

Oral Interview with Bill Rathmann - March 4, 2010

Susan: This is Susan Walter and I am talking to Bill Rathmann in the kitchen of his lovely home in Chula Vista. The date is March 4, 2010. And, Bill, could you start out please by telling me your full name.

Bill: My name is William Rathmann.

Susan: No middle name?

Bill: No middle name.

Susan: Okay, and you have a common nickname of,

Bill: Bill, they go by Bill, usually.

Susan: Thank you. Can you tell me when you were born?

Bill: June 8, 1922.

Susan: So that makes you how old now?

Bill: I am 87.

Susan: Congratulations. Where were you born?

Bill: Chicago, Ill.

Susan: Were you adopted?

Bill: No.

Susan: Can you tell me your mother's full name, including her maiden name?

Bill: Florence Hanson (sp?) was her maiden name.

Susan: Where was she born?

Bill: Chicago, Ill.

Susan: What kind of work did your mom do?

Bill: She was a housewife.

Susan: What was your father's full name?

Bill: Fred Rathmann.

Susan: Not Frederic?

Bill: No, Fred.

Susan: Where was he born?

Bill: Long Island, New York.

Susan: What kind of work did your dad do?

Bill: He was a machinist and a police officer.

Susan: Was that in New York?

Bill: No, he was in Wauconda, Ill.

Susan: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Bill: Yes, I have a brother and his name is Fred Rathmann, after my father.

Susan: So I assume he is older than you?

Bill: He is 4 years older than me so he is 92.

Susan: Are you married?

Bill: I am a widower now.

Susan: Can you tell me your wife's name?

Bill: I have been married twice. The first one was Geneve Plumb. Her father owned Plumb's Garage & Repair Shop on 18th and Highland in National City for many, many years - starting in the early 30's.

Susan: Did you have children with her?

Bill: Yes, I had two children, Janet and Pamela.

Susan: Then your second wife, what was her name?

Bill: Geneve and I divorced in 1958. And then my second wife, we got married in 1961 and her name was Josephine Lambert and she had two children. Shem was 8 years old and Beth was 11.

Susan: Shem is an unusual name.

Bill: Yes, it's really Charles, his first name, but that's his middle name.

Susan: Why does he go by Shem?

Bill: I guess because it was always special to him and his mother always used it for him. So everybody knows him by Shem.

Susan: And your stepdaughter?

Bill: Is Elizabeth (sp?) Lambert. Shem lives in Chula Vista and Elizabeth lives in Bonita.

Susan: Are there other people that are living in this general area important to you still, other family members?

Bill: Well, just my brother in Pacific Beach, a family member, and the ones that are in this area is Shem and Elizabeth.

Susan: Do they have children?

Bill: Shem does, but Elizabeth never got married.

Susan: I want to find out how you got to Chula Vista.

Bill: In 1940 my brother was in the Navy at that time and I came out to visit him. I loved it here and I never left.

Susan: When you stayed here, what did you do?

Bill: I worked at Ryan Aircraft Co. in San Diego. That's where I went to work.

Susan: And what job did you have?

Bill: I was a tool crib operator. They issue the tools to the workers. They maintain all the tools and the people come up with their own identification tag and they ask for a hammer or a drill motor and you issue it to them. Then you put their tag on the peg. I was 18 at that time.

Susan: How did you get out here, did you drive, or come on a train?

Bill: I came on a bus.

Susan: And your brother was in the Navy at the time so where did you stay?

Bill: He had just gotten married and so I stayed with him and his wife in San Diego.

Susan: What attracted you to Chula Vista, or to this area?

Bill: I believe what really brought me here was Rohr Aircraft Co. because I transferred from Ryan to Rohr in 1942. I was in the machine shop at Rohr and at that time I lived in government housing out on Hilltop and J Street where the school is now. That was all housing projects during the war.

Susan: What did Chula Vista feel like?

Bill: It was a very small town. I think we only had a population of 8-9,000 people at that time. And that was because Rohr brought most of them here. Otherwise, it would have been more of a farming town where they grew lemons and the closeness of all of the people. It seemed like we knew everybody in town. Whenever you would go to the store, you just knew everybody. Everybody was so polite. We didn't lock our doors or anything like that back in those days. It was just a friendly atmosphere all the time. Even at work, at Rohr, it was a good place to work.

Susan: Was there still a lot of other agriculture at the time?

Bill: Oh yes, a lot of places, none of it's here now. We had a lot of lemon trees, fields, and so forth and then I can remember when they used to grow strawberries and things like that down on 4th and G, I believe it was – 20 acres were just strawberries and we'd go down and pick up a basket of strawberries to take home – very inexpensive back then, I can't even remember the price.

Susan: What other crops were here?

Bill: Oh, it seemed like every 2-3 blocks there was somebody growing something. I can remember that there was a 5 acre plot where somebody was growing, it's all housing now. And then at the foot E Street, there's still vacant property down there where we have the Nature Center, they had tomatoes every year down there. They would allow the public to come in after they picked all the green tomatoes that were for shipping and the public could go in there and pick up all the tomatoes you want that were ripe because they couldn't get rid of those. So I would stop on my way home from work and get a box full of tomatoes and bring them to my neighbors back in those days. There was always something growing, somebody had 5 acres of pickles growing and I can rememberwent down way back then. The farmers said anybody want pickles to come and get them. So we went – never pickled a pickle before in my life. We learned how to do it.

Susan: So you did your own canning?

Bill: Yes, we did our own canning. It was a lot of fun.

Susan: So you did that with your wife?

Bill: Yes, my first wife and I did that.

Susan: Did other people trade fruits and vegetables around in the neighborhood?

Bill: Well, it seemed like many people had their own little gardens. We had Victory Gardens back in those days, too. Yes, there was trade-off - everybody was always friendly – they always shared.

Susan: Where were you actually living when you had this Victory Garden?

Bill: Well, the Victory Garden, I didn't have one, but the people that had their own homes had them because I was in a housing project. We were allowed to have a little garden and I did grow some tomatoes and things like that, but nothing to speak of – no quantities.

Susan: Were you dealing with rationing at this time?

Bill: Yes, there was some rationing. I went into the service in 1943 and there was gas rationing for one thing back in those days. I've forgotten what you were allowed to buy. It depended on where you worked, what you had to have to get to work. I think it was like 5 gallons a week that you were allowed.

Susan: Did people have chickens and rabbits and things like that?

Bill: Yes.

Susan: Who do you remember having that?

Bill: Me.

Susan: You, what did you have?

Bill: I'm talking about in later years now, in 1951 when I had this house here, I had rabbits. Mainly my girls wanted to raise some rabbits. So I had about 10-15 rabbit hutches and we raised rabbits until they got tired of it and then we closed it down.

Susan: When you raised them, did you eat them, too, or were they pets?

Bill: We ate them.

Susan: Who did the butchering?

Bill: I did.

Susan: You did, the girls wouldn't kill them?

Bill: Oh, well, I didn't tell them. I was getting rid of them. We had so many of them. They didn't pay much attention to it. They had to feed them, the fun got out of it. So I cleaned them up and got rid of them.

Susan: What kind of rabbits were they?

Bill: I don't remember.

Susan: What color were they, were they white?

Bill: I think there were some white ones and then some multi-colors, little grey, spots on some of them, white.

Susan: Did their ears stick up or did they flop down?

Bill: I can't remember that, but it seemed to me that they were up.

Susan: I've had pet rabbits, that's why I know. Where did you get the rabbits that you started with?

Bill: A friend of mine at work had rabbits and he was getting rid of them and that's how I got the coops and everything. Brought them here and he lived out in Lemon Grove and when he said he was getting rid of his rabbits, I went out there and got them all and brought them here. But I only had them for a couple of years.

Susan: Did anybody else raise animals?

Bill: Oh yeah, people in the back of me raised chickens, this would have been the early 50's and we used to go back there and buy their eggs. We really had them nice and fresh that way.

Susan: Do you have any idea what kind of chickens they were?

Bill: I think they were Rhode Island Reds.

Susan: So they were sort of brownish red color?

Bill: Yes.

Susan: Did they have roosters?

Bill: Oh yeah.

Susan: Do you have a story about that?

Bill: Well, it was something that we liked because when the rooster got up in the morning and crowed, we enjoyed it because we were early risers anyway to go to work so it was fun to hear the roosters early in the morning while we were having breakfast. The rooster would be out there making plenty of noise.

Susan: Did people have any other kind of animals?

Bill: Doves, pigeons, but I guess pigeons were the big thing.

Susan: What was the name of your neighbors that had the chickens?

Bill: I can't remember their names.

Susan: Did anybody have things like goats or sheep or livestock of that type?

Bill: No, I know there were people that had them, but nobody I knew, they were here and there, as pets and they were usually goats – they would clear the properties off.

Susan: When did you first move to where we are now, this house?

Bill: In 1950.

Susan: What was the condition of the property when you bought it?

Bill: It was vacant property. It had been a lemon field at one time and they took the trees down as I understood in the 40's. They took the trees down and this was all vacant property.

Susan: Was it weedy or anything like that?

Bill: No, not real bad. The people who owned the lots e lots - there were 3 lots here - we could pick any one of them out and I picked this one out because it was 80' wide and the others were 60. They were \$300 for each one. So that's why I picked this one out and I bought it in 1948.

Susan: And then what happened?

Bill: Well, in 1950, I saw this model of a house in Pacific Beach and we contracted to be built. Well, actually we contracted in 1949 and in 1950 it was

finished - January 1950. What war was that came up in 49, the Korean War, was it? And everything went sky high over night. And the contractor that we contracted with offered me \$1,000 to get out of his contract because things went up so quickly, the prices. And I said no I want the house so he built the house, but it took them about 9 months before the house was finished. He promised it in 3 months. I was just making at that time \$1 an hour as a machinist over at North Island and I couldn't even afford \$3 extra outlet that we might want to put in the wall. That's how close we were with our money. So we had the house built. The price of the house back then was \$8,600. But I was only making \$1 an hour.

Susan: So you've done quite a bit of changing on this house.

Bill: Yes, we have added to the house.

Susan: Can you describe a little of that, did you do it yourself or did you hire a contractor?

Bill: I hired a contractor to add to the kitchen, but the garage and my old garage where I built the fireplace, that I did myself with a friend. It took us 2 years to do it – piece by piece. Back in those days, 1970's, they allowed you to take an examination at the city hall and if you passed the exam, then you could do your own electrical work and things like that although it was all inspected by the city so it had to be up to code. But you could do it back in those days.

Susan: You told me an interesting story about dust in that garage, you want to relate it for the....

Bill: Since it was a garage, we went ahead and finished up the fireplace and built in the garage adjacent to the house, which is a big garage, it's 24 x 26, and so the wall that was between the garage and the house, my wife was told that it's going to be terrible to see the mess that's going to be left when we cut that wall down because we had to cut through the plaster that would make a big cloud. But we taped it off and had a big curtain of plastic and then we did this behind the plastic and the dust didn't get around the house at all. She went to SD Floral to work there and when she got home she was so surprised when the house was clean and this wall was down. And then she really visualized, she couldn't visualize the work that was being done and how it would turn out. And she was in awe when she saw it and realized how much nicer it would make our living room.

Susan: It's very lovely; you just step down, a couple of steps.

Bill: That was due to the garage down there.

Susan: And then you have a railing that separates the two rooms. It's very beautiful.

Bill: Because it has step down.

Susan: And did you build the fireplace, too?

Bill: I had a friend that did brick work and he came over and we worked together building the fireplace.

Susan: It's gorgeous.

Bill: Oh yeah, I'm real proud of it, the way it all turned out.

Susan: You also told me a reason why you have two sinks in the kitchen.

Bill: My wife, Jo, we were married in 1961 and let's see about 15, maybe 20, years ago we decided to add to the kitchen. We added 9 x 12 to the kitchen and since she was doing flower arranging and loved to do it, we built a second sink in the kitchen just for her flower arranging so she had a place to do it. Cabinets over it. So she enjoyed that until she got ill.

Susan: What hobbies do you have or did you have?

Bill: I used to like to play golf. I was the world's poorest golfer, but I loved to get out there early in the morning in Bonita and when we'd be out there so early in the morning, we'd see the fox and the rabbits and everything else going across the golf course, and the ducks. It was just invigorating to me to be out there early in the morning. We had the first tee off every Sunday morning. The fellows I worked with that lived in Bonita. So we enjoyed that immensely. And then fishing and camping.

Susan: Where did you go fishing?

Bill: In the High Sierra's, June Lake. We did a lot of traveling, too. We had a trailer that we pulled and with the children they got a lot of camping every year.

Susan: You pulled a trailer up to June Lake?

Bill: Oh, sure, thought nothing of it.

Susan: What were the streets like around here, was everything paved?

Bill: No. You really hit on a good spot. When I moved here, the only part of the street that was paved, I think was about 15-20 feet in the center of the road. We had no sidewalks or curbs. When it rained, I had a driveway that went out from the house 20 feet. I would go down the center of the street and then back into my driveway into the garage because when it rained I had to make a running start to get over the mud that went between where the curb is now and the center of the

street so that I had something to go up the street in. A lot of cars came down the street not realizing they came off of that asphalt and ended up in our yard. We used to have some pretty good rains back in those days. I think it was about 1952 or so we had the 1911 Act which is an Act that the neighbors okay a bond issue for your street to be paved and curbs and sidewalks put in. Then I can remember the cost of my sidewalk and curb because I had 80 feet – it was \$700.

Susan: That's a lot of money.

Bill: It was then. But they issued a bond back then so you just paid it each year, you know, in your taxes. I think it was all paid for in 20 years or something like that.

Susan: So do you remember when they put in sidewalks?

Bill: I think it was early 50's, maybe 52, 53.

Susan: Did any of the neighbors around here still have cisterns or any barns or any of that kind of thing.

Bill: Yes. One neighbor who just finished building a huge home on the end of the block, it was cheaper for them because where their house is located to build a septic tank than to hook up to the sewer. So they did. The great big house on the end of the block here, behind where regular little house was. Beautiful place. I think it's over 6,000 sq.ft. They are good neighbors, they're real nice. But back then we got good neighbors. Oh, one other thing I wanted to tell you, having this house built in 49 next door to me is the first mortuary of Chula Vista. I came down to see how my house was being built and they had moved that in on a truck. They used to be down on Third and I think E Street. And they moved it off that property and moved it next door to me. I'll say they took 5 years fixing that up to be livable. So that was a big surprise to see that big old building come in and it didn't make me very unhappy to see it.

Susan: So they actually brought the building?

Bill: Yep, brought it down on wheels on a truck, house movers we called them then.

Susan: Did you watch that process?

Bill: No, I just came home and there it is.

Susan: They didn't tell you it was going to come?

Bill: No, I didn't know anything about it. I didn't even know the people who owned the property at that time. It was vacant property and my house was just being built, it wasn't completed yet.

Susan: What did your wife think of that?

Bill: Not too well. The big problem is we've had a lot of illegal aliens come in and stay there, this would be their stop off place when they got to San Diego. It got to be known as a place to hide for a night, sleep for a night.

Susan: Because there was nobody living in it?

Bill: Right. It took about 5 years before it was livable.

Susan: What was it like having illegals coming through here?

Bill: It wasn't bad, most of them would just never bother us, but they would spend the night there and 4-5 of them would leave in the early morning. They knew where they were going, most of them did, to get a job. It was a very common thing back in those days.

Susan: Did you have experiences with immigration officials?

Bill: Oh, no, not back in those days.

Susan: Were there other Hispanics that lived here in this neighborhood?

Bill: Oh, yes. They were legal. A real dear friend of mine was Pete Gonzales lived on the same street. We lived together in the housing project and when I had this house built, he bought one down the street and we used to ride to work together for years. He was born in New Mexico. He had a lovely family.

Susan: How about Japanese, were there Japanese living here?

Bill: Yes, but not as many as there was before the war. They took away a lot of them as we all know and some of them never came back.

Susan: Did you know any of them personally?

Bill: No, I can't say personally. I knew them and would say hi to them and talk to them, like I say in the early 40's, in the 40's everybody was so friendly, and we all talked to one another.

Susan: Were there any African Americans living here in Chula Vista that you know about?

Bill: No, I don't recall any.

Susan: How about Indians?

Bill: No, I don't recall any Indians either.

Susan: Chinese?

Bill: No, I can't recall, I had Chinese friends that I worked with that lived in San Diego, but not living in Chula Vista.

Susan: Were there any European clusters of people – I'm thinking Germans, Italians, anything like that?

Bill: No, we were pretty well mixed up, everything was here. I knew back then we called them Okies, that came from Oklahoma because when the war started to get work and my meeting with them was great. I enjoyed visiting with them and talking with them. I had many good friends that were from Oklahoma. They just resented being called an Okie, you know, back then.

Susan: Where did you go shopping, grocery shopping, I suppose your wife did most of that, but where would you go, names of stores, do you recall?

Bill: Back in the 40's at the housing project we had a general store right on the project that we could buy from and that's where during the war years we did all of our grocery shopping. Then in National City they had a Piggly Wiggly. I can't remember, oh on Third Ave. we had a grocery store that would be now where the theatre is, not the Vogue, F and Third Ave., we did a lot of our grocery shopping right down there. They had produce stores, I can't think of the name of the place now. About 20 years ago we built a theatre down there and it wasn't very successful, in that block, when they tore all the old buildings down to build that shopping center. There are pictures of it on Third Ave. on plaques, different views – Watry was involved in that.

Susan: How about library, was there a library that you and your family went to?

Bill: Yes, the library was right next to our church, the Community Congregational Church. The fact is before the church that is presently there, I went to that one. I took my Boy Scouts. That's because the Pastor was very involved in scouting and so I said this would be a good place for us to work on some of our religious part of the scouting. Those kids that didn't go to church, I took them there and so it was lovely old, old church built back in the 1800's. The seats were elevated in a semi-circle and the Pastor was down below. It was lovely church, but I didn't join that church although I attended it for years and then when I married Jo, after I got my divorce from my first wife so that would be in 1958, I joined the church then. When I married to my wife Jo, we got married there at that church. My wife

worked quite a bit for the church there. On Sundays we had flowers on the alter. Then on Monday morning she'd go down there and dismantle that big arrangement and make little, they called them "tuffy mussies" (sp?) - that word I always remember, then she'd put the flowers in a little plastic coffee cup and take it to the hospitals and bring them to people who were ill, deliver those. The church also recorded the sermons at that time and in the early 60's and she'd deliver the sermons to those who were bed-ridden or locked up at home and couldn't go to church. Then the next week when she would go back, they'd give her the old tape and she'd give them a new one with little flowers.

Susan: How about schools?

Bill: F Street School was there and my first two children went there and then my stepchildren went there. They had a great principal there, Mrs. Sullivan, I can remember that. They had a PTA. Even back in those days, about the 60's, everybody was really community oriented and close and we'd have the Fiesta De La Luna.

Susan: I would like to ask you about that. What do you remember about Fiesta De La Luna?

Bill: I can remember Elmer Sorenson (sp?). He was at that time, I think, the vice president of the bank here in CV and he was chairman one year. I met Elmer on the Parks & Recreation Commission, we both served on that. He put in full time on the Fiesta and one of the things that stands out in my mind is they would block off a whole city block and as I recall correctly it was on F Street by the school. They would have dancing, booths and then there was just a great time. In the center of Third Ave. they built a cage and if you didn't wear a goat tee or a mustache, they would pick you up and put in the cage, lock you up and it would cost you a dollar to get out of jail - it was a fundraiser.

Susan: I take it they wouldn't put women in there.

Bill: No, no, I don't recall any women. It seemed like every day you'd come home, you'd be anxious to get to the Fiesta.

Susan: How long did it last?

Bill: I think sometimes a week.

Susan: And it had a parade?

Bill: Yes, I can't remember if that was at the beginning of the Fiesta or after. Marg Parsons with her palomino would always be in that parade. Marg is still alive and lives on Second Ave., we're good friends, and she was always in that parade with her palomino, a beautiful horse.

Susan: Marg's home is across the street from mine.

Bill: Well, then, I know exactly where you live.

Susan: I live in the Victorian across the street from her.

Bill: You haven't lived there real long, have you?

Susan: 16 years.

Bill: I can remember when it was up for sale.

Susan: Did you know any of the people that lived there?

Bill: No, I didn't. You know the old house that is almost your neighbor on Second Ave. that was owned by the Crockett's.

Susan: Are you talking about the grey house to the north, across the street.

Bill: Yeah, the same side of the street as you, oh, wait now, it's south of you.

Susan: The house is now green?

Bill: I think it might be.

Susan: It's also known as the Haines house.

Bill: Oh, I didn't know that. It was originally the Crockett house and it was close to where our Norman Park Center is now. The reason I know this, I was trying to think back now, I almost bought that house and a man moved it off its lot. They moved it over to Second Ave. The Crockett girls, one of them was the librarian, for years and years, well known. They sold that property and it was moved. You can still see the outdoor plumbing on that house. There are pipes coming down the side. When it was built, they didn't have plumbing, indoor plumbing.

Susan: So did they have out houses?

Bill: Yeah, the original house was, I think where it was originally, I think they put the indoor plumbing in. And then they moved it, but you can still see the plumbing coming down the sides of the house. There's a story, too, the Crockett's were real popular people in the 40's I'd stay.

Susan: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Bill: No, I really don't know much more about it than she was the librarian.

Susan: Who were some of your friends, people that you hung out with around here?

Bill: Well, one of my closest friends was John Smith, he was the mayor of our city, this would be about the latter part of the 50's. We voted out the city council way back then because we were not happy with them. John was on the city Planning Commission prior to that and he was my neighbor up on Sea Vale just a block away. And he also worked at North Island. He was the first PTA president at CV High School when it was built. Our first school was out at Brown Field in the barracks way out there. That's how CV's first high school went. We had Sweetwater High School, but then when CV started their high school it was out at Brown Field. Then we built our high school, CV High School. The principal was Rindone who became superintendent of our school district.

Susan: That's Joseph Rindone.

Bill: Yes and his children followed suit, in the educational area. Chet Devore, Devore Stadium was named after, he was the football coach at the high school and John Smith was the first PTA president at that school. He had 4 children, 3 girls and a boy. We'd go camping together and when he decided he was going to go for council, I was his campaign manager.

Susan: Oh really, that's a lot of work.

Bill: Yeah, even though the town wasn't very big, I don't know how big we were then, in the 50's, there was a lot of big decisions that had to be made. One of them was the City of San Diego was always scooping up all the land around and they ran a corridor down the bay and tried to attach the electric plant that was down there. The purpose of it was to get all the taxes for that electric plant. And they fought that and they won – then we got the taxes from it back in those days. So there were a lot of little political things going on. And I can remember the council had to make a decision on our sewage when we started a sewage plant in about the 60's. They had to make a decision and they voted to have a capacity of 260 homes – he said that ought to take care of things forever. Little did any of us know that the town would ever grow to what it is today.

Susan: What changes have you seen?

Bill: One of the things that we did in the early days, which were a good one, was to decide that we wouldn't have one major park for the city of CV. We decided that we would have small parks throughout the community and that part I think was very successful and really good. And I think they've kept that in the master plan ever since. It worked out so well because that whenever they would be planning a 50 acre building area that the people who were going to do it would have to dedicate a certain area for a fire house or park area before it would be

approved. In that way we got parks throughout the city and it's really enjoyable for me to go around now, even in the new areas, and see these little parks with children playing in them. It's a real welcome thing.

One of the things that I was instigator of is Eucalyptus Park right down here from us, I don't know how many acres there is, but on the corner of C St. and 4th we have a park. That was not dedicated as a park. So when I was on the commission I found out that anything that's dedicated takes a vote of the people to change it. Where if it's not dedicated, the city could sell it or do whatever they wanted. So I campaigned and we got it named Eucalyptus Park. John said now that you got your park, now what are you going to do with it. We got a professional park man to come in, landscape architect, and we walked around the area and he said we should put a fence in and do this, and we were taking notes all of what he was saying. Every time you'd turn around it would be \$100,000. And I was thinking, a \$100,000, wow, we don't have that kind of money. And so we went back to our commission meeting and he did this estimate for free just to give us an idea of what it would cost and then he would do it. We knew we couldn't present that to the city council because they would never buy it. So we decided to do it piecemeal. If they would give us \$10,000 one year, we'd put the fencing around -5 or 10 years we'd have our park. That's what the city council bought. But then we went out and got the apprentices from the brick layer's union and then we went to Hazard Brick Co. and they donated the bricks and the apprentices built the gate steps that are still down there. I think I have pictures of that some where. That's how we started with the fence and then they had dumped a lot of concrete – it was just a dump before. They had to clear all that concrete and the dump part out of there and start fixing ball fields and then a restroom and things like that.

Susan: When we first moved here and had children, our children went to play at that place. My kids called it the pony park because of the squeaky ponies that would be out there, remember those things? There also used to be a big pipe thing. They loved to play on it, but it's been taken away. I heard people slept in it causing problems.

Bill: You'd be surprised the problems you get in a city and when you serve on one of these commissions – you find out – we used to have a beautiful lily pond down at Memorial Park. Do you know where the ___ area is, well all of that was lily pond and water. The kids used to go down there and wade in it and have fun, except some people had to break bottles the kids would step on. And the only way we could end up with that was to drain it. One of those decisions you hate to do but for the safety of the children, you had to do it. So there are a lot of hard parts in serving on these commissions.

Susan: What were some of the commissions, again?

Bill: I was just on the Parks & Recreation Commission. I was on that for many years.

Susan: You were involved with trees here. Tell me about that.

Bill: Tree City USA, my wife heard about it, how it started was President Johnson's wife was flying over the US and she said what this country needs is some trees. I can't remember who sponsored Tree City USA. You had to have 4 requirements: you had to have a certain percentage of their tax money used for maintaining the trees in the city; you had to have a policy of planting trees in the city. When they built a house, they had to have a tree. There were some other requirements. Greg Cox was the mayor at that time. So I presented to him one time in his office and he said okay Bill, you got free rein to get all this information from any department. I could go to the different departments and tell them what we had to do and what I needed. Information on how much money we spent on the trees. I got that from the street department. So we gathered all this information and then we sent it to this national organization and they named us Tree City USA. We had to have Arbor Day every year, recognize it. So we started that Arbor Day recognition.

Susan: What was actually entailed in Arbor Day here?

Bill: Basically we always tried to plant a tree, for one thing. The recognition so the people would know of Arbor Day. That was it. We'd get a proclamation from the mayor. We had to have that. So we gathered all this information. It took a long time because we had to get ordinances squared away and then we were named Tree City USA. Every 4th year you have to renew it. So I think I did it a couple of times and then I said I'm too old for this. Somebody else could do it.

Susan: Do you remember where the trees were planted for Arbor Day?

Bill: Gosh, no, well, yes, I do know. We planted one at the city library – did this twice.

Susan: Are those trees still there?

Bill: Yes. One is at the end of the parking lot where the park kind of starts – it has no plaque or anything. Then our Garden Club bought two rare trees and we planted those right behind the library in the park. And one of the maintenance men thought they were a weed and cut them down. I think we spent a couple hundred dollars for those trees. So we hollered that we were wounded and the city replaced it, but they didn't put the same type in.

Susan: Do you remember what those types of trees were?

Bill: No. The CV Garden Club was originally started in the Women's Club here in CV. They were part of them. They broke away back in 1950. I believe they

separated. They were planting trees as the Women's Club at that time. So it's been going on for a good many years.

Susan: What kind of trees do you think sort of signifies CV to you?

Bill: At one time this Women's Club started a big campaign with that purple flower, jacaranda. I think it was about 50's and I think for a \$1 you could buy a tree and plant it in your driveway and that's why you see the jacaranda trees here and there, but they're messy. That was one of the big projects that were going on in the city at that time. I was not involved in that, but I remember we bought a couple of them. I ended up taking them out because they would bleed all over your car if it was parked in the driveway. So we took ours out and we had some more put in that the city put in several years ago that I have out there now.

Susan: Do you ever drive by and see a tree and remember that you were involved in getting that one planted?

Bill: Yes, just vaguely – we planted at schools and places all around. In fact, my grandson had the honor of planting one at Rosebank School with the principal at the school. We made all the arrangements for that and I have a photo some where - I had it but I don't know where it is. He's now a school teacher, by the way. He's 30 years old.

Susan: Can we go back to the Boy Scouts. What did you do, how did you start, what was your involvement, how did you start with that?

Bill: It started with my father and mother got divorced when I was 8 years old. My father raised my brother and me. We both became Eagle Scouts, which is the highest rank of Scouts. That gave us our basic training, you might say, without a mother in the family. From that experience, after the war, I went down to the town council, that's what they had in the housing projects. The people had their own little council pertaining to that project. They had a Boy Scout troop and they wanted to get some money from this council for the Boy Scouts troop and I said that's not Boy Scouts, you don't give them money, they earn it. And somebody said if you're such a smart guy why don't you come down. And I said I'll do that. And after two meetings I was the Scout Master. Then I couldn't believe what was going on in scouting. Here I just came back from over seas and was working at North Island. I went out on the first camping trip the week before I was Scout Master and these kids were drinking wine on a camping trip. And I said to the Scout Master, do you know what those kids are doing and he said he doesn't pay attention, they're the older boys, 16, 17 years old and he said they won't bother them me. I said, well, it bothers me and I went in there and I threw them all out and sent them home. At 16, 17, we were camped not very far from home, they could walk home. So the parents started raising cane about it. I said that's not scouting, you don't do that. So I threw a bunch of them out of the scout troop and they made me scout master, and that's how it started. I taught the children the

ways the Boy Scouts are supposed to be. I can remember one father said that I was a dictator because I requested and required discipline. I said when I whistle that means quiet, complete. So one of the kids was speaking up right after I whistled, and I said, hey, that's enough of that. When I whistle, quiet. So he kept on heckling. And I said up, go home, you're out of the scouts. So I had a big deal then because Rohr was sponsoring the Boy Scout Troop. And the guy wrote a letter to Rohr how I was a dictator and so on, but all of the parents came to my rescue. They said this is the first discipline the kids have had. I've had those kids, half of them are gone already, passed away. That's the sad part. But I kept in touch with many of them over the years. They went into the Korean War and I got some of the boys together, they were in their late teens, and we sent packages to them when they were in Korea, when they came home, we had get-togethers. But now, there are too many of them gone. It's sad and upsetting.

Susan: Sure it is. Did your boys attain Eagle?

Bill: Two of them did. One went on, came over to North Island and worked as an apprentice and then continued going to school and got his degree in electronics and he left North Island for a private company, very successful.

Susan: What was his name?

Bill: Ted Chandler. I had his brothers in the scout troop also, Mickie Chandler, and the other boy, an Eagle Scout, was Norris. He lives up around San Francisco. He became head of the production control for Convair. Then he retired.

Susan: Is Norris his last name?

Bill: Yes.

Susan: You know his first name?

Bill: Vern. They were good kids. I even started Sea Scouts, a troop for the older boys. I'm very proud of those kids.

Susan: I think you develop an attachment to them.

Bill: Oh, my gracious, yes. The one, his father passed away when I was on vacation. He would help me with scouts quite a bit. Any time I needed a truck, he'd go to Rohr, he worked at Rohr, and he got a truck and took us camping or whatever we needed. He passed away and his son's name was Benny Martin. He had a daughter and son. Benny was a very mischievous kid. He had asthma. You had to watch over him because he got running in some of the games. I'd have to set him down before he'd have an attack. So I became real close to him since his father passed away. Even as he grew up and played football for Cal Poly, he got his degree in college and he was planning to retire when he was 60 years old and

got cancer. I'd talk to him on the phone once a week, at least. He lived up in San Jose at that time. Anyway, it's like losing a son.

Susan: Do you remember what those boys did as an Eagle project?

Bill: Actually we didn't have that at that time.

Susan: Because all the Eagles I know now have to complete a project.

Bill: Things have changed in the requirements. For instance, Pioneering Merit Badge, you're supposed to cut down a tree and you know you're not going to cut trees down. If all these Boy Scouts went out there, there wouldn't be any trees left. So what they did at scout camps, they had some trees that were cut down and after the project they would have to go ahead and take their project apart and pile all these trees and parts together. But the project would be you had to make a lean-to and a signal tower that was 12 feet high and that was the basic parts of the Pioneering Merit Badge. And you had to build a bridge, not a big one, just a half a dozen of these trees across the pond, tied together in such a manner that it wouldn't wobble. It was a lot of work for one kid. You had to do that alone.

Susan: Eagle Scouts now that's usually a young man has a team.

Bill: I know one kid built a flag pole. That was all brand new to me during my days in scouting.

Susan: Did you ever know Edith Wyatt, she was involved with scouts for awhile. She lives in CV now.

Bill: No, it might have been after my time. We had several merit badges. To become an Eagle Scout in my day, you had to have 21 merit badges. To become a First Class Scout, you had to do certain things. I think it was 5 merit badges. Then to become a Star Scout, you had to have 10 merit badges. To become a Life Scout, you had to have 15 merit badges. Eagle Scout you had to have 21. But in each of these categories, you had to have certain ones. For instance, you couldn't become a First Class unless you had a Swimming Merit Badge – you had to swim 50 yards. A lot of kids never got over First Class because of that. They were scared of the water and in as much as they tried to do it, they just couldn't get over it.

Susan: Where would they go swimming?

Bill: Well, I took them down to YMCA in my day and we would get in there for free.

Susan: And where was the Y?

Bill: Down in San Diego on 5th and E St.

Susan: So you had to go all the way over there to swim?

Bill: Yeah, we'd go over there and prepare the kids for swimming merit badges, and pass tests all the time. I can't remember ever having a swimming pool here. Our pool, I guess it was around early 50's and I'm talking about 40's. We had Florence Chadwick here when we dedicated our swimming pool and you know who she was?

Susan: Well, tell the story about Florence, briefly.

Bill: She was the first woman to swim the English Channel and then she was the first woman that swam it back and forth. One time before she did it the first time, I have a little story about faith. Florence Chadwick said if she'd of had faith the first time, she would have made it. What happened is there was a fog bank along the shore and she was tired and she knew the shore was behind there, but she never had the faith. So if you have faith, you continue on because it will be there. And that's the story of Florence Chadwick. So the next time she had faith. She was a nice person. She and her parents owned Chadwick Restaurant in San Diego.

Susan: Any other notable people that you have met.

Bill: Bob Wilson. He was a soda jerk, that's what we called him. I was trying to think who was in there now – on F St., right across the street from Marie Callender's. And that was Wilson's Ice Cream. He worked in there. I was an ice cream person and still am. I got to know him there. And then he ran for Congressman. He belonged to our American Legion Post, Past Commander of the American Legion Post, also. So I knew him quite well. He had a lot of clout in Wash., D.C., but he was always fair in everything he did. My first wife and his first wife were co-chairman of Day Camp at Eucalyptus Park way back in the 40's. I got to know them quite well. It was a sad day to see him go. I'd see him every so often when he was in town.

Susan: Any other notables?

Bill: Well, over the years I knew most all of the city councilmen, being on the Parks & Recreation Commission. Stanley McMane (sp?). These people were involved in the community, not for themselves back in those days. It became so political now that it's sad. I don't know of anybody else. I considered a lot of my friends have done volunteer work and things that notable people, like the Hedenkamp's. Did you know the Hedenkamp's?

Susan: No, go ahead and tell about them.

Bill: Willie and Annie Hedenkamp were very notable people in our community in volunteer work. They belonged to the Welfare Council, they called it years ago. And they would stack food that they would gather in their garage and make up boxes of food. The school nurses would notify them when a child came to school without shoes, needed food, something like that. They would go to their home and take them food or get them some shoes or whatever was necessary. They did that for years and years. Their garage was just full of groceries and at Christmas time and Thanksgiving, they would then give turkeys and we would help her deliver a lot of those things. One year somebody got an idea, let's have the Police Dept. deliver the boxes which you'd think would be a nice gesture for a policeman. But nobody would answer the door. And Annie called me up and said I need help. She said the policeman can't deliver because no one will answer the door. And I can see why, when we delivered them, they were run down homes, they were worried. One of the reasons, some of the schools, especially out near Donovan Prison, has poor grades. The children really had no home to come home to. They blamed the teachers and they can't blame the teachers because the teachers can't go home with them and pound it into their heads. They need help from parents. I would always get a kick out of this when we say all the teachers are no good because there are a lot of good teachers out there, but the environment that's coming up with some of these children are sad.

Susan: So, tell me about these notes that you've got here.

Bill: It's from when I was born, in Boy Scouts and about my brother that we've already discussed. I was a Scout Master and I became a Mason also. I'm past Commander of the American Legion Post 434. I married my wife Jo in 1961. I should have put I was on the Parks & Recreation Commission. My wife and I, we were married 46 years, before she passed away. When we got married, she was working at North Island and wanted to know if she should keep working. And I said No, a woman's place is at home with two children. My son said, hey mom, you're going to get a break, aren't you. So she stayed at home and took care of the children and when they were beyond taking care of, then when I retired in 1977, we were in volunteer work full time. That's what my little notes cover.

Susan: Could you tell me about the Masons? I don't think I've ever spoken to anyone about the Masons here in CV.

Bill: The Masons are a big backer of public school systems. That's a big thing that we believe in. You have to be an honorable person. It's a fraternity that was started years ago – it started in England basically. The first people that made pyramids were stone masons and that's how masonry started. Kind of a fraternal group and then it became more popular in England and we followed the same rituals and things that they had for years and years. A man who is upright, honest person can only join. You must believe in God.

Susan: Can you tell me a little bit about some of the projects that you did in the Masons?

Bill: Basically, I didn't do any of the projects. We visited the schools, put cornerstones in schools and put on a ceremony pertaining to the Masonic rituals. The Hedenkamp's, we named the Hedenkamp School after them. The Masons put in a cornerstone when that school was built. They recognize public schools and everybody should be treated equally.

Susan: Did the cornerstones include a time capsule or anything like that?

Bill: Sometimes. When I first went into the Masons, some 60 years ago, our meeting hall was above the Silver Dollar on Third Ave., second floor, and then one of the Masons willed the property that he lived on where the Masonic Hall is now on Third Ave. Then we built the Masonic Temple there and it was done by all of us, we'd go on weekends and nights and work, it took us a long time. But we were fortunate because a lot of the people were craftsmen, like Logan Plumbing we had back in those days and he put in all the plumbing with the help of brother Masons. So that is how that hall was built. Then we had the offshoots of the Masons – Jobs Daughters. Like the American Legion, I was always very proud of the fact we had American Legion baseball for the kids. Bob Geyer who worked with Chet Devore – Bob was our coach for our American Legion baseball here. As you can see, almost everything is leading toward community that we lean towards. My father was a Mason, that's one of the reasons that I always thought of him, too. So it's been a good life. You know, it's what you put into it, what you get out of it. You get to meet so many nice people. Even in the Garden Club, the ladies are always nice to me and respect me and just don't expect me to be the man to carry the tables and chairs. I had my turn. The Garden Club is always getting to the community in major center. Now the Garden Club is working on a geranium – our city flower is the geranium – and we're getting one that will be named after Chula Vista – red in color. I was surprised when I saw it, it's a beautiful red. It's an ivy geranium so it's hybridized now – the fact is we're just waiting for the city council to approve it – the name. We're all leaning toward the centennial and our big thing this year is to promote the geranium so more people know. I was on the Parks & Recreation Commission when the city council asked us to name a city flower, recommend one. We had meetings with people all the time – on the rose – Pasadena has the rose and somebody wants the carnation, somebody else has carnations. We wanted one of our own. I always thought of the people who came from back east carrying their little geranium in a pot – you know they had to protect it from the winter – when they got here, they would throw the pot away – they were growing wild practically. So the one we are going to have will be perfect for our season and climate. I'm kind of excited about that.

Susan: Thank you so much. It's been really interesting.