

Albert J. Braun, 1911-1991

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The pages that follow constitute the transcript of an interview conducted as part of the Wilmette Public Library District's Oral History program, started in 1975 by a committee of the Friends of the Wilmette Public Library which has been chaired since its inception by Rhea Adler, a resident of the Village of Wilmette since 1932.

A copy of the tape on which this transcript is based is available for circulation, and may be obtained by checking with a Reference Librarian concerning circulation procedures.

This program would not have been possible without the cooperation of the many long-time residents of the Village interested in helping to preserve particulars of a fascinating past, and the patience, energy and effort of a small but dedicated group of interviewers, transcribers and typists who share the belief that the past is too important to be forgotten.

Richard E. Thompson
Director

ABSTRACT

Interviewee: Albert J. Braun

Interviewer: Rhea Adler

Date of Interview: October, 1978

Account of Braun family, six boys and three girls
 Farm of 25-30 acres — Truck gardens — Randolph Street Market
 and South Water Street Market with horse-wagons
 Indian Hill Estates developed by Henry Drucker - Streets
 laid out - Turned over to Bill's Realty - Swamp land - Skating on pond - Drained
 into Skokie Lagoons

CCC Camp - (Civilian Conservation Corps) - Harold Ickes - Sump pumps needed
 in houses built throughout the area

Earlier times they were able to ice skate north to Glencoe in winter and west to
 Waukegan Road — Clamp-on skates - Playmates Bohnen's and Braun's and
 Borres — All relatives but Thalmann's

Thalmann's Grocery and Tavern — Now Wilmette Fire Station #2 — Tavern later
 a bowling alley - Ballroom during Prohibition - Old Gross Point band
 Moonshining - Blind Pigs - Home Brew - Raids Judge Peters Warrants needed —
 Warnings given before raids were made — Contents of various liquors
 Picnics held at Lake/Locust - Mostly family reunions - Several generations
 Otto Kempe - Shoe shop - Paul, Mathilde, Walter
 Ditmer - Shoe Shop - Lake Avenue

Dance halls of 1930's — Weller's tent - Waukegan/ Dempster - Kit Kat at
 Howard/Sheridan second floor, one on Peterson Avenue - Saturday night at
 Diamond Lake - Young people's parties - Taverns of the 1930's family affairs
 Winkler's Grove at Ridge/Lake

Stores on Ridge Road: Beuscher's Hardware, Klinge and White Grocery
 Segar Street now Schiller - Reinwald now Illinois Road - Blum Street and Brown
 Street

Families on south side of Lake Avenue — Goldbach, Zeuschel, Carrier, Ditmers,
 Spiess, Braun, Joe Thalmann and Millie Thalmann
 Meier's Ice Company — Wilmette at 1900 Washington (from Seltzer's Pond at
 Hibbard/Illinois Road) stored in saw dust in barn

Annexation of Gross Point by Wilmette 1921-1926

Albert J. Braun

RA: Would you like to state your name?

AB: Albert Braun.

RA: And where do you live?

AB: 739 Illinois Road, in Wilmette.

RA: Have you always lived here?

AB: I was born and raised in this house right here.

RA: You were

AB: That's right.

RA: How long did your parents live in it before you were born?

AB: Uh, see. There were - my oldest sister and my brother were born - oh maybe 8 - 10 years. Seven years.

RA: I see. Was this part of the original Braun property?

AB: This was part of the 7 1/2 acres that my Dad had - that was part of it . . . and he farmed this part, and he farmed another piece that belonged to a man who was around.

RA: Oh, yes.

AB: And then he farmed across the street on my uncle's - the original homestead. And part of Mrs. Fiegan's and Chris Braun's farm.

RA: Oh, yes. And how many acres - do you remember all together?

AB: Well, there's 7, 15, oh maybe 30 - 25 to 30 acres.

RA: And what kind of crops did they raise?

AB: Oh, everything. Corn, vegetables of all sorts - beets,

AB: carrots, beans, peas, tomatoes, cabbage.

RA: Now, were they - was it for their own use?

AB: No, he hauled most of it to the market. Cabbage we made sauerkraut, and stored the winter vegetable in the little hills that they buried in the ground.

RA: Do you want to describe those little hills that were... the vegetables put in?

AR: Well, they kind of plowed it up and they scraped the dirt to one side and made a hole maybe, oh - 10 inches to a foot deep, and then they put the vegetables in there and they covered them with dirt and straw, manure, and then some more dirt. And that was about it. And it never froze in there, and nothing else.

RA: Did they ever have the permanent kind, where they dug a hole, and put a big mound and a door, in it around here?

AB: No, we never did that.

RA: I came from farm land

AB: I've seen them, but we've never had one.

RA: I see. And where was the market that they took the vegetables to?

AR: Randolph, and sometimes South Water Market. Mostly Randolph.

RA: And South Water Market was - where Wacker Drive is now?

AB: Um Hum

RA: Part of it?

AR: Part of it - yes. And Randolph - I forget just where that was.

RA: It was a big wholesale area

AB: Right. The Water Market - they just backed their truck in and they would unload it and the wholesalers - commission houses would sell it. But Randolph Street - they used to sit in the truck and sell it to the individual peddlers as they came by. And sometimes you would be there all day - sometimes you would get rid of your load, sometimes you wouldn't. What you didn't get rid of you brought back and fed to the hogs and the cattle.

RA: Do you remember where - Randolph and what was the market?

AB: Oh, it was in the neighborhood of Halsted Street - in around there.

RA: Randolph and Halsted. Farther west than the South Water Street Market.

That's interesting. And how would they go from here to that area?

AB: Horse and wagon. There were no trucks in those days. When I was a little too young to go down with the horse and wagon. But later on, why when Dad got his first truck why I went down with him a few times down there. But just from the stories that he'd related how they used to - Dad would start out here and he'd go to sleep, and the horses knew the way down, they just went down there, and when they got to the market they'd stop, and Dad would wake up. And the same coming home. He just threw the lines to the side and come in.

RA: I see. And then, so you grew up in this house, as well as having continued to live in it?

AB: Oh, but we moved - when we first got married, we lived in Northfield for about 9 years, and then came back and I bought the house.

RA: I see. But your parents lived in it up to the time of their death?

AB: My mother died here, and my Dad was getting old and we couldn't handle him - he was kind of sickly, so he was in the Salvation Army home for about - Oh - about a year.

RA: Now, what relation was your father to the Mr. Braun who recently died?

AB: Brothers.

RA: They were brothers.

AB: Brothers. Adam, Ben, Joe, Chris, Pete, my Dad. Six.

RA: Six brothers.

AB: And Pete - also did I say Pete?

RA: I think you did. Were there any girls?

AB: Mrs. Fiegan, Mrs. Borre, Mrs. Bohnen. Three girls. That's B-O-H--N-E--N.

RA: That's, that name is familiar to me. And they've all continued to live in the community and raise their ...

AB: They all lived right around here - my Uncle lived on the hill up here - Adam - at 706. Pete lived over in the homestead until he died. My Dad was here - Mrs. Bohnen was on Illinois Road, 1039, I think and Uncle Joe was on 1139 - 1140. And Ben was down on Prairie Avenue, 629 I think it was. And Mrs. Borre was on Lake Avenue.

RA: I see.

AB: And Mrs. Fiegan was on Schiller Street.

RA: Oh, yes. Well, all in the immediate area. Now, in the land that was owned, did you own any of it that is north of Lake Avenue? and west of Illinois Road?

AB: No, it was all south.

BA: It was all south of Lake Avenue.

AB: Um hum.

BA: Can you tell me anything about the area that we now know as Indian Hill Estates?

AB: Well, Indian Hill Estates was nothing - practically swamp. There weren't any houses in there, period. I saw all them being built. And this is what you're waiting for.

BA: Well, what I meant

AS: We used to - it was all swamp and prairie and we used to ice skate over there.

BA: What I was primarily interested in, was the original ownership of the land over there, first.

AS: Well, my earliest recollection of the land over there was by, by a man by the name of Scully. Scully Family. I think they were the original owners, at the beginning. They rented it out to people - and I don't remember that they sold it.

Yes, you want to continue?

AS: The last I remember was before it was sold to the Bills Reality, bought the property and developed it.

BA: Did they buy it directly, or did Henry Drucker buy it?

AS: I think Henry Drucker owned it before Bill's bought it.

RA: This was my understanding. That he had bought it, and he and his partners had taken what they wanted for their own purposes of, of, it and then he turned it over to Bill's Realty.

AB: To Bill's Realty, who developed it. It was a sub-division. I forgot about Mr. Drucker.

RA: Well, I have been close to the family over the years, and that was why I thought I knew this story.

AB: Well, it was all swamp land.

RA: Now that was before my time.

AB: It was low-land.

RA: I see. It wasn't farmed ever?

AB: Oh, yes it was farmed, but

RA: Grass?

AB: Grass. And - well - parts of it were east of Illinois Road was farmable. Corn, and stuff like that. And there were parts of it on the west side that they could farm, but oh, along about fall, when you start getting the heavy rains, why the water would just lay in there all the time.

RA: Well, was it - was it part of really part of Skokie Lagoons? Sort of?

AB: Not - a - well it all emptied into the Skokie Lagoons, yes. And Hibbard Road used to be covered with water all the time, and that whole - before the CCCs came in and, and dredged it and made ponds and that in there and lagoons, that was nothing but water. At times it was impassable.

AB: A car couldn't go through it. The water was up to the running board, or even higher.

RA: Even after Harold Ickes development and putting in the - I remember that some of the houses along Hibbard Road in Winnetka were badly -

AB: Well, they were always under water. Even as far east as Locust Road the water got - Oh - 3-4 feet in the basements.

RA: For goodness' sake!

AB: And my brother-in-law worked at: 999 - um - 995 Hill Road - and was only 2 houses in there at that time. 1001 which was Baker, and Howard Phillips. And my brother-in-law worked for Howard Phillips, and I used to go over with him and they had 2 Evinrude pumps. And they'd have to start and keep pumping, and as fast as they were pumping it out, it was coming back in. But a...

RA: Those were sump pumps, we call them now.

AB: Well, these were - they weren't stationary. They were moveable.

RA: Oh! Like for motors, of boats.

AB: Well, they were bigger. They were regular - they were a sump pump but not the...

RA: Not the permanently installed ones.

AB: No, no.

RA: Oh, yes.

AB: And they had a pond there and they used to run the hose all the way up to the pond. I guess they didn't need the water in the pond, but that's where we'd run them anyway.

AB: And I would do this all for gratis just to help my brother- in-law, but then when the Skokie Lagoons was developed and they got all the lagoons in there, why that sort of took care of everything and there was no more floods and water.

HA: Do you have any memories of - when it was flooded, what happened?

AB: Well, like in the winter - like - that was all our ice ponds, all the time. And we used to, and I recall one time my Dad and I put on our skates over here in the back yard and we'd skate all the way to Glencoe.

HA: For Heaven's sake!

AB: And west as far as Waukegan Road. And stop in at Frank Eckels' and have a fast one. (laugh)

HA: By a fast one you mean a beer - I am sure.

AB: Well, I was too young to drink the beer but my Dad would have one to warm up to come home.

HA: Oh, sure! Tell me - you said skates. Did you have the kinds of skates we know today?

AB: No, we had clamp skates. The ones you clamp on, and you take a piece of rope or whatever you could find to keep your ankles tight, but mostly clamp skates.

HA: No shoe skates.

AB: No shoe skates. No, I was . .

HA: You used your own shoes.

AB: Right!

RA: That's a far cry from - from today's skating. I know and

RA: that was what I used, too. Well, how - do you remember some of the families - the boys that you skated with?

AB: Oh, yes. The Bohnens and Brauns, Borres, and it was - all

RA: All your cousins!

AB: That's all that was around here - relations!

RA: Oh, yes. Everybody really was interrelated to someone else, weren't they? All these families.

AB: Yes. Used to be you couldn't go anywhere and talk about the Brauns or the Borres. You were talking to one of their relatives! (Laugh)

RA: I came from a town like that where I told someone when they came to town for the first time that they had better not say anything about anybody else because they might be talking to a relative.

AB: About the only ones that were not related directly to us was like the Thalmanns

RA: Now the Thalmanns were an entirely different family.

AB: They were entirely different. No relationship. But - although it - from Wilmette Avenue down to where Illinois Road makes the bend there only about 5 or 6 houses, maybe 8 at the most, and you just saw the whole community build up.

RA: Well, I've seen- even I have seen it build up in my time in this area. It was very sparsely populated.

AB: Well, I remember the grocery store over here .

RA: Thalmann's!

AB: Thalmann's, yes.

RA: Where the fire station is.

AB: Right. And before that it was just a little grocery store in the front and in the back there was a tavern. And then later on they put - they had a bowling alley in there.

RA: Oh, did they?

AB: Yes they did. They had two alleys. Two alleys and the tavern and the grocery store. And the grocery store wasn't as much as the tavern, and everything . . . but it was a place to get a loaf of bread and some lunch meat, and later on flour, sugar and everything. And then after prohibition, when the repeal came in, why there was no more - during prohibition, the tavern went out, and he made a dance hall out of it. We used to call it "The Million Dollar Ball Room".

RA: For goodness' sakes!

AB: And Joe Schneider, Shootie's older brother, he had an orchestra and they played over there. Mostly Joe's orchestra.

RA: Oh, yes. And before him, didn't Shootie's father have a band?

AB: They used to call it the Old Gross Point Band, yes. There was a whole gang.

RA: Who were some of the other people in it?

AB: Well, Frank Schaefer, I think my Uncle Adam was one of them. I think he played in it. And "Luxy" and Joe's

AB: Dad was about the only ones I can recall. It's as I say, I was only a young punk.

RA: Oh, yes.

AB: And when he had the Million Dollar Ball Room, over there, why, he used to have .

RA: People come from all around, I bet.

AB: Gangs from Evanston, because that was the only dance - open dance hail within miles. Then after they closed, why, they'd start these outside tents. I don't know just what happened, why he had to shut down all that, for some reason or other.

RA: The dance hail was closed?

AB: Yes. I think it was right after the village took over - and there was this - a little drinking and a few fights . .

RA: In the 20's - what did they call the drinking in those days when it wasn't legal? When liquor was sold?

AB: Moonshining! Blind pigs! (laugh)

RA: Blind pigs! Do you remember - were there many in town?

AB: Yes, there were 1,2,3,- there were about 5 of them right around here. Heinie Zeutschel on Lake Avenue, my Uncle down the road, and my Mother used to make a little bit for the boys at the dance hail.

RA: There was a great deal of home brewing wasn't there - during that period? I t was not a popular . .

AB: And John Epp, on Locust Road, and the thing that I get a big kick out of . . . See, in those days they had to have

AB: a warrant stating exactly where they were going to raid. They couldn't just come in and say, "This is a raid! We are going to go through your house". They had to state on the raid what room, and what part of the house they were going to raid. Well, Judge Peters was the judge, and whenever they'd come in for the warrant, why they couldn't find the judge. And then they would tell them where they were going to raid and everything that they wanted a warrant, and by the time they would find the old judge - well, at that time the cops - Wilmette only had two squad cars - two Dodge squad cars, and they had a red light on top of the police station. And they had two of them, instead of one. If both of them were burning, that meant they should all come in. And they knew what was going on. So all the cops in the country would come in, and then they would say, "There's a raid at John Braun's. Go over and get rid of the booze", So - we'd have more cops out here than they had in the village. (laugh) So by the time the cops got out here you had enough room to get rid of everything. Why, then the Judge would show up, "Ya, vat do you vant?" (laugh) You know, all this in broken German.

RA: Oh, yes!

AB: So, he would issue the warrant, then they would come out and they couldn't find anything. And, the mash that they made the whiskey of, where they would never think of going to look for it, we had out in the hog pen. We kept the

hog feed. So they would never think, "Well, what's the smell out here?" "That's pig slop, the pig's dinner!"

RA: Tell me, what was the mash made of?

AB: Corn, sugar, water and it all depended on what you were going to make, like the - if you were going to make gin they put juniper berries in it, for the flavoring of the gin, and the kinuittel - and that was just made of regular corn whiskey and then you would boil sugar and make a real sweet syrup and mix it, and that's where it got that thick taste - thick runny fluid and the sweetness came from the sugar.

RA: I see. Oh, so they made various kinds of alcohol then.,

AB: Made everything!

RA: Everything! From gin, whiskey, beer. And it all had a corn base?

AB: The beer didn't.

RA: The beer didn't.

AB: The rest if it did.

RA: Was the malt raised around here? For the .

AB: No? You'd buy it in the stores - the hops and the malt. You'd have to go to the store to get the .

RA: I see. This is very interesting, because I've heard various accounts, but nobody's ever gone into it in the detail you have.

AB: No one was - everyone was afraid to admit it.

RA: No - Lloyd Hollister, before he became too ill, told about a judge, I believe he must have been a circuit court

RA: judge downtown, but he lived out west of the ridge, and he buried a number of cases of alcohol in his yard, and then he couldn't find it when he went to move. And it's a delightful story.

AB: Well, we - when they had the Million Dollar Ball Room over there, why there was a regular track between the ball room and over here.

RA: I can believe that! That's very interesting and a very good account. What were some of the things - did you have family picnics or gatherings?

AB: Yes we did. We usually had them along on Lake Avenue, right across from where the school - the Mormon Church is now, in the grove, where they pastured the cows, and that was

RA: On the north side of Lake Avenue?

AB: Yes.

RA: That's in Indian lull Estates, now. And those were

AB: And we had one Braun picnic at - where Lambolts, you remember where Augie Lambolt used to live?

RA: Oh, yes!

AB: And we have a picture - how many are on there? 200 and some?

RA: Of your family!

AB: Of the Braun family, yes!

RA: That is amazing! So some of them lived - Lambolts, as I remember it was quite a bit south.

AB: South - of f of Golf Road.

RA: That's right.

AB: But they were all right here in the area.

RA: Yes, but spread over quite an area, if there were 200 of them

AB: Well, that's from the grandchildren to the

RA: The great-grandchildren of your grandparents.

AB: The last one they had was in '39.

RA: I see. Do you have any idea of when the Braun's first came to the area?

AB: Off hand, no. My Grandfather came from Germany

RA: What part of, do you know?

AB: Trier, and Baden-Baden.

RA: I see. There were two different areas that people - this place I found some were from Luxembourg

AB: Well, that was the Gross Pointers. The Barnichs, and the Epps, and the Epions . . . But the Brauns are all from

RA: The Trier area.

AB: The Trier area.

RA: The Hoffman's came from the Trier area, too, I believe.

AB: Yes.

AB: This - I do know - Now, do you know about the Kempe's at all?

AB: I remember Otto Kempe, he had this old Gross Point shoe shop up on the Ridge, right across from . . . well, right next door to Hoffman's barn there . . .

there was the storehouse with a grain shed. I remember him and Paul, Paul, and I can't remember the girl's name.

RA: Matilda?

AB: Matilda, yes.

RA: And there was a Paul, and there was also a Walter.

AB: Yes, also a Walter. Three of them, I think is all.

RA: Oh, yes.

AB: And the Detmer's, do you remember them, they had their shoe shop on Lake Avenue.

RA: Lake Avenue and what?

AB: Oh, the alley there it's 2100. In the 2100 block there.

RA: Oh, yes. The name I know because I think there were several generations of Detmer's, weren't there?

AB: Ummm - not really. There was only one - two boys. Paul who went down to - he was a peddler. He was kind of handicapped with a bad arm. And he used to go down to Halsted Street or Maxwell Street, I should say, and he had a stand there, and then he used to go around from house to house and sell shoe laces and stuff like that. And then there was Philip who a - there was one girl.

Whatever she was called. There was Philip, he drove a laundry truck for Welson Laundry, and drove for Klinge and White when they had their grocery store up there, and I don't know what happened to him later. He committed suicide, I know that. That's about all I can

RA: I was thinking there were some Detmers in .

AB: That's Ditmars, D-I-T - not D-E-T.

RA: Oh. Well then .

AB: D-I-T-M-E-R

RA: Well, then I am thinking of a different Detmer then. That is a very interesting part of it. What did you do as young people, for entertainment? Now - was prohibition still in effect when you were growing - grown up? Let's say - a young man?

AB: Well, the repeal was '32, so I was 21 years old. But before that we used to, well they had dances at the Kit-Kat, and Weller's tent. And a

RA: Well, where were those places? Weller's tent?

AB: Weller's tent was where Weller's restaurant is on Waukegan Road. There was a . . . they had a dance hall back there - a tent back there, and they came from all over, and they had bands and that and there was one - the Kit-Kat was down on Howard and Sheridan - on the second floor, and there was one on Peterson Avenue. Saturday nights was always Diamond Lake! (laugh)

RA: Oh, Diamond Lake is quite a distance!

AB: Well it was. That was a long ride. "We're going out to Diamond Lake tonight!"

RA: By that time you had cars?

AB: We had cars. Yes. I had an old Model T Ford about a 1916 vintage. And

RA: Those are priceless today.

AB: Today they are, yes! Yes. And we all had some kind of jalopy, and we would go up to Maury Schmidt over on what is now Golf Road, he had a blind pig over there, we'd get our bottle over there and then sneak off on a side road

somewhere to have a drink before we got to the . . . Today the kids have no place to go like we had those days. No dances anymore - we could go anywhere and have a party in someone's home. Take turns about once a month - a gang from Des Plains and some from Evanston, Skokie, we'd all, all chip together and get the eats, and one night have it here, and the next night over at my uncle's - Doetsch's and all over. Just made the rounds. About once a month we'd do this. Instead of going to the Kit Kat or somewhere.

RA: There was much more home activity

AB: Home activities in those days. Yes.

RA: They had games, and things that the young people

AB: Yes - we had a band - someone would play the concertina just not a big orchestra or anything. Just something to dance to . . . And today, the kids don't have that. It's not as much fun. They can go in the tavern now, when they're 18. In those days we had enough taverns to go to, so it was more fun hiding to sneak that drink! (laugh)

RA: And one or two drinks probably satisfied you, too.

AB: Yes! No one ever got drunk or anything. Not like today - they're not satisfied like the kids in those days. With well, they'd have it in their house the parents were there to supervise, and -

RA: And you expected them to be there!

AB: And we didn't have to sneak to have that drink. Like today, most girls - their parents don't want them seen in

AB: a tavern, where even the younger generation was

RA: Well, when you were growing up, the connotation "tavern" was a bit different than it is today, wasn't it?

AB: When I was just a young kid, yes. They were quite a bit different. The - you couldn't take a kid at the bar - parents, or even husband and wife - the wife would have to sit at the table

RA: With the children.

AB: With the children. And some of them had a back room where they

RA: Families?

AB: They called it the family room, yes. Where they'd gather. Well, today, heck, you could take a 10 year old kid and sit at the bar, with you. It's supposed to be illegal, but no one enforces it.

RA; I know. This is very true. But in those days, really, the taverns were the social life of the community, weren't they?

AB: Yes, they were. There was a place for everyone to go, and Al Leverne when he had his tavern out there, it was a regular Sunday gathering. He had tables for the kids, and parents would sit at the table with the kids, and a bowl of popcorn, and the kids would have a coke while the folks would have a beer. But you don't find that today anymore.

RA: No - that's quite true, you don't. And I often think today's youth really is pretty bored.

AB: They're cheated.

RA: And cheated. That's right! And yet they have TV, they have radio, they have built-in music if they wanted to dance to it

AB: Well, they can't have the parties like we had today.

RA: Well, I suppose not. And yet almost every home has a family room.

AB: Well, when I say we had parties, we'd have maybe 20-30 couples

RA: That's 60 people, that's a big crowd.

AB: Well, like in the summer - in the winter we didn't have that big a crowd, but in the summer we'd be outside, and some dancing down in the basement and stuff like that.

RA: I'm interested in that Weller story - of the tent for dancing. So it was almost a natural for him to have a restaurant, wasn't it?

AB: Well, he had a little - hamburger, and hot dogs, ice-cream In the front, then in the back he had the tent. It was, oh, like a circus tent.

RA: Oh, yes.

AB: Big tent. A couple of hundred people inside.

RA: What kind of a floor did he have for dancing?

AB: They had & regular wooden floor. They built a floor - I

I don't know if Winkler's grove was still up here on the Ridge, when . .

RA: Now Shootie Schneider mentioned Winkler's grove. And that's at Ridge and Lake.

AB: Where the A&P - Jewel is now. Yes. And they had the - oh, like the Wilmette Days carnivals, they had a big dance hall there and they had something going there every weekend, or at least once a month there. Some kind of doings in there, just a big floor with a wooden rail around, that a, I guess you paid a dime or a quarter, and you'd get a stamp to a, for the privilege of dancing.

RA: Oh, yes. Now tell me. You mentioned Thalmann's store - you mentioned the shoe repair places - two of them. What other businesses were there that you recall?

AB: Well, there was Beuscher's Hardware, Klinge and White, the grocery store . .

PR: And where were they?

AR: On Ridge Avenue, between Lake and Schiller - what is now Schiller, it used to be Segar Street I believe.

RA: Segar Street? That's interesting. When did they change it?

AR: Oh, right after the village took over - this Illinois Road used to be called Reinwald Avenue.

RA: I knew there was a Reinwald Avenue out in here, and that was because the Reinwalds had a farm north of Lake Avenue on Illinois Road, wasn't it?

AB: North of Lake Avenue - yes. I think he was the oldest settler. I think that's why it was named Reinwald Avenue.

RA: Oh, yes. Well, it's interesting that they would change it from Segar to Schiller, because the Segar probably commemorated someone early in the village.

AB: Yes, and there was Blum Street and Brown

RA: After your family.

AB: No - it was B-R-O-W-N.

RA: Oh, I see.

AB: I think that's where Harvard is right now.

RA: Oh, interesting. I never knew that. As a matter of fact I didn't know any of those streets were named before - when I first came. There was no dwelling on any of them at that point.

AB: Well, there were homes on them!

RA: Were there?

AB: Oh, yes.

RA: In '32? . . . It seems to me that I could remember the wall of the convent

AB: Yes - well that all came up later on. On the south side there were homes - there was Goldbach's, Zeutschel's, and there was one on the corner there - I never did know who lived there - Carrier - or something like that.

RA: I see.

AB: And then there was Ditmers, and Spiess, and the old Braun family - my father's uncle, I think it was, and - yes cause I always called them Uncle Chris and Uncle John, there was two Braun families, there, and Joe Thalmann's and Millie Thalmanns.

RA: Well, down here, yes. I . .

AB: But up toward the ridge, there was Zeutchel's....

RA: But, weren't most of them on the south side of the street?

AB: They were all on the south side. From a, just the one right on the corner there next to the Ziebart place there - there was that house and then the rest was prairie up to here - or even farther west.

RA: Well, it was the north side of the road I was thinking of, along by the convent area.

AB: From there - from Ridge Avenue to Skokie Highway, there wasn't a house. It was all prairie, and stuff, in there.

RA: Oh, yes. Well, tell me about some of the other businesses, if you can remember. How did you get your ice, for instance?

AB: From Meier's Ice Company, Wilmette.

RA: Where were they?

AB: Originally he was on Washington, in the alley. 2100 - 1900, on Washington - where his garage is now, that was an ice house. And they used to make the ice off of Seltzer's Pond.

RA: And where was Seltzer's Pond?

AB: On Hibbard and Illinois. There's a big pond back in there. And they had a regular slide where they'd go out and they'd cut it out on the pond, and then they'd just slip it up this ramp and, and then load it up on the trucks. And had 400 pound cakes in those days.

RA: And what did they do with those cakes after they were frozen, because they delivered ice in the summertime?

AB: Well, they were stored in this garage - in this barn - and they would have sawdust - they would have sawdust in between to keep them from freezing together. And have sawdust

All: laid in between them. And they would chip them off, and they'd have the whole thing - it was zero in there, practically all summer.

RA: Well, you say a barn? Did they insulate it in any way or was it thick?

AB: Just tar paper - the barn and tar paper - that's all.

RA: Oh, and the ice itself

AB: And the ice itself kept everything from freezing from melting.

RA: Melting.

AB: Melting. And it would stay frozen, and they'd throw it on the wagon, and they'd cut enough in the winter to last them through the summer. I think he had about 4 wagons, about 4 or 5 wagons, and, that they had them later on when he moved down there to Wilmette, they had ice machines. And stored it. They made it as they needed it then in those days.

RA: And was that an ice house back of the place he had on Green Bay Road there?

All: It was right on Green Bay Road - they had the barn in the front where they kept the trucks and in the back, why they had the ice house. They didn't make that much ice that they could - you know, that they would run out.

RA: Now is that building still there?

AB: I think it is.

RA: This is what I'm wondering. If it .

AB: I'm almost sure it is . . . I know they had a beer

there. They've remodeled it, and everything, but the building is still there.

RA: Oh, yes. And then they had their place out here - west - after Wilrnette went dry? Wasn't that a son of his that had his place on . . . on Lake Avenue?

AB: Yes, the tavern on Lake Avenue. And they still call it Meier's Tavern. But they no longer own it.

RA: That's what I understand.

AB: I think three different parties went in there since he's been there.

RA: Oh, yes. But it's still a very popular place.

AB: That's still popular. I think it's a Greek family that owns it now.

RA: I understand the food is very good there.

AB: I never cater it anymore. I did when they first opened up. When it was the first - the original house. Where he started, and then he built the front part on later on but . . . I haven't been there for - well, ever since I got married I haven't been there.

RA: Well, this I've never been in there - but I have been interested that these friends of mine have gone and have enjoyed their food at lunch time. People that work in the village. Well, do you remember anything really significant when the two villages were joined together?

AB: Well, it was in 1921, when they abolished Gross Point. My Dad was village clerk at the time. I know he was

AB: downtown for months trying to get the deal settled, and when they finally got it passed, needless to say, he - we didn't need any wood for the fire because he, Pop, would come home with a load. And he was so happy it was over because, gosh, he was down there every day for about, oh, I guess, 4 or 5 months, trying to get it settled. And

RA: Well, they actually didn't vote on it until '26. When they - because it was about 5 year span.

RA: In the making

AB: In the making. And I can still remember the old policemen with their motor-cycles coming - George Schaefer was one of them, and Schaefgen, George Schaefer - he'd come - he was just learning to drive the motor-cycle and he'd come around the corner in a show off to his Uncle - well, about how he could drive the motor-cycle, why he ended up in Thalmann's corn field over here

RA: Took a spill - I would imagine!

AB: Sure did! (laugh) He didn't show off any more after that!

RA: The roads were all still gravel then, weren't they?

AB: They were all gravel.

RA: Crushed rock?

AB: There was no crushed rocks - it was just sand and gravel.

RA: I see.

AB: I remember when they paved Lake Avenue, it was quite a thrill a big deal . . . to watch that cement being mixed over there.

RA: And probably, it was before the days of General Dynamics

RA: and the big mixer.

AB: Oh, yes. They would haul the stuff in with trucks, little trucks and mix it right on the job there and they had tracks running along where they would move ahead and the big scoop going up .

RA: This - I think perhaps you are about ready to quit.

AB: Right.

RA: Well, then I'll say this is Rhea Adler on October 15th - 1978, signing off.

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