the alley to the north of us. We

had a...down by the theater which on down north in that block a...Buzz Reed had a...Tasty Market which was a small grocery store. And I am trying to think...I believe there was a small grocery store on the west side of the square. And a...it was a going place especially on Saturday when all the people came to town to do their shopping and a...our grocery store...it was about this wide **(he motions with his arms stretched out)**...about as wide as this room is. And it went back probably a lot more than half again as deep and we had to cut meat in there and his big specialty was oranges. He'd worked out in California and his brother was running a truck between Kansas City and California...produce. But his big thing was...oranges. Orange about **(he uses his hand and cups it to show how big)**...about as big as a tennis ball was a penny. We have the front windows of the store, one side would be full of oranges and we'd have to clean it out every Sunday.....Monday and take all the oranges out of the window and put in some fresh ones **(he laughs)**. But that was the bargain at a penny a piece. You can't do that today.

But a...I am trying to think **(he laughs)**. Yes, in the A & P was probably...might of been half again as big as the store. Course they had Ern Poland work for A & P and he...they had a meat counter across the back part, but nothing like the stores you get into today. And a...Tasty Market lasted for a long time and it wasn't as big as our store. And course back then they did a lot of credit business we kept track of it and people paid up every week or every month like that. But now all you do is put it on your credit card **(he laughs)** today and then worry about it. No it's...I am trying to think...and a...when I first came here '35 Safeway was Piggly Wiggly on the south side of the square. And it was a pretty good size room. It was a good two times as big as our place. But I...you talk about child labor laws, we used to go to work at 6:00 in the morning on Saturday and get off after midnight. **(He laughs)** There wasn't no overtime either. **(He laughs)**

But the people would come to town on Saturday and a...park around the square and talk with people that they hadn't seen all week. We had two movies...we had movie on Park Street and Andrews Theater on Cherry Street and that's what they did they came to town. They bought their groceries but they left them sit in the grocery store. And they'd go to the movies or upstairs over this grocery store was an Old Fellows Hall originally and it was a dance hall. And so they'd go up there and dance and everything till midnight come get their groceries we'd load them up and then they'd head for home.

So you had to stay until they picked up their groceries?

Yes, we stayed open **(he laughs)**. Then we were too tired to do anything so we'd come back on Sunday and clean up...straighten up. **(He laughs)** Yeah, that was the beauty of my life. And the day of Pearl Harbor...the Eagles used to have a hall on the 3rd floor of the building that sat at Chestnut and Park Street. And so they had pool tables up there and slot machines and a big meeting hall. And we'd go up there on Sunday and play pool and that kinda stuff. The day of Pearl Harbor I was up there that's when we heard it on the radio. That's when things fell apart

for sure. At that time...let's see...no they had taken the street car out in 1940. The tracks were still in the street course, but a...

Where did the street car run?

It ran to Kansas City out here. It would come right down Park Street and of course Park Street had a pretty good hill. Hill is there now doesn't seem like it was as steep as it was back then (**he laughs**). They'd get on there and go pretty fast going downhill. And then it would go up town just about a car width between the curb and the tracks. In other words if you weren't up close to the curb the street car couldn't get by. Sometimes he'd a...sat there and blow his horn to get whoever was blocking him out of the way. But a...they had a...it came down Park Street went down to Kansas Avenue and made a turn to the north. And I guess the tracks went all the way to Santa Fe Street at one time, but they would make a turn and then back...back into the station which was a track which had a connection with the Santa Fe. You could go clear onto the Santa Fe tracks except the power run out the electricity was cut off back there. But they would interchange cars with the Strang Line cause they took a...I don't think they did Lenexa but a...they took them from Olathe over to Overland Park cause Overland Park didn't have any of the railroad. And did quite the business in the fall with coal cars. They haul them coal cars over to Hodges and unload them cause they sold a lot of coal because that was the way you heated your home at that time.

What was Hodges?

Hodge's Brothers? Was a lumber yard which had a...I think something like seven different locations, like Desoto, Bonner Springs, Edgerton, Olathe, Stanley, Spring Hill, Overland Park. They stayed in the business for quite a while. Course one of Hodges was governor of Kansas. George, he built a house down on south Harrison and Frank he built a big house on Water Street which they were back to back. They were two brothers that owned it...course they owned the First National Bank. They owned *The Johnson County Democrat* (**he laughs**). So they pretty well owned things around here. Course they were democrats. Johnson County had always been Republican and that made it interesting. (**He laughs**) Is there anything else?

You worked on the railroad, what kind of things did you do while you worked for them?

Well when I went to work, I went to work as a telegraph apprentice. And when they put me out to work as an operator we were still using the telegraph to communicate. Course they were slowing moving onto telephones and a...but up to that time you still did a lot of telegraph work. All your Western Unions was on the telegraph. But when I went out to work on the road, they a...I am trying to think where they sent me first (**he laughs**). My first job they sent me up to Lansing, well it was actually between Lansing and Leavenworth. They had a little station called Wadsworth where the VA Hospital is now. And a...they sent me up there to relieve a guy that

was off sick. I was out there by myself. **(He laughs)** And I didn't even have a car at the time **(he laughs)**. So I had to ride the bus and kind of stuff to get around.

Then a...then a...then...that was another interesting experience. But a...at that time the union owned the railroad...got an agreement...the guys that were working at that time were working seven days a week...prior to that they'd been working 12 hours a day and they got it down to eight. But a...they still working seven days a week and a...they got that in the agreement to move it from seven days a week to six days a week so then they had to find some relief for those guys so that's when I went out to work. And a...they had to put some relief jobs on and I worked three days a week at Holiday, which is down on the river north of here and three days a week at Lawrence. And then I worked that about a year and they got another agreement in effect to go from six days a week to five days a week. And so they gave me a choice of those two jobs and I took Holiday. So I worked Holiday for five days a week and a...relief position. And so that left one job open so they put on a job which they called a tag job and you bid it in that you worked...let's see...you worked five days a week like this job did at Holiday and then you worked five days the next week at Lawrence the next week at Topeka. You had five different stations to work in. And then you had a week off...it was more than a week it was eight days off and a vacation every 6th week. But I didn't have any money to go anyplace. So **(he laughs)** we didn't go. But that is the way it progressed from seven days a week to six days a week to five days a week. And a...I worked a...well I worked Lawrence there for about that year five days a week.

What years did that change?

'48 or '50 right in there when that changed. In fact we had one guy that...his home was in Minnesota and he would drive down here to work that job and a...then he could go home for a week. **(He laughs)** So it worked out pretty good in that respect. But then I...what was it...I was trying to think...well I worked all of this eastern Kansas mainly, but I never did move. I did a lot of driving...I did a lot of driving. I thought it was better that I didn't move cause my wife was working and I had two kids in school. **(He laughs)** So...we just coped with it you might say. It worked out pretty good. We've been married about 60 some years.

Is she from here as well?

Well she...she...grew up in a little place between here and Gardner called Claire. Back when she was born these trains they would go between block stations which were about every five to six miles. So you start down here by the river at Holiday and you come up and you got Zara, these are all little communities that existed back then...come up to Zara, Craig, and Snow. Snow was 111th Street now, then you came to Olathe then there was Claire, Gardner, Wellsville, Le Loop and Ottawa. And a...they used to have a block signal system train between each stations.

And a...I trying to think...well if a...when I went to work for the railroad this rails did a lot of snake track between here and Holiday. In other words this is a hill in between the river level and Olathe is quite a rise. And you can go out here today even to see where those rails existed...rail beds...In 1970...'75 they made a bunch of line changes and you go out Northgate here coming out of town and you can...it...it kept hugging the cliff you might say. And they did away with eight curves in there. They made the realignment and they brought the track out a ways and straightened it out. It don't look too straight at times, but it's a lot straighter than it was. Outside of that anything else?

What is one thing you wished hadn't changed about Olathe in all the time you lived here?

(He laughs) That hadn't changed? I wished they'd left the downtown alone. When Urban Renewal came to town it changed...it changed things considerable. We had a...old...course these were old buildings...and we had a bad fire down town...that wiped out what they called TG&Y fire. It was in the paper here a while back. Max Evans wrote an article about it and...got dislocated...but a...it burnt that whole section out and after that they cleaned it out and rebuilt it. And a...people lived downtown, you had store fronts these different stores could exist back then...but a...not today not the way things are.

But I...I don't know...that I'd really wish...but that was the biggest change for Olathe was Urban Renewal when they came in and moved us all out of downtown. We had a library which was one of the old Andrew Carnegie Libraries. It was old and inefficient but a...it worked and next door to it was Masonic Temple. And a...the Catholic Church sit across the street and it was an old well-built place. It just took a lot of things clear out of the heart of Olathe and that's why you don't have much to fall back on and call....call Olathe today.

Then when they built I-35 that really did it in cause they built two Olathe's and they got all the new building part east of I-35. I would have liked for it to have stayed the same. But a...you can...in your respect...you can look at Gardner right now and see where it's going cause a...they're going to be building some new...well they already have...some businesses on Moonlight there...that is going to keep going that way. The way the houses are going there building over there to the northwest it's a...it's going to change...there going to build commercial out there. And a...you get lost...I get lost.

I used to hang around Gardner Lake considerable **(shrugs his shoulders)** one road. **(He laughs)** You went out Gardner Road to the lake...151st on west and that was it. Now it's all filling up. When the CCC built Gardner Lake and then they turned it over to them as finished use to have a night club out there which was the old mess hall. That was the CCC camp. Several different things like that. It's changed so much that a...anybody that lived back in the 30's around here

they'd really be shocked they came back today. Anything else there I haven't covered? **(He laughs)**

Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

(He laughs) No too much. What really blows my mind...when we moved to Olathe in '35, '34, '35 there was a...three grade schools...Central, Washington, and Lincoln. And what always got us was those colored kids that lived at Park and Ridgeview would walk clear across town to go to school at Lincoln. And a...I mean...it just didn't seem right. And they finally got it taken care of. But they had some good kids out there.

So there were blacks that lived over at Park and...

Yeah, Bruce family. John Bruce worked on the section. And a...he had some family. And Gene Jenkins was his brother-in-law that lived on the corner of Park and Ridgeview. And...when I was a little kid down at Afton, course Ottawa County was no blacks in Ottawa County. Gene worked for the Frisco as a porter and he would run from Kansas City down to Afton and tie up for the night. Well he had to go over to Vinita to stay overnight. And a...that never did seem right even as a kid. But a...that's the way they did it.

And a...highway 66 ran right down the middle of Afton...lot of traffic even back then. And a...they had a restaurant in Olathe, Makers, and the colored people come in there and they'd have to go to the kitchen to eat...to get anything. It's changed **(he laughs)** you can say that. But a...John Bruce and Gene Jenkins were brother-in-laws and then there was another family I can't remember the name and he lived out there in a house...had a family. But they had to walk clear across town to go to school.

But those kids did go to John P. St. John?

Yeah, after they got of Lincoln...8th grade I think it was they came to high school. And in my graduating class I had three girls, Ada Burnett, she got a bunch of Burnetts still around here. And Violet Jackson and then there was a Pauline Jackson...three of them graduated with us. And a...most of the boys might go for a year and then a go to work. Most all of them that I knew were acquainted with would go to high school for a year and then go to work some place.

We had an ice plant in Olathe and that's another deal. Chemical Commodities is the location that everybody talks about today. But a...my brother worked, one of my brothers worked, at the ice plant one summer so I was pretty well acquainted with it. But they would make these 300 pound chunks of ice. They would go in a...even today you can find some of these containers they put down in there. But these oblong containers and they had two holes in the sides and they would have a big crane that went down the length of the tank. And they'd take these

containers and they had a lid for...take off but put everything down underneath with brine. And they'd put that tank down in there and then they'd have two water hoses/air hoses stick it down there and fill that thing up and go down in the water. And then they would move on down the line. But when they picked them up they had a deal that fit into those two holes and pick them up run them up to where they dumped them into tank of hot water heat that tank up and then they would dump it and it would go into the cooler into the freezer room. And then you'd have to go in there and set them up and line them up (*he laughs*). And then they'd haul that ice around to these different homes for different uses. And a...Hartley had a nice house down on Kansas Avenue sold ice out of it.