

Bulthuis, J. September 4, 2012

Today is September 4, 2012 and I am with Mr. J. Bulthuis at the Indian Prairie Library in Darien, Illinois. My name is Deb Barrett. Mr. Bulthuis was born on February 7th, 1937 in unincorporated La Grange, Illinois. He now lives in Willow Springs, Illinois and is here to share his story about this area.

You were born in unincorporated La Grange. You said that is now a part of Indian Head Park?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes, that's part of Indian Head Park now.

So you didn't come from the city?

Mr. Bulthuis: No, I was born and raised right there on Wolf Road at about 72nd and Wolf Rd. where there's condominiums sitting there right now, used to be my grandfather's farm; that's where I was born and raised, right there.

O.K. Your grandfather had a farm. What kind of farm did he have?

Mr. Bulthuis: They were truck farmers. They grew vegetables and all those kinds of things, sweet corn and tomatoes, and all those kinds of things you're familiar with. We had other vegetables also. Spinach, we used to get up early in the morning like about five o'clock and go out in the field. I remember when I was still in school about a teenager and we would go out there, make a load and take it to the market on south Water Street and my uncle or my father, one of the two, would drive this loaded truck down there and they would sell the stuff off the back of the truck.

This was your grandfather's farm but it sounds like you all lived on the farm?

Mr. Bulthuis: It was a family farm. All my family lived down the road. My dad's brothers, they all had farms down the road, too.

So it was multiple farms?

Mr. Bulthuis: Right. So I have my grandfather's uncle was right next door. There was one in between there somewhere that was by the Eckhart's, they had 10 acres, so they had like a farm there. Then I had an uncle, my grandfather's cousin was next door, and then my uncle was next to that and then there was another Bulthuis that was a relative, a shirt tail relation to my grandfather. He had another farm. So we had farms all the way from 72nd and Wolf Road all the way down to where Pleasantview Fire Station is right now. My dad used to farm that land where the fire station sits.

O.K. How big were these farms?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, my grandpa's was fifteen acres. And most of the others, I think, were all around 10. They we all grew the same thing, you know, sweet corn, tomatoes, cabbage, carrots, rutabagas, not rutabagas, cabbages and all those kinds of things.

Brussel Sprouts?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah, brussel sprouts, all that kind of stuff that you have as a vegetable.

O.K. How long had your family been doing this type of work? How far back?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, my grandfather, when my father graduated from high school, no he didn't ever graduate from high school my grandfather didn't, no my grandfather never graduated, he came from the old country.

Which was?

Mr. Bulthuis: Holland, from the Netherlands. My dad, he didn't graduate high school, he finished grade school and they moved from Stickney where the brick river, the Sanitary District is now, they were farming out there. So then they took it over with the Sanitary District and everything way back in the thirties and then they bought property out on Wolf Road, my grandpa did and then the rest of the family came along afterwards and one of my uncles got married there and they all started their own farms.

So your grandfather is the one who came from Holland?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes, my grandfather came from Holland.

Was his family doing farming back there?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes, they were all farmers back in the old country.

O.K. So this was very familiar work for them.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes. It would always amaze me for years. They used to make what they would call beds. They were like about, oh, I'd say maybe I'd say as long as this table. What's this table, about 15 feet?

12 feet.

Mr. Bulthuis: 12, 14 feet. So they might have been about 20 feet and they were beds and they were big long rows and so they went about 100 or 200 feet down and then it was what they call a furrow which was a little ditch on the side. I could never figure out why was that in America we had to have that ditch. Then I went to the Netherlands and I saw why. It was low country and they all these beds like this and these ditches because of the water. And I was riding on a bus one day and I said, "duh." Now I can see why they did it that way, because that's the way they were brought up; that's the way they did it in the old country. So they brought it back here. So, today, I don't know if some of the farmers still do it any more. They're too big so I don't think they do it anymore.

So you said your grandfather came here about what year?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, he came, most of them that are relatives to me came here back in the early 1900's around 1920 somewhere around there, maybe earlier than that.

O.K. Was your dad born here or was he born in the Netherlands?

Mr. Bulthuis: No. My dad was born here, my dad was born here.

So your relatives were living in Stickney when they came here, that's where they moved?

Mr. Bulthuis: That's right. That's where whoever they were that sponsored them to get here were in Stickney and they worked for whoever their relatives were in those days. And they where they started and

they worked for them and and they got a few dollars in their pockets and then they moved out on their own.

What made them decide to move out to this area?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, they moved out here because the Sanitary District took over the land that they had over there. And there were other Dutch people that had farms in the area, too, and Midway Airport is sitting there on their farms now. And my wife can tell you all this history because she's got all this figured out like a clock.

So, from Stickney to here they moved southwest?

Mr. Bulthuis: That's right, by horse and wagon.

By horse and wagon. Did they decide to move here because they knew of something here or just because...?

Mr. Bulthuis: I think they got it because the land was cheap. Flagg Creek runs through the property and it used to flood all the time. I used to see some mighty big floods there when I was a kid, let me tell ya'. Water used to be almost all the way up to Wolf Rd. and a lot of times Wolf Rd. would be closed off because it was flooded over. But that's why they bought there because the land was cheap. They got it from somebody else. I don't remember who it was that owned it but that's why they bought it because it was cheap land.

And you said they came by horse and wagon?

Mr. Bulthuis: Horse and wagon, yep. That's how they came. I forget how long it took 'em to come. It took 'em like an all day trip or something like that to come from Stickney or half a day, I don't remember exactly. That's my mother's story telling me this stuff.

Horses were a little slower than cars.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes. Well, I can remember when I was a little tyke, I was probably about four or five years old that we had horses doing the farming work before tractors. We never got a tractor on my grandpa's farm until after World War II. When the war was over they were making stuff again so then you could get a tractor so right after the war we got a tractor so before that uh-uh, horses did it all.

So, your family moved out here by horse. Your dad was born in Stickney?

Mr. Bulthuis: He was born in Stickney.

Do you know how old he was when they moved out here?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, he had just graduated from grade school so about 14 or 15 years old.

Did he go to high school?

Mr. Bulthuis: Never went to high school.

He went to 8th grade.

Mr. Bulthuis: He went to 8th grade. He said he the closest he got to high school was they toured Morton High School then they moved and that was the end of that.

So, how many brothers and sisters did he have?

Mr. Bulthuis: My dad had, let's see, 4 brothers and 3 sisters, 7 kids.

Your mom's family?

Mr. Bulthuis: My mom's family lived in Chicago around Halsted St. and some place, I don't remember the number any more. We went by the house a number of years ago, I took my mother and father there, there was nothing but an empty lot when we went there. Her parents were born in the Netherlands also, so she was born here.

O.K. So it was a very familiar culture for both sides of your family.

Mr. Bulthuis: Right. I'm sure that they probably met in the church because you know how guys are. They go looking for girls, where do they go, they go looking at church to see what they got over there. I used to do stuff like that myself. I'd go out to different Christian Reform Churches and check out the girls and stuff like that on Sunday evening.

You said, before we started, that you said that you had gone to the Christian Reform Church in Cicero.

Mr. Bulthuis: That's correct, right.

That you were in Stickney at the time.

Mr. Bulthuis: Right.

So then you moved out here. Was there a church here or did you go back to Cicero?

Mr. Bulthuis: We kept going back to Cicero for a number of years and then they started a church in Western Springs. A lot of the people that lived on Wolf Rd. were involved in and I guess there were a lot of other of Dutch people that moved out this way. So they started a church in Western Springs which is now, I can't remember the name of the street but it was behind the Western Springs library about one block behind the library. There's a school sitting on it now. I can't remember the name of the street but 52nd and Wolf Rd. that's where it's located now.

Were your parents part of the group that started that up?

Mr. Bulthuis: No, but some of the relations, my grandfather's cousin, was one of the original that started it but no, we weren't the first ones that started it up. My parents transferred there, when I was, I must have been about 7 years old, maybe 6 years old.

So, you were born there and moved here when you were 6 or 7 years old?

Mr. Bulthuis: No, I was born on Wolf Rd. So I was here. I was already here. We used to go back to Cicero to go to church and then they started one in Western Springs and then we moved to Western Springs to the church.

And you said you were born at home.

Mr. Bulthuis: I was born at home in the house. I was a very small child. And you can ask my wife told this story because my mother told her many times I was like a premature baby. And in those days they didn't have incubators. So what did they do? So my grandma started a, in the old stove there was a kind that you started a fire with the wood, open the oven door and put me there in a little shoe box or basket or something, or so I'm told.

To keep you warm.

Mr. Bulthuis: To keep me warm.

A home made incubator.

Mr. Bulthuis: That's what I've been told by my mother and my wife who heard the story, too.

Like a little roast.

Mr. Bulthuis: That's exactly right.

But it worked.

Mr. Bulthuis: I'm still here so it must have worked.

So you had a little bit of a rough start if you were born premature.

Mr. Bulthuis: I must have been, I don't know any of that story because I'm too young, I can't remember any of that.

So when you were born, who was living in the house? Were your parents living with your grandparents or were they in their own house?

Mr. Bulthuis: No, it was their own house. It was just my parents and me, that was it.

Did you have any siblings?

Mr. Bulthuis: I had a sister that was right under me and I have four other brothers. They're all younger than me, I'm the oldest one in the family.

How long did you stay in that house?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh my, I was in that house until I went in the army. I went in the army when I was 23 so that was 23 years.

That was your whole life until you were an adult.

Mr. Bulthuis: That's right. Then, my parents moved to my grandparents. My grandparents had bought a different house across the street so then my Mom and Dad went in that house, my grandpa's old house, my grandpa lived next door. Those were the good days. My grandma used to come over or I was sent over to my grandma's. You could walk out of your back yard and go over and see grandpa and grandma just like nobody's business. It was good. Yeah, I loved it.

What's the first thing you remember as a little kid?

Mr. Bulthuis: The first thing I remember. The first thing that always sticks in my mind, I don't know why this is. It must have been right after Wolf Road was paved 'cause my mother said it was paved in 1937, Wolf Rd. . . ., the year I was born. I can remember, my aunts were watching me over at my grandparents home. And for some reason, I don't think I was walking there. I think maybe I was crawling or maybe a toddler. I was a toddler. I don't know why I remember this. I sat right in the middle of Wolf Rd. And I can remember a guy pulled over in a truck, got out of his truck and pulled me over on the side of the road and then my aunts come running up. That's the first thing I can remember and that's the youngest I can remember so I don't know how old I was but I wasn't that big. Because if I was dumb enough to crawl there and sit in the middle of the road, I didn't know what I was doing yet.

Well, actually, there wasn't as much traffic on Wolf Rd.

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, that's very true, there was very little traffic.

Or the speed either.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah, there was very little traffic. You could roller skate down that road. We used to roller skate on that road all the time. Put roller skates on and roller skate down to the cousins' house and do whatever, take your skates off, play a little football and stuff like that. I used to do that until I was 15, 16 years old, it was still good.

So, before you went to school, you were at home?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes.

Did you help with anything on the farm? I know you were real little.

Mr. Bulthuis: Not when we were real little. You know, we had a big yard, we could play around, we could go out in the field and visit dad and grandpa and all that kind of stuff. Grandpa used to get mad because with a little kid like me, you know, 6 years old, 5 years old, we didn't know they had roads that went down so that they could bring the pick up trucks and stuff down there to pick up the vegetables and bring them back to the barn. I march right across the whole thing and my grandpa used to get all mad 'cause I didn't walk down that road. My mother, I remember, my mother had to put a rope around me and tie me to the tree 'cause my grandpa was hollering so loud. All because I always wanted to go see him. He got so mad he was stepping on all the onions and he's stepping on this and stepping on that.

Those are about the earliest parts that I can remember.

O.K.

Mr. Bulthuis: I can remember we used to have chickens. My mother would say, when I was older, "You dummy, go out there and get a chicken for dinner." So I'd get up and get a chicken, kill it. The she said, "I'll bring you a bucket of hot water," and she says, "dip it in there and pluck that son of a gun." You'd take it in the house then she'd clean it out and then we'd have it for dinner.

So you knew where food came from.

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, yeah, you certainly did. We had quite a few chickens.

Other animals?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, we had a... of course the horses, before the war. We had a cow, too. That's where we used to get our milk from. My dad used to milk the cow. The cow or the horse one of them either a cow or a horse squished him in the stall over there and he had a bum shoulder for a long time after that I can remember that. He got in there with ...

Your dad?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah, he got a bum shoulder, got squished by either a horse or a cow, I don't remember which one. Yeah, that's right. We used to have our own milk. Then after the war, the cow went by the wayside and then we started having a ... Bowman Dairy used to deliver milk to the house. I remember that real good because he was a veteran. The guy, milkman, was a veteran from the Pacific, he was fighting in the Pacific.

So, when you started school, was there a kindergarten at the time or did you go into first grade?

Mr. Bulthuis: We never went to kindergarten, we went right into first grade. We went to **Tres** Lutheran School because it was the only Christian school around anywhere we could go to. So, it was all the relatives that were older than me, they all went to school over there so they sent us over there, too.

So you knew a lot of kids there?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah, I knew, you know, people from Willow Spring went there. Some of them are still friends of mine from **Keifville**, that area there, they're still friends of ours. It was a one room school.

How many kids?

Mr. Bulthuis: I don't know, there was probably 60, 70 kids in there 'cause it was first grade was first row, second grade, second row, third grade, third row until you had eight rows with kids in there.

How many teachers were there?

Mr. Bulthuis: One teacher.

So how did the teacher manage to teach eight grades?

Mr. Bulthuis: It was a good question. He would have the first one do, what I can remember from first and second grade, he would give you this much you gotta do, O.K. blah, blah, blah, blah. Then he'd move down the line 'til he got over. Then that was your homework, then you had homework to take home with you. You had to do homework. One teacher for the whole crew.

So you just kept rotating.

Mr. Bulthuis: Right. So I got, we got done with that and then we were asked to please leave because we were not of the Lutheran faith, which was a Lutheran school. So, they had it filled up with their own children, so we were asked, my parents were, to go somewhere else.

What grade were you in?

Mr. Bulthuis: So I went to 3rd & 4th grade over at Pleasantdale School.

How was that different from your experience at the Lutheran School?

Mr. Bulthuis: It was four grades in one classroom. First grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade. That was one room, this was a two room school so it was an improvement one way or the other. The teacher was very nice. The other one was, well he had to be strict, there was a one room school, he couldn't let the thing get out of hand. But we had two rooms there and I stayed there until fourth grade. And then in fifth grade they started, had a school bus or started school society and they bussed all the Dutch people, all the ones that were Christian Reform Faith, into Cicero to Timothy School which was already standing there at 52nd and whatever it's on.

So, you were bussed all the way there?

Mr. Bulthuis: We were bussed. We got on the bus, I don't know, sometimes like 6:30, 7:00 in the morning. I don't remember, it was pretty early, I know that.

That was a long trip in those days.

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, well, we had to make a lot of pickups. We picked up people in Downers Grove, and all the way out to Westchester and all the ... So we rode around. The bus was right down the street from our house because one of the guys, one of our relatives, he was the bus driver so, shhhhh, that's the way it went.

How many kids were in this new school?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh that school, that one over there, they had quite a few. They had one grade to a room which you had at least 30 kids in every room.

You had a teacher for every grade?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, yeah, you had a teacher for every grade then, yep.

And this was a Dutch Reform?

Mr. Bulthuis: Dutch Reform School. It was a religious so they didn't take just Dutch Reform, anybody could have gone there but basically that's what it was. The founders were the Dutch Reform.

So you went to 3 different grade schools.

Mr. Bulthuis: Right.

What was the, besides the fact that you went from one room to a two room to an eight room school. What kind of subjects, what do you remember about your lessons?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, I think I remember the most of like stuff is, either first or second grade, when I was learning how to read. We had, you know, the old "Dick & Jane" reader. And there was one sentence I couldn't get. This one always stuck in my head. And that teacher one room school

teacher, he got, ... bring it up here. He'd bring you up to read that to him and I could never get the sentence right. And he drew big lines underneath it. You dumb kid you should be able to read this thing by now and I couldn't get it. That's one thing I remember. And the other, in fifth grade, I can remember we had a nice teacher. She was a big, tall gal. Then she left and went and got married right in the middle of the school season. Then we had another teacher ...

So when she got married, she didn't come back?

Mr. Bulthuis: No. She moved to, her husband and her moved to Fulton, Illinois. Or maybe he was from Fulton, Illinois and he came over here and got her or whatever. But she went to Fulton. She was a nice teacher and I remember her. That's what I remember most of all.

Some of the schools that were established back then we especially tight knit communities.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes.

Did some language also.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes.

Did you do any Dutch language.

Mr. Bulthuis: There was no. To the best of my knowledge, there was never any language offered in high school or grade school.

O.K. It was not part of just your every day reading.

Mr. Bulthuis: No, you kidding? Your mother and father spoke that language only when they didn't want you to know what they were talking about. My mother and father could both speak it but they never spoke it to the kids unless they didn't want you to know what they were talking about. Then they would switch to that but other than that... I never lived with my grandparents from The Netherlands so, you know, I wouldn't get it.

So, you never learned Dutch?

Mr. Bulthuis: No. But my dad told my grandfather on my mother's side, "Hey, you live in America, you better start learning how to speak English," because it was all Dutch, Dutch, Dutch, never any English. In church they spoke Dutch way back in those days, too.

That's why I was asking. If the church put the school together, if they were teaching Dutch.

Mr. Bulthuis: In the church there, they had Dutch services. They had an English service and a Dutch service so you could take your pick.

Did you do religion classes in the school?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, yes, always religion, every morning.

But they were in English.

Mr. Bulthuis: Always. Everything was in English.

O.K.

Mr. Bulthuis: Everything was in English. From the Lutheran school, not in the public school, but the Christian Reform, Timothy School, yes, everything was in English. There was nothing offered until you got to high school then they had Latin, you could go to Latin. Duh, for what? I'm not Italian.

So you went to a school with separate classes for every grade?

Mr. Bulthuis: Right.

So you had your own teacher.

Mr. Bulthuis: Right.

Are there any other classes that stood out to you or anything you remember about your teachers, any teachers you really liked or any teachers that were

Mr. Bulthuis: I didn't hate any of my teachers, they were all good teachers. You know, it just depends on how much you wanted to use what they were trying to teach you. But we had a couple of them that were fairly strict. I saw a couple of them, we had a reunion a few years ago and I went to it and I saw a couple of them that I remembered. They were all, you know. Of course now that we're all retired, what the heck, you know, they're all good people now. But, I can remember some of them being fairly strict. But hey, a teacher's got to be strict sometimes, you know. But my parents always said, "Hey, if he got it coming, give it to him 'cause when he comes home, he's going to get it again," so there you go. But no teacher ever raised their hand or hit anybody that I can see. So I don't have any bad feelings about any of the teachers I had.

What kind of discipline did they have?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh. I never remember any. They basically sent you out of the room, took you down to the Principal's office most of the time. That's basically what, nobody ever used any corporal punishment. When I went to the Lutheran school, they'd say, "Hey, put your hands out," and give you a whack with the ruler, we had that with the one room school. But that's the only time I ever had any kind of discipline like that.

So you went to school. It was a long school day if they had all these kids to pick up.

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, yeah.

How long was the school day? What time did school start?

Mr. Bulthuis: I think school started at nine and it got over about 2:30 pm or something like that, or 3 o'clock. So by the time we got home it was usually 4:30 or five o'clock.

You had homework?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, yes. There as very few days we never had some homework.

And what about chores around the house?

Mr. Bulthuis: Chores around the house. Well we always had chores around the house. Somebody had to, you know, you had to wash the dishes after dinner and things like that. Go down and clean out the basement, if you had a basement. We didn't have a basement, we had a cellar in our house. There was a dirt floor under there so you didn't have much to do there. But you had to go down and make sure, you know... Originally we never had a furnace in the house, so we had oil stoves and stuff like that. So that's what, these coal stoves, you know, these little pot belly stoves, that's what we heated the house with back when I was like 10, 12 years old. So when we got to be about sixteen years old, my dad got some bucks or my grandpa did, one or the other. We put a furnace in the house. Which they dug out the bottom part of the basement, the cellar, and put the furnace in there. Then we had a chore to make sure the furnace kept going. So at night, you learned how to bank the fires and keep the heat going so in the morning you could throw some more coal on there and you got some heat back in the house again. So that was one chore we had. And then when we got to be teenagers, we worked out in the field. So we had chores doing that. We were out there helping our parents, grandparents and uncles and aunts, not so much the aunts, but get the load ready to go to market so my uncle would get out at two o'clock in the morning and go down to the South Water Market and sell those vegetables so we had an income.

Did you help in the fields at all when you were in grade school?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, I don't know how old I was when I started. We were all fairly young because they always hired a lot of kids from Willow Springs when they got out of school in the summer time. We had all teenagers. I think I was probably, I might have been like 10 years old when I started out there or so, something like that. I worked out there until I got out of high school, 18, 19 years old. As a matter of fact, my parents had other businesses too, so after the farm business went down hill then we had other businesses.

What kind of businesses?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, my Dad went into the garbage business. They were in the garbage business in Homewood. Homewood Scavenger Service, they had that for a number of years. I used to get a day off of school once in a while when then needed an extra hand to go out there and help on the garbage truck. Then they got rid of that and my Dad was in the landscaping business with my uncle. My Dad ... so we did a lot of landscaping. I worked there until I went in the Army, I was 23. Then I was in the Army then I got my own stuff and I'm on my own since then.

So your parents and aunts and uncles, grandparents, they never worked for anyone else? They always only had their own business.

Mr. Bulthuis: That's right.

O.K. What was the vacation like or the holidays? What did you ?

Mr. Bulthuis: Vacation? What was that? What was a vacation? We never saw what a vacations was. I can remember, only once we went on a vacation in my whole life. And we went up in around Spooner, Wisconsin, to a lake for a week. Actually, we were there for two weeks, my Dad was there for one week. My Mom stayed with the kids.

He had to go back.

Mr. Bulthuis: He had to go back and get back to work; it was right in the middle of the summer time. He couldn't take time off work so he took a week. We were there and my uncle and my cousins were there, a couple of my cousins were there. And that was it. That was the only vacation I ever remember that we took in the summer time.

What was the reason for going on vacations since it was so rare?

Mr. Bulthuis: I think it was the fact that my mother's sister and her husband were going on vacation and he had his own business in the city. They were going up to some lake and my mother's sister, my mother had two sisters so the other one was up there. This was all her side of the family. We went on vacation up to Wisconsin. That was the only time. I was driving then, so I had to be about 18 years old. I remember that. I remember that. I had my own car, too. But I just had my car so you couldn't do what you wanted because aaaah, your mother would holler, your father would holler at you. But that was the only vacation we ever took as a family that I can remember in my life.

So when you were in grade school and high school, other than that one vacation, what did you do in the summer?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, in the summer time? There weren't that many ... You either went with the cousins that, you know, they were all older than me, I was a young guy out of all of my older cousins. I was the youngest one of the cousins and stuff like that.

O.K. You were the oldest in your family.

Mr. Bulthuis: So I would go down there. You played with your brothers and stuff like that. Or if you got lucky, maybe there was some other kids living in the neighborhood that you got to know eventually. But there weren't that many houses around us when I was a little kid. 'Til after the war there was nobody around there. It was just all adults, me and my brothers and my cousins, that was it.

So you really had your own community of just your family?

Mr. Bulthuis: That's right, that's right. Because I didn't go down to ??? & Willow Springs Rd. until 10 years old, 12 years old. You know that's a long way to go for a little kid me to go down there. My parents would never allow to go for that. So you just played with your brothers and sisters and stuff like that.

Everybody having their own business, that takes a lot of time. What did you do as far as holidays? Like Christmas?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well at Christmas we always had, we went to one of the grandpa's house and Thanksgiving we usually went to my mother's side of the family for Thanksgiving and my Dad's side for Christmas. We did that for quite a few years. Fourth of July, it was just another day, holiday. You worked a half a day and had the other half off. That's when I got older. We didn't have a holiday for 4th of July, we didn't have a holiday for Labor Day because we were working. So Labor Day was a half a day. You worked in the morning and at noon time you quit. Then once in a while my Grandpa would say, "I think I'm going to go to the Cubs baseball game today. They're going to start playing the Cardinals. I think we'll go to the ball game today." So, he would go to the ball game. I got to go once. That was way back when. That was when the Cubs stunk. That was when Hank Sauer was playing and everything. So if you know any players... Of course, they haven't improved a lot.

What about your friends?

Mr. Bulthuis: My friends now?

Your friends back then.

Mr. Bulthuis: My friends back then. I haven't seen anybody from way back then. The one good friend I had, he moved to California. Another one was a good friend, he, I don't know where he is. He married some girl from Peru. His first wife he got a divorce from. Then he married a girl from Peru. I don't know where he went from there. His brother moved to Idaho. He was a good friend, too. And one other good friend that I had was, he moved now to Michigan. He moved all around. He got married, he lived in Oak Lawn. We were friends for a long time. Oak Park, Oak Park? Worth. He lived in Worth and we were friends for a long time. He got married, had a couple of kids and all that kind of stuff. I was unmarried at the time when all this started. Now he lives in Michigan. But as far as being close with those people anymore, no, they're all gone.

Back when you were in school, your friends were your classmates?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah. Those people, I haven't seen since I graduated. I haven't seen any of those since. 'Cause I lived out here, they all lived in the city. I only have one friend that we still have that I knew her brother, the one brother that moved to Michigan, his sister is a good friend with my wife and I and we still see them pretty regularly, couple times, three, four times a year, anyway. I mean they moved to Florida, they live up in Michigan. I mean, we travel up there, when they're there, to see them. They are about the only ones. The other ones around here, we have just ones that we picked up since we're going to church.

What did you and your friends do when you were growing up for fun?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, gee whiz, used to chase girls for crying out loud. What do you think we did?

But when you were younger than that?

Mr. Bulthuis: When we were younger than that, we played baseball a lot. Did a lot of baseball. Like I said, we roller skated on the street. But we used to play ball all the time, 16 inch ball that's what we played. That's how I learned, softball, baseball, whatever. Didn't do much swimming in those days that I can remember. There was no soccer. We didn't do any hockey. We used to ice skate. We used to do some ice skating. Not a lot because we didn't have ice rinks around. All we had was a pond, maybe, and the ice was always bumpy as all get out. Park districts didn't make ice that much in those days, at least not where I lived. We didn't have a park until, shoot, I was almost married by the time we got a park by me. Pleasantdale Park. That was about things that I can remember that we did.

What about movies?

Mr. Bulthuis: Never went to a movie when I was a kid. I didn't go to a movie, I think, I got married. Never. That was against our religion to go to movies. That was a bad, bad thing when we were growing up. Oh, Oh, that's no good. But now, it's much more liberal. I don't go to many movies now. When my wife and I first got married, we used to go to a movie occasionally. Used to see a lot of Rock Hudson and Doris Day movies in them days. But that's about it. We don't go to much movies.

So you went to Timothy in Cicero?

Mr. Bulthuis: Right.

That was your grade school?

Mr. Bulthuis: Right, my high school, too.

That was high school also?

Mr. Bulthuis: They started the high school the year I graduated from grade school. They started a high school and I went to school all the way through.

So you kept going there the whole time.

Mr. Bulthuis: Kept going there the whole time.

Did you date in high school?

Mr. Bulthuis: I had a girl friend one time, two times. I had a couple of girl friends. One, she married somebody else, got a divorce, I don't know where she is now. There was one other one, too.

What kinds of things did you, where did you go on dates?

Mr. Bulthuis: Gee whiz, I can't even remember what I did when I dated. Used to, you know, always find a dark corner and do a lot smooching.

I mean, since you didn't go to movies, did you go to dances?

Mr. Bulthuis: Never went to any dances either, but we always found things to do with other couples and do things and go to, what would I say, music festivals and stuff like that. Used to like certain groups that we used to like to listen to and stuff like that. There was always something doing for church. You had young people's group and you always had to go with young couples of our own age. We used to have a married couples' group. Sandy and I, when we got married, we'd go all over and do all kinds of different things. Go to somebody's house, have progressive dinners and stuff like that which they don't hardly have anymore, we used to have a progressive dinner thing. We used to go on those kinds of things. We once went to a Jewish Synagogue, I'd never been to one when we got married so we did that with a whole bunch of young people, young married couples. We went to the synagogue snowing, pretty good snow storm we had in a long time. We outnumbered the parishioners, I think, because there weren't many there. Those are the kinds of things that we did, pretty much so.

So you were at home until you were 18. What happened when you were 18?

Mr. Bulthuis: No, I was home at 18. I stayed home until I was 23. I went in the Army at 23.

What did you do between the end of high school and going into the Army?

Mr. Bulthuis: I was working. I worked for my parents, for my Dad. I worked on the farm and worked on the landscaping business after the farming stopped going.

What did you do for the landscaping business?

Mr. Bulthuis: We put in new lawns, we cut grass, trimmed trees, anything a landscaping business does, we did it. If you needed, you know, bushes planted, all kinds of stuff like that.

Why did your family decide to get out of the farming? Was it just not profitable enough anymore?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah, it was losing profitability. What was happening was they were starting shipping more things in from California and they saw then the Randolph Street Market went down. They went to South Water Market which was all a commission house so you brought your stuff there and sold on commission. And they brought railroad cars in full of stuff. There's only one big farm left yet and it's out in Indiana. It's a big one. The guy brings in all kinds of stuff. He's got a big farm. And you had to be big. You had to be real big. So they just said, "It ain't worth it anymore," and that's the end of it.

So, basically, as transportation got better, local farming didn't pay as well?

Mr. Bulthuis: Right.

And they decided to go into the landscape business?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah, well, they went into the garbage business first that I told you about in Homewood and then after that went down then they went into landscaping. That's what they were in until they retired after that, until my Dad was like 65, 75 years old before they retired. My uncle passed away. He had cancer, prostate cancer, I believe and he died so my Dad and him were in a partnership and when my uncle died, my dad said, "That's it, I'm don." My Dad was like 70 years old already anyway, so he said "I'm done." So he sold out.

So for about 5 years you worked for your family in one capacity or another, keeping the family businesses going?

Mr. Bulthuis: That's correct. Yes.

And you said you were 23?

Mr. Bulthuis: 23, went in the Army.

Why did you go in the Army?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, they were going to draft me, so I went in. I got my notice, please report, so I went.

And that was about 1950?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah, 1950.. no it was before that. It was after the Korean War. When did the Korean War end, '53? So it had to be '53, '54, '55. Well you figure '37, '47, '57, it had to be close to '61, '62. Yeah, that's when I went in, somewhere around there.

O.K. and what did you do in the Army?

Mr. Bulthuis: I was in the Military Police Corps. I worked in, I went to Okinawa, that's where I was set and I stayed there for 18 months and then I came back and I went to Arlington, Virginia. I worked at Arlington.

What did you do there?

Mr. Bulthuis: I was still a military policeman. I was military police the whole time until I got out of there.

O.K. and your enlistment period was?

Mr. Bulthuis: I had 3 years. I volunteered. I picked regular army over... I should have taken a two year but I ...

Why should you have taken 2 years?

Mr. Bulthuis: You would have been an infantrymen and I didn't want to be in the infantry. I wanted to have nice hands without calluses on them and everything like that and be treated right by everybody 'cause you're a policeman so they always treated you right. Everybody has a little respect for you because, you know, they could get a ticket from you or whatever so I was in the military police corps and the cooks were always good to you and made sure you had a little extra if you wanted it and everything like that. It was good.

O.K. So you did your 3 years?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes.

And then you came back.

Mr. Bulthuis: And then I came back and then I got married.

When did you meet your wife?

Mr. Bulthuis: I met my wife in church three years before, a couple of years before I went in the Army.

O.K.

Mr. Bulthuis: And when I came back out, we got married.

So she was from this area as well?

Mr. Bulthuis: She was originally from Rochester, New York.

O.K.

Mr. Bulthuis: And her father was transferred here from his company and we got married. And he left here and then he took another transfer and went to Georgia so she stayed here and he moved on.

O.K. So you said she was from the same church. Does she have the same parentage as you do?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes, her dad is from, born and raised in the old country. Her mother was from English and her grandma and grandpa were from England.

So you lived in the same area where you had moved when you were at home?

Mr. Bulthuis: I only lived like about a mile from where I was born. When we bought our home, it was like a mile from where I was born. I live at practically at 79th and Wolf Road in the subdivision right off the corner there. You can't miss us if you go there. It's a little one. Got a big empty lot behind our subdivision. That's where Lyons Township High School owns all the property. It's been empty for many years. We got a nice woods. Kids used to run around and play in there and have a good time. Now they got motor cycle tracks in there and they run motor cycles, dirt bikes in there all the time. But anyway, that's where I live and that's right there.

O.K. When you and your wife got married, you lived somewhere for a couple of years? For one year.

Mr. Bulthuis: For one year. I lived in Willow Springs underneath the Park 'n' Shop grocery store, which is now

Underneath the grocery store?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes sir. They had two apartments underneath. Archer Avenue is up here and there's an incline going down, so there was a whole basement under there. Well half of the basement they made two apartments in. There we had a two bedroom apartment under there. It was nice little place really, in a way

O.K. So you were there for a year and then you bought your house.

Mr. Bulthuis: Then we bought our house, right.

O.K. So you were in familiar territory.

Mr. Bulthuis: Now I'm in familiar territory, yes. We looked at a few other places, but they were up by La Grange Hospital and stuff like that but we decided. It's all one level. It's great for us old people now because I don't have to walk up a lot of steps or anything. No second floor, it's a ranch style house so we don't have to worry about climbing stairs. That's good.

How long have you been in that house?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, let's see, we've been married 49 years so I've been there 48 years.

O.K. When you started raising a family in that house, what was the neighborhood like? Were there more kids? You said the farms were kind of disappearing.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah, well there was still a lot of empty land around us yet. I'm trying to think. Our subdivision was there. There was the houses on Wolf Road, obviously. There was something around on this side. The swimming pool was there. But there was a lot of empty property if you go further west up 79th street there was a lot of open land up there. There was still farms around that were just not being used. I don't remember, I don't think that when we bought ours there was any houses behind, I don't think... The school was there. I live right by Pleasantdale South School. So the school was there so there were houses around there. So we had some houses, there were subdivisions around us already. It was building up, it was building up. But a lot of the big houses in Burr Ridge and that, none of them were around yet. I mean, the ones over, the condominiums on 79th Street up by, what's the name of the street up there, I can't think of it, but by the shopping area there. None of that stuff was there. That was all open prairie up there.

Yeah, there was a subdivision here, subdivision there, fire station was there. So it was building up, it was building up.

O.K. Your kids, where did they end up going to school?

Mr. Bulthuis: Let's see. My oldest one, he went to Pleasantdale School the whole time. My other two, the younger, the two younger ones, my daughter and my other son, they went 3 years to, 3years? Yeah, 3 years to Pleasantdale School and then we sent them to Trinity Lutheran School for the rest of it, for the last four years.

Where you had gone and they sent you away.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes. Where they sent us away. Right and they let us back in because we were members of the church by then. Well, yeah, we were church members then. And then they all went to LT High School.

O.K. Lyons Township?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah.

As your kids were growing up, you saw changes to they way they were spending time with their friends?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, yeah, a lot more different. Much different, more mobile. They were much more mobile. We didn't. When a kid was, got to be old enough that he could get behind the wheel, he was wanting to drive. In my day there was no driving in school. You didn't learn how to drive in school, you found somebody, your grandpa, your uncle, your dad or somebody to take you out driving. That's how you got driving. Other than that, you're on your own.

What about getting a driver's license?

Mr. Bulthuis: In my day?

Yes.

Mr. Bulthuis: I don't know how I got my driver's license. I remember going for my chauffer's license; I remember that because I used to drive a truck. I used to have it, you know, for the market, and stuff like that when my uncle stopped doing it, I had to do it. I went and got a chauffer's license. How did I get my driver's license? I'm trying to think how I did that. I don't remember. I had to go for a driving test, obviously but I don't remember how or where or when. But I do remember going for my chauffer's 'cause I had to take the truck and go down to the driver's license station.

Where was it?

Mr. Bulthuis: Where did I go? I think it was on Harlem and 87th Street, I think. Some where around there anyway. So, I went, took the truck, and they took my out for a ride. Do this and that, where do you put flags and flares and all kinds of stuff like that, not like it is today, for hazardous materials and all that. I got my license, boom, that was it, no problem. But I don't remember how I got my driver's license to tell you the truth. I don't know. I don't know, I can't tell.

O.K. How did your kids spend their free time as compared to how you spent your free time?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, when they were young, they used to have a lot of friends in the neighborhood we lived in. We had a lot people our age who had kids. They were always running around with each other. You could let your children go in there and not have to worry about them because one neighbor had them and you'd say, "Hey, I can't find my kids." Oh, don't worry, they're over at my house, I'll take care of it. That was it. It was a great neighborhood. All them people were our age so it was great. They used to go to the park behind our house there, we've got Pleasantdale Park behind us, too. They used to play ball all the time. Play ball, ride their bikes, play ball in the front yard, play ball in the back yard. They were always playing ball. Then they had their little squabbles. They played street hockey, them kids did. They hung around at the park a lot. They used to go to Pleasantdale Park, Gary Schaffer was the recreation guy. He was great with the kids.

So they had some organized programs.

Mr. Bulthuis: They had a lot of organized programs there where the kids were. They had floor hockey and they had this program or that program. It was good.

A lot different than when you were a kid.

Mr. Bulthuis: Hah, there was no park district there when I was growing up. There was a farm when I was growing up.

The area also developed a lot from the time you were a kid until the time your kids were in school. What do remember changing? The roads changed obviously.

Mr. Bulthuis: The roads changed. There was much more traffic on the road because, like I said, when I was a kid you could roller skate and that. Today, you couldn't do that, today, you'd get run over by a bus. That's the biggest thing I noticed. They built so much stuff around us now, that, there's traffic on Wolf Road, it almost needs another lane sometimes.

What about the expressways.

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, I can remember when the expressway went in. I was, I must've been around 18 years old when it started going in, 19, somewhere around there.

Which expressway?

Mr. Bulthuis: 294.

294 O.K.

Mr. Bulthuis: Or was it I 55? I 55 is the first one. I 55 is the first one, I remember that going in. 294 came through there and when they made the curve there, they didn't take any of the farm land but they did pile all the clay that they dug out, all the dirt and everything, right next to our, to my grandpa's farm. And then I can remember all the, when the rains came, washed all the clay, all the clay washed in his property and ruined his acreage. Well, he was really hot about that. I don't know whatever the outcome was on that. They never moved the dirt pile so I don't think he won anything out of it. I remember there was houses right along side there and when the road came through, they took all those houses out and a lot of them had to be moved on 72nd or

whatever around that area. They had to move all the houses were either knocked down or people bought them and moved to another lot, I can remember that.

O.K. Did the building of the roads, of the expressway, bring any more work to people?

Mr. Bulthuis: I don't know. I don't think it brought a lot of work to any of us that lived on the road. I can remember where I 55 runs through there now, that used to be 71st Street, you'd go right down that way.

O.K.

Mr. Bulthuis: And there was a stop sign at Wolf Rd. and these trucks, they'd come down... There was a stop sign for Wolf Rd. but not for 71st St. They'd come off of old 66, go right on 71st and hit La Grange Road and they'd get on there.. You could hear them trucks coming 'cause they were flying like a bird because they had to get up this incline and so they had to shift gears so rrrrum, rrrrum. You could hear them rrrrummm,vrrroom and up they'd go man. You'd say, "Wow, what kind of truck is that going there?" and all that kind of stuff when we were working out in the field. I can remember that. But the expressways, I don't remember that they did a lot of work, anything for us, to benefit use at all. I mean, they were just there to get people from one place to the other.

Did your family start using them in order to get market or did they just keep going the way they had?

Mr. Bulthuis: I don't remember ever being on the expressway with my parents. I started using them when I had my own family but that was it. Nobody wanted to pay the tolls in them days. Hey, if you were making 25, 30 bucks a week back in those days, you were making pretty good money. I can remember, come to work, when I was working at the fire department, say, what are you making? I'm making \$10,000. a year, for crying out loud and here you're working for the fire department making 5, what the hell, that's like shooting yourself in the foot. 'Cause wages were, well, you know what it was like then. It's going back that way in a lot of ways, I think.

You mentioned Route 66.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes.

That's changed a lot.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes, it has. Where is it? You have to find it in different places.

What was Route 66 like back in its hey day?

Mr. Bulthuis: Its hey day – I don't remember its hey day so much. I remember going down there. Well that was a major thorough fare compared to what it is today. They used to carry a lot, a lot of traffic. They used to have some really big accidents over on Joliet and Wolf Road, boy. Man, I can, being a young kid, I could go there and see a semi truck laying on its side and people getting killed and everything over there. It used to be bad.

Why was it such a bad intersection?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, you had, you got the cemetery to the right, that's got that Civil War thing on it. You had to gage your stop to get across. Because it was only a stop sign there, there was no signal light

there, it was a stop sign. You're talking about 1940's, 45, 50 cars. Not like today where they got 6 on a ???, 4 on a ???. So these truck would be coming down around that corner, there was a little curve way back up a little ways, and phooof, they were shooting down to get up, they gotta go up the hill. And if you didn't make it, there you were. You got hit.

How many lanes in each direction?

Mr. Bulthuis: I remember, I can remember there was only two lanes way back when, if I remember right.

Do you remember anything about how fast cars were driving then?

Mr. Bulthuis: No, I don't remember that. If they were coming down Joliet Road, they were going pretty good. They were probably doing at least 50 miles per hour, compared to the rest of us that are doing about 20 going across the street. They were all hoofing pretty good. I can remember one of my friends trying to come around there. And he had bought a newer car so he wanted to test it out. So we were on Archer, we were on Joliet Road. I think it was a four lane road, I changed my mind about that. I remember when I was young, come around that corner this way, and he was going so stinking fast, he had all he could do to keep it on the road. Lucky we didn't get killed, when I think about it. Because he was putting on the breaks, that thing was bouncing across the road, oy. And we must've been doing about 65, 70 miles an hour then. So he would come around that corner, he'd go pretty good.

Other parts of this area have really changed, too. Argon Labs went in. Do you remember that going in?

Mr. Bulthuis: That was in before my time. My father could do it. If he was alive, he could tell you about that because he could tell you all about it because that was his time, when he was young that that was put in.

Did you ever go to the speedway?

Mr. Bulthuis: Santa Fe Speedway?

That's right.

Mr. Bulthuis: Are you kidding me? For crying out loud. Yeah, I put a few years in there.

Yeah?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah, I put a few years in there, working there.

You worked there, too?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yeah, I did a little work in there. I was married already when I started working over there.

What did you do there?

Mr. Bulthuis: I used to be a, we were firemen. We put out the fires in all the stock cars when they got smashed up and they got caught on fire, we used to put the fires out. And then when the track got all sloshy from the radiators running and that, we used to spread dirt on the wet spots so that it wouldn't be so slippery and stuff like that. That's basically what we did. We helped light the fireworks a couple of times when they had fire works, you know, and stuff like that.

How long did you do that?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, I think I worked there, I didn't work as long as those Kefhill boys did. I was there probably 4 or 5 years. And then I said, "That's enough of this stuff for me." My wife worked there, too. She sold tickets there.

What other type of work did you do?

Mr. Bulthuis: Me?

Yeah.

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, at Santa Fe?

Well, at Santa Fe or elsewhere.

Mr. Bulthuis: I only did two things. One, I worked on the farm with my parents, I worked on the landscaping, I worked in the Army, did whatever the Army did. I came out. I worked on the garbage truck for my Dad and my uncle. I went on the fire department and I stayed there for 46 years.

And which fire department was it?

Mr. Bulthuis: Pleasantview.

Pleasantview, O.K.

Mr. Bulthuis: So I've been on... I was a volunteer fireman there. When I was 21, I joined the fire department.

O.K.

Mr. Bulthuis: So I was on the fire department then I went in the Army for 23 until I was 26. I came out, I was **????** they put me back on or they let me back on and I stayed there. I was a volunteer for a while and then I went on full time and then I stayed as a full time fireman the rest of my career.

How did you see the fire fighting change over the years?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, my. It's like night and day. When I was on there, our training day was Monday, when I was a volunteer. I went on full time, that was still our training day. We didn't do any other training then as far as fire fighter training. Once in a while, occasionally. But basically, what we did, we were there to keep, to make sure we went out on ambulance runs and whatever kind of fire runs there were and kept that equipment in top notch, working order. So we did a lot of maintenance work, a lot of cleaning work, maintenance on the buildings, maintenance on whatever we did. We were like, in a way, janitors. It was always, it was a good job.

What was your specific role in the department?

Mr. Bulthuis: I was a, well, in the beginning, I started as a fireman, right down **????** Then I got promoted to Lieutenant, then I got promoted to Captain, then I got promoted to Deputy Chief and my last five years, I was Chief and I retired when I was 57 years old.

How has the territory covered by that department changed?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, yeah. It's gotten a lot smaller by annexations. When I joined Pleasantview as a volunteer, we used to go all the way to 47th Street. Let's see, there was part of La Grange, part of Western Springs now. We used to go all the way to East Avenue. So it's gotten smaller. Willow Springs has taken part of us. The tax base, I don't know how much that's changed but the area has shrunk substantially.

It was an unincorporated area and the surrounding communities have taken pieces of it?

Mr. Bulthuis: That's right. It was unincorporated. They started the fire department because there was no fire department and La Grange wouldn't come out there neither would Springs so they had, "Who's going to cover?" So they made a contract up. There was a vote of the people to start forming this thing. So then they had, who was it? They McCook or Hodgkins or whoever had them cover until they got their own equipment and their own stuff and their own people trained and set up.

And when was that?

Mr. Bulthuis: 1940, 41, 46, 47, somewhere around there. 48 somewhere around there.

How many firemen originally staffed this?

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh, it was all volunteers. So whatever guys you could get. If you could get 20 guys, you took 20. If you could get 50 you'd take 50. Whoever, whatever. Because you never knew who would be home. 'Cause everybody's working so you took as many guys as you could get.

When did it move from volunteer?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, let's see. The first full time man was the Fire Chief. And then they added one more guy. Let's see. I'm trying to think. When I was there, when I joined in 1950, '58. When I joined in 1958, they had one, two, four people working there full time. The Chief, the Captain and two firemen. That was 1958. I'm assuming the Chief was there probably 3 or 4 years before that so probably mid '50's some place, '52, '53, '51, that would be my guess. I mean, I could go and find the record where it is.

As that fire department district shrunk, the area around here was really building up.

Mr. Bulthuis: That's right.

A lot of housing came in in the '60's & '70's.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes.

What do you remember of the all the building that went on? How it affected the roads ...?

Mr. Bulthuis: I don't know how it affected the roads so much, but the building. When the fire department was first started it was mostly all prairie around there. I mean, La Grange Highlands wasn't La Grange Highlands, that was Vial Farms, that was, there were wheat fields and stuff like that there. I can remember seeing that when I was a kid. La Grange Road, too, there was hardly nothing there. They had, what do you call it? Drive In theater was there.

Where was the Drive In theater?

Mr. Bulthuis: It was right where, let's see, where Home Depot is now, if you're familiar with La Grange Road. Home Depot.

I don't go much on La Grange Rd.

Mr. Bulthuis: The Home Depot where the big shopping plaza is there. White Castle is across the street and stuff like that. The show was right there.

The Drive In Theater.

Mr. Bulthuis: 66 Drive In Theater it was called. But change wise, as far as building wise. William Tell was built up there, you know, 6 story. Man, that was a big for us. Wilshire apartment buildings in Indian Head Park. I mean we didn't have anything to go inside and fight inside fires. That was a volunteer fire men, they don't go inside that much if they can help. Today they do but not in those days. So, you didn't have the equipment to go there, so you had to do all kinds of training to learn how to go and do it. For us, that was an experience, but we survived it. That's what I remember.

When you think back when you were growing up, obviously you needed clothes. Did your parents buy them? Did your mom sew them? Did your grandma sew them?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, clothes from the old days. Well, I can tell you I wore a lot of shirts made out of old chicken feed sacks. Pajamas made out of chicken feed sacks and stuff like that. Hand me down clothes from my cousins, I can remember that, too. Used to get a new suit, it was always a hand me down. I mean, in the winter time, it was real thin for us because there was no income.

Right

Mr. Bulthuis: Because there was no farm, nothing growing. We're not making any bucks. So the grocery would carry my mom and dad. They'd say, "We'll pay you when we get the money." Guy would bring some groceries over, stuff like that. When the money started coming in, then they'd pay it back.

So as you grew older, it was also more available, different types of clothing became more available.

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, I can remember, we used to have a guy come down the street carrying a suit case, a sales guy. He carried all kinds of little knickknacks in the suit case. You know, shoe strings, needles and thread, you name it, whatever, tweezers and all kinds of little stuff in there. And sometimes he'd have a shirt or two or three or whatever. But that's what used to come, I don't know, once a month or something. He took the, obviously he took the bus and then he'd come down. This guy's carrying a big suitcase that was like yea, like that. It was a good, heavy son of a gun. This guy was no spring chicken either and he's carrying this stuff. And I can remember my mom, I'm a little kid, and my mom said, "I'll take this, I'll take that. How much?" Ah, 50 cents, 75 cents, whatever.

Shopping from home was a little different.

Mr. Bulthuis: You know, stuff like combs and brushes and different things like that. You know, it's like you see in the old days in a wagon where you had the pots and pans in the wagon going western. Well, this was practically the same but the guy walked with a suitcase. He carried all kinds of small items, that I remember.

But getting back to the fire department stuff. Yeah, I remember, I can remember the big stuff going in. And we had to learn how to deal with. We didn't have the equipment, so. Tax payers had to buy new fire trucks and stuff like that so. We didn't have much back in them days. We didn't have half the... In the old days, there were no air packs, like they have now. Every guy wears an air pack, everybody's got his own. In those days, forget it, there was no such thing. You stuck your head in there and you went and got it. You swallowed the smoke and that's probably why you see a lot of guys probably got lung cancer and stuff like that. From the smoke, well, you know it's all the plastics and everything. And the thing that we've seen over the years is that more stuff is made with plastics in different kinds of products like that are much more toxic which they're getting on top of it now but all that kind of stuff. Those are the kind of things I remember from that.

So you if you were used to fighting fires from the outside, you didn't have to go in so much and buildings started getting larger, too.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes.

And then you started getting the malls. You didn't have to go out to Oak Brook or Yorktown. That really changed people's shopping habits.

Mr. Bulthuis: Oh yea.

And the way people did things. Just all the mobility really affected people's lives.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yea, oh yea. It affects the services that are provided also. I mean, look at the police departments, they had to put on more people because of more stuff that's going on their community. And the fire department is the same way because, you know, you get these things, you have to have this kind of equipment, that kind of equipment. So, hey, we better find some bucks that we can do this stuff with. So, well, we can't do this, this year, but, we'll do it next year. In the old days, you never had long term plans. Now they got long term plans. Oh, we got to have a 5 year plan, a ten year plan. So you plan, you say, well, we need to buy this, we going to get that, we gotta get this. And then, in between, you always got something that unexpected comes up, so now you gotta deal with that. So, it's like any government body, it's the government, it's the same thing.

Right. You saw also some of the events that happened around here. There was a ???? airline crash.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes, I was in the military for that so, I can't say anything.

It was right here.

Mr. Bulthuis: It was right here, down the street, not too far. Our department was there but I was in the Army, so I wasn't around. But I have seen some different kinds of crashes, some big crashes on 294, in the fog. Other ones, I've seen a number. I remember the first guy, when I 55 was opened, I can remember the first guy that got killed on I 55. I was on that call. I remember that. Guy fell asleep and ran right into the bridge, right smack into the side of it.

That was the first fatality?

Mr. Bulthuis: The first fatality on I 55.

When was that?

Mr. Bulthuis: Boy, I don't know. When was I 55 put in? Was just opened, the road was just opened, there was hardly any traffic on the road.

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Mr. Bulthuis: Whatever year that was, I can't tell you. And I've seen a number of other fatalities here and there. Another one on I 55, yea, it was on I 55 underneath the toll road bridge. Where the toll road goes over, three kids got killed on that thing. I remember that one, too, because I was on that call, too. That was not a good one either. Guy got onto the expressway going the wrong way, ran smack dab, head on into this car load of young kids. Killed three of them. One guy, I think one kid made it. That was not a happy, that was not a happy thing. And I've see a couple of care fires on there with people getting killed. Also on there. Got burned up in the fire. That was not a good either. Your bringing back these lousy memories.

Sorry about that. You lived in a community, basically, of all your relatives.

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes.

And you grew up with those close connections. How about your kids? Have they grown up in such close proximity or are they spread out more?

Mr. Bulthuis: No. They didn't grow up in the same kind of environment as far as stuff, you know, with cousins and stuff like that. Although, we had, since my mother and father were alive and when my parents passed away, we've been having large family reunions in my yard for the last, well, my dad's been gone 8 or 9 years. So, we've had this, last year, we stopped having them because it's too much work for me to do because everything is in my yard. I have to do it all and with very little help from the outside. So, I said, "That's it, I can't do it anymore." But anyway, the kids were not in that kind of environment, they have their own friends outside of family and stuff like that. They see their cousins and know their cousins because of the family get-togethers that we had. But other than that, they don't socialize that much with their family.

Do your kids live nearby?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes. One that I have lives by Midway Airport, the oldest one, married with two children. And my daughter lives in Oak Lawn and she's married with a child. And my youngest child lives in Palos Park, Palos Hills, I think it is. He's got two kids and he's divorced. 3 kids and he's divorced. His oldest one's in the military.

So your kids settled still in the southwest suburbs?

Mr. Bulthuis: Yes.

But seems to be sprawling out a little bit more already.

Mr. Bulthuis: Right, right.

So you've seen a lot of changes happen and it seems like the mobility that came about really caused so much change.

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, you know, everybody gets a car today when their young and they're going all over and people travel twice as much. You know, you got to remember I was born and raised World War II. You know, people never traveled anywhere. Most of these guys in the military never saw anything until they went in the military. When they came back, ahhh, freedom of movement. Let's go buy a car, travel. And that's what's happened. So now, the kids are taking from the parents and the parents do whatever again. You know, hey, I want my kids to have it better than I had. That's the way it is today. You want your kids to have better than you had.

So with all these changes that you've seen, what are your thoughts? What do you miss that isn't around any more? What are you not sorry to see go?

Mr. Bulthuis: I personally, if I had it to do over again, I'd like to see it like back, if we had it, back in the 50's where we were a little more community oriented stuff. I know that towns have stuff but a lot of people, a lot of the neighbors don't talk to each other. You know, this guy lived next door to me for 20 years, I never talked to the guy or stuff like that. You know, I know both of my neighbors; I know all my neighbors around me. Because, I was like, I didn't have any neighbors when I was a little kid except cousins. But now when I moved into my house, I got neighbors, I got friends. You know, we get together, we have 4th of July together or we have Memorial Day together or we just walk across the street and have a beer with each other, you know.

It's a real sense of community.

Mr. Bulthuis: Right. You know, that's the biggest thing that I see. Most people never, don't even bother talking to their neighbor.

Right, right. What changes are you grateful for? What changes do you think are positive?

Mr. Bulthuis: Well, I don't know, not positive, I got older. Wish I could go back to 30 years old again.

Don't we all.

Mr. Bulthuis: No, I think, you know, a sense of community. I mean, our community is still good even though I complain about it a lot. I don't know if there's anything really that I'd want to see change. I mean change is going to come. I don't know. I really don't have an opinion on it one way or the other, to tell you the truth.

O.K. Is there anything we haven't talked about that you'd like to mention?

Mr. Bulthuis: No, I think you covered everything from my brain that I can think of right now. It doesn't work as good as it used to. A lot of things I forget very easily, you know. You gotta walk there, if I can go and get something, I turn around and say, "What did I come here for?" and I walk back away and so then I get 15 feet and oh yea, then I gotta go back again. That's the kind of thing that's going on in my life.

O.K. Well in that case, we're going to go off record.

Mr. Bulthuis: That's good.

Thank you.

Mr. Bulthuis: Alright.