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Jim Baima Oral History Interview

Gavin Trowbridge, Interviewer

Collinsville, Illinois

October 10, 2018

Gavin Trowbridge (GT): Uh this is Gavin Trowbridge interviewing uh Jim Baima?

Jim Baima (JB): Correct.

GT: Um in Collinsville, Illinois um so you said you've lived here your whole life?

JB: Correct.

GT: Um what was it like growing up here?

JB: Well in the area where my house is right now and of course I just lived across the street when I was born. Uh Grandparents, parents really came from Italy they settled um in this area and it was an Italian community. When you cross the tracks...

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: ...coming to my house, on this side every road was ... made up of Italian immigrants. One came over and then another one'd come over and they all came over to work in the coal mines.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: Cause there... Italy was so bad at the time. So I grew up with children of Italian immigrants, no one really spoke... the adults, very few of them spoke English most of them spoke our dialect from Northern Italy, from the Piedmont region

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: The Piedmont region is the North part of Italy, Northern part of Italy and that's where most of the Italians in Collinsville migrated from; and the reason they came, Doctor Lumaghi who lived in St. Louis had a coal mine in Collinsville. Collinsville Lumaghi Coal Mine, and he would call back to his region where he came from and it was the Piedmont region, so people came over to work in his mine. So, it was just a bunch of little Italian families with young kids and we all played in the fields it was a farming area, everyone had chickens, cattle, self-sufficient. So that's basically it, it was much better playing in the field, ball, and in the woods than with computers and TVs and [unintelligible]

GT: Yeah [chuckle] Yeah [chuckle]

JB: Than we have now, I must say a time gone by.

GT: Yeah um

JB: [Well a lot?] Right and the street I'm on, Belmont, and it's called Belmont and actually in the day it was called Bellamonte. Bella is nice monte is mountain, nice mountain. As you noticed you came up a little hill.

GT: Yeah, it's pretty hilly yeah.

JB: So that's what it was, the other hill is Peila hill, my Grandmother's maiden name was Peila

GT: Oh

JB: so that's why that why that was called. There's uh uh about every road Barberis Lane they're all named after Italians. Right now most of them are deceased, uh a lot of the kids my age, I was about the youngest one out here at the time [unintelligible] hadn't moved out of the area. Collinsville really didn't wanna have much to do with Italians [unintelligible] that's why we were all on this side of the tracks.

GT: Mm-hmm.

JB: And uh now they have an Italian Fest so, there's not many and you know there's second, third, fourth generations but a lot of the kinda the history has been forgotten. I was very fortunate that my parents and grandparents kept me informed and we always had a family connection in Italy.

GT: yeah

JB: And I still go back, of course aunts, uncles, I'd have cousins now.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: My father was from an old town called San Carlo Canavese and my Mom's from Cuneo, very close to the French border.

GT: Okay um [interviewee coughs] I noticed you said they didn't really wanna have anything to like the town didn't wanna have much to do with Italians.

JB: Well yeah ya know go like New York, Chicago, everyone has their own little communities.

GT: Yeah

JB: [Interviewee starts banging his hand down on the table] German, Italian, and everyone stuck to themselves.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: and uh I just remembered my Grandpa they all had vineyards out here and made wine and of course a

lot of people from town came out to buy wine [laughter] So uh. But no they stuck together they could speak the same language, they ate the same food, they knew the same people in Italy so it was more like that rather than throwing rocks.

GT: Ye- well yeah [laughs] um but I think that's kind of like a well a lot of cities are... just happen to be like that. Just cause of how things were they were pretty uh

JB: Oh Sure

GT: you know they're still somewhat... segregated I guess, even though its that's [interviewee coughs] the term you use its not pretty but

JB: Oh even when I go to St. Louis I migrate to the Italian Hill you know it's just like

GT: Yeah. [laughs]

JB: Okay I wanna go

GT: Yeah exactly

JB: some place where there's Italian stores, there's Italian uh uh restaurants. It's just that you migrate to what you're accustomed too and what you like.

GT: Yeah

JB; Now you saw that book right there. Its ah my grandp- it's ah a book they used to learn English.

GT: That is [interviewee coughs unintelligible]

JB: Have you open it up it's surely interesting.

GT: oh [interviewer opens the book and some old newspaper clippings start to slide out, and chuckles]

JB: There's some [unintelligible] papers in there.

GT: Yeah I didn't know.

JB: They had to uh you know they all became citizens.

GT: yeah

JB: and uh but they had to learn the English language. I remember my grandfather when I was in high school, my friends would be around and my uncle would be talking to everybody and they'd say okay what's your uncle saying? And I'd say he's speaking English you just gotta listen to him [laughing a little] it's his

GT: Yeah

JB: Accent [coughs] well my gran- one grandmother never spoke, English very little so that's where I learned most of the language by... staying at her house after school.

GT: Mm-hmm... yeah just exposure

JB: Yeah

GT: over time [unintelligible]

JB: when you're little you pick it up and go to Italy it takes about two weeks and it starts coming back.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: But we speak a Piedmontese dialect

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: but now a lot of the dialects in Italy are move- are dying out. They want a universal Italian so if you go from the North to the South,

Both: there's no confusion

GT: Yeah.

JB: right. So they always say I'm speaking the old Italian. Well that's all I know and that's it.

GT: Yeah um [chuckles] yeah, I think its uh that that'd be a daunting task trying to I mean like even... here in America like there are so many... I gue- yeah, I guess we'd have dialects too.

JB: I... right if you go down south sometimes

GT: yeah

JB: You have to listen uh to a person, but these words are entirely different too. And after the unification of Italy they had to so they I forget how what year what it was, but they said all legal documents have to be in this [interviewee slams something on the desk for emphasis] particular dialect. I think they use the Lombardi, don't quote me on that but that was the official language then. So now if you go north, south everyone can communicate. Where

GT: Yeah

JB: my parents couldn't speak to someone in the Southern part of Italy, had no idea what they were saying.

GT: That's kind of... kind of crazy when you think about [chuckles] just like that like its still your same country but you have no clue at all

JB: Well so many little bitty villages and they're in mountains and they just stuck right there

GT: Yeah

JB: and that dialect stuck [interviewee pounds hand on desk again] and Cuneo like my mom and where we're from is close to the French border so there are a lot of French words in our dialect. [unintelligible]

GT: [unintelligible] influence.

JB: Mm-hmm so it's just, it's interesting.

GT: Yeah um do you remember when the like when the first uh Italian Fest?

JB: I do remember but I couldn't quote the date it was somewhere in the

GT: I think it was like

JB: early Eighties? I'm saying.

GT: Yeah it was like eighty... I wanna say nine maybe?

JB: Okay so you're testing me then? [laughter] no

GT: [laughter] No its fine [more laughter]

JB: no I knew it was in the 80's I remember when it came around and we kinda participated but a lot of the food we have is pizzas. my parents, grandparents when they came to America they didn't even know what a pizza was. I still remember my grandfather saying what's a pizza pie?

GT: [chuckles]

JB: They just didn't have [laughter] 'em there and it's just grown and when you do go to Italy a lot of their, not like the pizzas [stack of papers was passed by the microphone] we have here. So yeah, I do remember when it came around, when it came through here. And we have a bocce ball tournament and my grandfather and my father have both been Illinois state champions. That's my grandfather's plaque [pointed off the the wall to the left of him where he kept the trophies] and I think it was in the early in the 30's when he won uh state champion and my father's is that uh cup right there he won in the 70's. And that basket by the lamp on the floor are bocce balls

GT: [interviewer turns away from the microphone a bit and the interviewee leaned over the desk to point and drowned out the interviewer]

JB: that they bright from Italy and they're made out of African an an African wood, their not the synthetic type you get now those are really the

GT: Yeah

JB: and we say Bocce in our dialect I know a lot of people say "bahchee" now.

GT: Yeah I-I didn't know which to say [unintelligible]

JB: No we say bocce and now most of the people in Collinsville with still say bocce rather than "bahchee".

GT: Well that's good. Not a uh in St. Louis and I kn- know it offends some people but like ah it's just I'm used to it a lot of towns with French

JB: Oh yeah

GT: and no one say- everyone you know everyone says Belfountain not Bellefontaine

JB: fontaine, right.

GT: um which... I maybe I should have a problem with that but uh [laughter] anytime someone does say Bellefontaine I just kinda look at em like ya sound a little pretentious a little bit.

JB: A little bit there right.

GT: Even though you shouldn't it is a

Both: French town.

JB: The influence of the French in St. Louis of course and Collinsville of course, they all worked in the coal mines. and that was an important thing when they came here cause our country coal saved the US World War Two, I guess World War One, manufacturing and so my father uh actually when to Ranken technical college which is kinda unusual for that period of time during the Depression and graduated from there and uh uh then when he went back into mining the Peabody's sent him he became a mine inspector and rescue and he had all kind of certificates of whatever from mine rescue...so....

GT: Yeah I've uh [chuckles] I can't imagine if the student loans were as bad as they were now [chuckles] if they were like that in the Depression oh god

JB: Oh I know I can't [unintelligible] look my grandfather he actually had it was called contract mining, they got the repairing rights if [unintelligible] and they dug their own shaft and mined their own coal and when they had the mine going he would sell rights to people like okay [slams desk] you wanna work in my mine? You can you know you work in it and there's a percentage or whatever

GT: [unintelligible] like letting people work off your land or whatever?

JB: Right. my grandfather did quite well during that period of time. They sunk their own mines, and that's what was called contract mining. So yeah my dad yeah he took the street car he said from Collinsville all the way to Ranken. And uh I, he graduated in '29 and there was a the big tornado of St. Louis I can't remember the date on that and he was at Ranken when it hit and uh all the streetcars and everything was shut down and he had to walk from Ranken [slams fist] all the way to the river to get a street car that was operating so he could come back to Collinsville and he said he remembers the fronts of buildings all torn off and the debris but uh thattornado hit when he was at Ranken.

GT: Yeah that's gotta be just... I mean one having to walk through that would just suck but also just like see- like just walking through that and seeing all that has gotta just be like I can't even like it's humbling

JB: No he said it was crazy what you know it was amazing what happened to all those buildings that in that short period of time that collapsed so anyway I brought that up and it has nothing to do with it.

GT: [laughter]

JB: That picture on the wall up there ah in Collinsville, and it was this at the bottom of the hill here everybody was Italian on it and they had a uh uh clubhouse. and those are all my father's in that, his brother and the young men around here that was the Italian... Collinsville Italian Club.

GT: Okay so uh sorta like a like how churches have men's clubs?

JB: Yeah, yeah but all families would get together and usually on Sunday and every other Sunday or whatever and they had food and you know the salami and cheese and the others played Bocce ball and we played in the creek or play ball and women would play cards but they built up a clubhouse there. And it's kinda strange to say it but they called themselves the Dago Reds. Dago not being a good name for Italians, but since they were all Italians and they called it that. The reds I have no idea [slams a book on the table] but uh they all uh that was the name of the club. And that was the Italian [slams book] club [slams book] and all the men and women from this area that were Italians were there about every other weekend.

GT: Uh is the ah club house still there?

JB: No it's, it was at the bottom of Peila Hill like I said that was my grandmother's maiden name and that ground has been sold. We still have on top of Peila Hill we still have [slams desk] four and a half acres and my grandparents' house they built when they came from Italy. His broth- [thumps desk] my uncle's house and we rent those out so.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: we still hang on to some property

GT: yeah

JB: and the wine cellars.

GT: [laughs] Yeah there you go.

JB: [laughs] We still have the wine cellars- every house has a wine cellar.

GT: Um I um yeah I noticed um I looked back at uh I went to the website for this year's Italian Fest and it has um an archive of some of their old websites and uh I noticed the events have change a little bit over the years. Um a lot of the earlier ones did have you know they had wine making um but I noticed like this year didn't have one. Um it stops at like 2005 so I don't anything farther than that.

JB: I, I belong to the Italian American club and uh I know a lot [unintelligible] I know every Italian food that was made in Collinsville [slams book] and I hadn't heard of that before, you know [laughs] and it's just kinda like a money-making thing. As a matter of fact I just printed out the amici newsletter, means the friends and uh that's the club I belong to and that kinda tells you what's going on Italian wise in our area and St. Louis uh we bring in uh the top uh movies from Italy every year

GT: I yeah uh I saw that

JB: and they're played at usually at WashU or SWIC and uh there's Italian classes that you could take.

GT: I didn't notice...I did not know that that's...

JB: Ah right, uh they sometimes are on campuses at SIUE they're non-credited and you can take accredited ones. These are non-credited [thumps desk] lotta times there just taught at the library or in town in Collinsville but it's a neat class to take just to learn basic Italian.

GT: Uh yeah I was about to ask if it was uh language or history.

JB: well you know she does a lot of you know verbs and until you study languages, have you ever had Spanish or Latin or anything?

GT: Uh I took Spanish, thought it was hard, takin German now, Spanish is very easy.

Both: [laughter]

JB: Germ- easy right. Especially if you know Italian, but

GT: oh yeah

JB: conjugating verbs I hate verbs [laughs]

GT: Oh yeah yeah

JB: But that's always Owen[?], she's big on that and I guess you have to know it. But I got up to the conversational. The reason I took it that's true Italian and I speak a dialect. And I wanted to learn the true Italian. So it was kinda fun for me to take it.

GT: Yeah um but yeah in uh Germany has a ridiculous amount of dialects.

JB: Boy it's hard to say some of those words.

GT: Yeah but-

JB: I just came back from Greece.

GT: Yeah I h-

JB: I was there two weeks.

GT: and got uh got stuck cause of the uh bad weather?

JB: The hurricanes

GT: yeah

JB: We were stuck on Santorini we were stuck on [thumps table] Mykonos, I was with Trafalgar Tours they finally we were supposed to sail [thumps table] they got a private jet, they flew us to Santorini everything was fine [thumps desk] government shutdown the sea again so we couldn't get back to Athens where we started...

GT: Yeah

JB: So we could fly out and we missed [thumps desk] our flight. So, we ended up staying three more days which is okay ya know be stuck in Santorini three more days and Athens that's all right. So were still working on insurance and our extra money for the flight but Trafalgar took everything. [moves papers] But what I was getting at is the [thumps desk] Greek alphabet and [moves papers] pronouncing [thumps desk] those words, that's a challenge.

GT: [Laughs] Yeah I bet.

JB: So

GT: But yeah actually I had we were just in German class and I was watching news and uh I [stammers] It didn't look as bad as a hurricane I just thought like hmm that's real bad ... wind or something...but...

JB: No it got rough. There were some pretty big seas and ah my my sons were calling me and they saw that [unintelligible] and he said what's a medcal? And that's what they called it there, medcal [thumps desk] cal [thumps desk] Mediterranean cyclone.

GT: Okay

JB: So but when I was in Mykonos I'd walked around with my fingers, how windy it was on my glasses

GT: [laughs]

JB: to hold them on my head.

GT: Jeeze

JB: [laughs] And so it was windy.

GT: Yeah that's gotta be bad. I mean [laughs] the windiest place I've ever been is actually SIUE.

JB: Oh it's oh yeah cold

GT: Yeah

JB: Walkin' from parking lot

GT: Mm-hmm cause I remember I actually lost- I almost lost my hat [laughs] my first year there cause I...

JB: Oh yeah

GT: ...walkin up a hill and it just blew straight off my head.

JB: I went after papers before up there.

GT: [laughs]

JB: Yeah.

GT: Yeah. But uh um so you said you were a teacher?

JB: For a while yeah, then I went into union work.

GT: Mm-hmm um where did you teach at?

JB: uh Southern Illinois, a small town and then I taught some night classes at S- ... well at SWIC now but it was Belleville Area College then.

GT: Yeah

JB: So it was basic design classes.

GT: Oh okay

JB: But I am a graduate of SIUE...

GT: Um

JB: ...and they just called me yesterday for some money.

Both: [laughter]

JB: So

GT: Yeah

JB: I told them I'm retired now, I'm I've paid my s- My oldest son graduated from SIUE also.

GT: Hmm

JB: So were all graduates from there.

GT: There you go. Um yeah I've got a uh uncle that graduated backI mean this would've been back before they had dorms so...this would've been a while [stops]

JB: There did, well had dorms when I was up there, over by ... the lake [cross talk] they didn't like on campus, the ones over there [cross talk stops]

GT: [cross talk] Oh yeah that would've been- right yeah ... yeah [crosstalk stops]

JB: I'll tell you how long ago it was a full- a- we were on quarters not semesters. There was fall quarter, winter quarter, spring quarter, quarter then

GT: Yeah

JB: Summer quarters of course [thumps desk] and a full load was 82 dollars and 50 cents.

GT: That...

JB: [laughs]

GT: ...would be real nice [laughs]

JB: It would be nice but you know that was a hunk of money back then [cross talk] but I keep thinking it's like eighty-two fifty a quarter.

GT: [laughs] But well yeah, and it's like any time people think back to like- oh yeah it was this but it's like that sounds great, but

JB: It's all relative.

GT: You gotta take yeah it's with inflation it's the exact same basically.

JB: 'Cause I know when my son went I said boy it sure went up a lot ...

GT: yeah

JB: Since I was there.

GT: Yeah well and college is supposed to get like ... within the next few generations it's supposed to you know it's gonna increase, so ...

JB: Oh sure and it's

GT: yeah.

JB: everything else does so

GT: yeah

JB: it's still the same.

GT: yeah exactly.

JB: a good deal.

GT: Yeah when you hear it it's you're like that sounds unreasonable, but then you think well gas, everything's gonna increase, taxes all that so ... yeah.

JB: That's why you need a good job so you can make a lot of money.

GT: [laughs] Yeah exactly

JB: [laughs] So you can pay.

GT: Yeah um ... do you think that the Italian Fest is important in helping people to connect like with their heritage people who maybe can't go over to Italy or don't know if they have relatives over there or if it's more of just kind of a um fun uh diversion?

JB: I don't think there's any really history involved in it they there's a little exhibit at the uh library they'll put some literature there but most people probably don't even go and look at it.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: I've helped put together a few years uh ... I hate saying this ... but I think it's kinda turned into a drunk party fest.

GT: [laughs]

JB: You know

GT: Yeah

JB: they don't think about what they're even going there for the history of...I think there's some families in town that have Italian roots that things it's important to pass it around to their kids but I think the majority of individuals that come to Collinsville for this weekend just come to party, and eat and drink and leave.

GT: Yeah

JB: I don't there's nothing really lecture-y or informative ... I hate to put it down like that.

GT: [noise in other room] Well yeah the thing I can think of would be the um ... the exhibit that ended a little bit ago. 'Cause I noticed this year they had aside from the movies, I think they had some art and stuff.

JB: Yeah there were some posters I went up too. I...I've I did three years, and a lot of it was on the coal mining history. Cause they asked me to do that and the paper that I gave you [interviewer moves papers] the individual that types that up and sends it every year she uh she does a lot, lot on Italian Fest. But I don't think there's a lot of history involved, I don't think people come to find out about Italians and culture.

GT: Yeah it seems kinda like a um ...

JB: It's probably when go to a German fest in a town

GT: Yeah Oktoberfest

JB: You go there you eat the food, drink and leave.

GT: [laughs] Yeah its yeah just over time as its I guess grown and people have known about it, it's probably less abou- It may have originally been about heritage, or celebrating people...

JB: I think by the first couple years it was right, cause lot of the- my dad, you know the lot of that generation they still were alive and participated in it and now it's like everything kinda dies off and you're so far away from the grassroots of anything, things change so. Like I said I didn't even stay in town for it this year I was out... [laughs]

GT: Yeah

JB: ...out of the country.

GT: Um

JB: I think uh that language class is really good especially for people your age to take it there's a lot of history involved in that too.

GT: Yeah uh so uh I know we've gone over the coal mining a little bit.

JB: Mm-hmm

GT: Uh we talked about it a bit before [laughs] we we started um ... [laughs] oh gosh I'm trying to think back now. [laughs]

JB: No its fine uh [pauses] everyone out on this street, now that I'm thinkin of the men, they all worked in the mines. Actually the little house next door here, my dad's best friend, Red, they called him Red Niputey[?] he was really Joe Niputey.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: Uh ... when I was I'm thinking in 7th grade and they had two daughters and we were still really really close cause [adjusts seat] we grew up together

GT: Yeah

JB: in the neighborhood. Uh he was killed in Lumaghi Mine that is out here on Lebanon Road.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: I still can remember that day so vividly, ya know the whistle blows ... ya know wer- it was a summer and we're all like playin' in the yard somebody brought it was like oh [had raised his hands when telling the story and put them down on the desk] that was just terrible.

GT: Yeah that's

JB: And he wasn't the only one that was killed there were a lot killed. ... In coal mining] a very dangerous occupation. Peabody, the union mines were much better, they were much more controlled and safe...for workers as opposed [moves in seat] to other mines. My mother and her parents when they immigrated to the United States they settled in Panama, Panama, Illinois.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: That was a coal mining town and actually my grandfather, her dad [moves papers] worked in the mine but it was a company owned mine so you weren't paid in money. You were paid in called script.

GT: Oh

JB: So you bought your groceries [thumps table] at the company grocery store. [thumps table] You lived [slaps his hand down on a book] in the company house, so you worked your ass off in the mine where my grandfather got- they called it then miner's asthma, which we know now is black lung.

GT: Yeah

JB: They paid 'em in script so they [claps] took out the money for the groceries [claps] they took out the money for the house, you had hardl- you had nothing left, you got sick ... [moves things] and they didn't care they just put another immigrant down in the mine and work. So uh that was a nonunion that was ... the way a lot of those mines operated then. What's Tennessee Ernie Ford's, the company store or whatever. I don't know exactly how that goes [sets a book down] but yeah they owned you, they basically ... you were a slave [thumps desk] to that company.

GT: Yeah a lot like um sharecropping in the South...

JB: Exactly!

GT: ...was exactly like that. Yeah.

JB: Right you got paid in script and it was only usable money

GT: Yeah just keep you in debt to work for them.

JB: Yeah in the [thumps table] in the company store and their house and everything. And uh my grandfather I was told worked in that mine in Panama and he worked next to John L. Lewis and John L. Lewis became the president of United Mine Workers I believe. I may have... [unintelligible].

GT: Huh... Yeah um and then I know Illinois also has a bit of uh history of of towns like that, not necessarily only with mining but um well and then gosh I'm trying to think of the names now but a lot of them have been renamed. But just like um I guess company towns?

JB: Oh sure.

GT: Yeah [crosstalk] it's like here's ya know here come ... live here's housing, bring your family

JB: Mm-hmm

GT: All this stuff and it sounds great but

JB: And you're ours.

GT: Yeah exactly. But then there's the kinda shady corruption and all this other stuff influencing it. [moves papers]

JB: Right no yeah, it was uh it was [noise from other room] I remember my grandfather said you know when they came from Italy here, they you know. The story in Italy was he didn't go to America cause the streets are lined with gold he said I looked [thumps desk] and looked and never found any gold

GT: [laughs]

JB: [laughs] All I found was hard work.

GT: Yeah just coal.

JB: But they did they were proud to be here, they were all very, very proud...

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: ...to be Americans. And uh my grandfather was the only one who went back, nobody else would go back. They just said we came here, and you know- letters, I got boxes of letters... [thumps book]

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: ...and I remember the first time when I went over, I graduated from SIU that first summer my [unintelligible] go over and stay with your aunt and I went over and uh brought some of the letters and they were so impressed that we had all these letters still and everything.

GT: Mm-hmm yeah, I was actually gonna remember to ask um how often, if it was like a family thing but your first time was-

JB: No I was other than my grandfather I was ... they just came here and they just didn't. I remember my uncle, his wife, my aunt, uh I don't ever think she was really happy here. Uh and that's why they, he never went back cause I think if she went back she wouldn'ta come back over to the US. But see they came over they were in their early thirties. I mean you're leavin' all you're leavin' all your family behind

GT: Yeah just everything.

JB: Friends and you're comin to a country that you can't speak the language and fortunately my uncle, his... my grandfather was here and had work for him and they, everybody here was Italian.

GT: Yeah, thank god for that.

JB: So that kinda surprise, but I think my aunt would've I never felt like she was really happy and comfortable here. Cause most of the letters are from her to her mom, to her s- to all the relatives and uh [moves something] it just was kinda sad when you kinda read em. And that would be hard I mean I ... I when I was thirty I sure wouldn't wanna leave a country and go to another one,

GT: Yeah

JB: Start all over.

GT: Like yeah just thinkin about that its like it prett- it's really intimidating um I mean having family and people there definitely helps um but uh I couldn't imagine being the first person or the first few people to like decide to move somewhere [unintelligible]

JB: See even with Italian- uh Mexican immigrants... I understand their plight! They wanna leave... oppression, they want something better for their family, and that's what this country's supposed to do, open our arms up and help people that start- we are a melting pot [sets down stack of papers] and that's what's great about our country. So and on my kitchen wall there's a picture [thumps desk] of our family house in Italy. I'll show you [pats hands on desk unintelligible]

GT: All Right

JB: you'll see that.

GT: Do you have any er- are there any uh stories from like your childhood that stick out uh in particular or?

JB: Uh ... not really, I mean ... when I said our neighbor ya know was killed in the mine I mean that's something that's I'll never forget that day and the two young, his two daughters were my best friends. Two or three days I was afraid to talk to 'em I didn't know what to say. When you're little kids what do you say? Your dad was killed in the mine ... uh ... I just know we had a really tight little group here and I think it's great. There was every night we were playin' outside which kids don't do anymore ... we were

playin' ball, kick the can all that stuff, playin' in the woods [laughs] building clubhouses and then of course grandpa had a farm. We worked on the farm too, pick fruit and vegetables he sold vegetables and it just was a different time and I'm glad I grew up in it and I'm glad my boys were still out here and still able to get some of the- able to run around in the woods and the fields and still have that, where now it's kind of...

GT: Everyone's kind of afraid to let their kids do [unintelligible]

JB: I know and I walked home- well you saw town of Collinsville I'm a mile from grade school and Saint Peter and Paul's our church. You'd walk home after school it's one mile from there to here I was in probably second grade, grade third grade startin' to walk home, very good parents. No one thought anything about it. Cept the only thing, don't take candy from a stranger, well okay fine I got that. Now I walk my dog down to the track [laughing] I take a club with me...

GT: [laughs]

JB: a walking stick [laughs] I do, I really do [laughs]

GT: When I walk on um ... whenever I'm walking on campus um I haven't seen a a a buck yet, but you know cause their- the deer-

JB: Oh yeah yeah they're up there, no they're up there.

GT: Yeah. Well, 'cause I'm always worried. I know that they're very, uh, domesticated isn't the right word, but they're very nonplussed by people. But I'm always afraid of a, just like a buck just running out in ...

JB: [unintelligible]

GT: And, and goring me or something on accident. So, you know, I keep something with me if I'm walking, just because I don't think it's going to happen, but ...

JB: You never know.

GT: Yeah. God forbid.

JB: Well, we used to have trouble with geese up there.

GT: Oh, my god.

JB: The pond behind Peck building.

GT: They're the worst. Yeah.

JB: Yeah. When they had nests, I mean if you walked that one path that went by there, you had to keep one eye on the geese.

GT: Yeah. Well, oh god, there's ... I mean, they've (sighs) last year, they were just the worst. But I remember I was walking, um, past Dunham.

JB: Mm-hmm

GT: And there's that little ... There's that little outlet next to it with the, the wall ...

JB: Sure.

GT: Uh, so and I was walking and I was listening to music and, uh, I, I'm walking up and all of a sudden, I hear this ... I hear a honk. And I, I'd heard it a little bit before I got there, but then like it was right next to me. And I turned and there's a goose just standing right there, waiting for people to come by ...

JB: [laugh]

GT: To yell at them.

JB: Very protective.

GT: Yeah, well and I was ... Like it was ... I mean, right here. It was less than a foot away. So, I was just like ... And I accidentally looked it in the eyes, because ...

JB: [laugh]

GT: Because I just, I was like, "What?" Um, and I was so happy that it, uh, didn't want to attack me. That it just seemed like it just wanted to annoy people.

JB: Yeah. Yeah. They can beat the heck out of you ...

GT: Yeah.

JB: With their wings and, they're a big bird.

GT: Yeah.

JB: Yeah, we always had trouble with geese, especially during mating and when they had babies ... their nest and that.

GT: Yeah. And it's so wet here that they stay forever.

JB: Oh, I know it. They don't migrate anymore.

GT: Yeah. It, which is great [sarcastically], because then paths get all dirty. And then also they get blocked off because there, there's 20 geese, you, you know, blocking your path. What are you going to do? Well, you got to go around. [laughs]

JB: At least the walkways now are asphalt up there.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: When I was there, they weren't. They were pea gravel. You know, that little orange pea gravel?

GT: Yeah.

JB: And they were ... Because the architect thought that, you know, blended into nature and everything.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: Which it, which it does, talk about some hard walking on that stuff.

GT: [laugh] Oh my god.

JB: It was like walking in sand. Getting in your shoes.

GT: Oh.

JB: That's when there was all the complaints. So, they, uh, finally asphalted the walkways.

GT: That's good. Yeah. And well, yeah plus that would just be so hard to maintain.

JB: Oh, it was.

GT: I didn't even think about it getting in people's shoes, but I just like [pause] yeah. I just thought of the geese having to clean up after them would suck. Um, [laughs] yeah that ...

JB: Lot of change up there, but that, that's a good thing.

GT: Yeah. Um...

JB: So, I don't remember anything major other than it was just a simpler time. Went to school all in Collinsville. K through high school. And then just SIUE. And that really wasn't that far away.

GT: Yeah. It's only about 20, 25 ...

JB: 20, 25 minutes exactly.

GT: Yeah. Um, any, uh [pause] well, obviously Collinsville has changed. Um, anything that like sticks out to you?

JB: Oh, yeah. No, we had one ... you had small towns. It was probably every small town in the country. You were self-sufficient. You had your grocery stores. You had your hardware stores. You had your every store you needed. Two or three different types of clothing stores. Your dime stores. Everything was here. And it was a viable little productive town. Now, when malls came out, you know, it killed all the little businesses. You know, your hardware stores, your ... every little store. So, right now, as you know, we have ... hardly any of them down in downtown Collinsville. But Moore's, uh, Home Furniture is going out of business.

GT: Oh.

JB: It's closing. It, this Monday is its last day. Uh, Shop 'n Save's closed. I think Walmart's put them out.

GT: Yeah, I noticed when I was driving here that ... which I ... that's the weirdest thing to me is those Walmart Neighborhood Markets. They're so odd.

JB: I think that's one of the worst things. My philosophizing here in this country, Walmarts and just poor wages and they just did away with the mom and pops and the...

GT: Yeah.

JB: ...stores.

GT: Well, I worked for, um, Dollar General this summer.

JB: Oh, okay.

GT: I, you know, I was sitting there, I was thinking like, "Oh, this is a great company." You know, they're [pause] I mean, they, they care about their employees and their supervisors, but, uh, then I learned like they mostly set up in places, uh, that most people, like most other stores wouldn't. They put a lot of places out of business...

JB: Oh, sure.

GT: ...because they're so cheap. And that really made me reevaluate that, uh, what I thought about the store, you know?

JB: Mm-hmm, No, now [pause] So downtown Collinsville is no longer like it used to be. But that's every little town was like that. We had a show. And we had Miner's Theater. Which I'm sure you heard of our Main Street, Miner's [pause] god, this goes back to my grandfather's time. They took a percentage out of their check to build that. And their miner's office was upstairs. And in the bottom was a stage theater. And so, we had always had a local theater growing up, you'd go up there on the weekends. God, I feel old. And now, uh, it's just a building.

GT: Mm-hmm.

JB: Nothing's really being used in it.

GT: Mm-hmm. Um, was it ... like was it the miners putting on the shows? Or?

JB: Uh, no. They used it for office buildings, because I know my father played a violin in an orchestra and they performed there sometime. Uh, again, they had stage productions, I guess. I don't remember it.

GT: Yeah.

JB: This book is a good book for you to get. It's the history of Collinsville. And everything is in it.

GT: All right. [laughs] Yeah.

JB: So ...

GT: [laughs] Oh, I didn't plan more questions. It's always so hard to, uh ...

JB: Well like, like I said, I know we have, we have, uh, the Cahokia Mounds.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: And what's that? Like 1100, 1200 BC? I think I kind of looked that up to see how old that was. Yeah, 1100, 1200 AD, excuse me. And the Indian civilization. And that's why I find all the artifacts here.

GT: Oh.

JB: The Piasa bird. Are you familiar with that in Alton?

GT: Um ...

JB: It's painted on the bluffs.

GT: Yeah.

JB: Lewis and Clark, Clark, when they did their expedition- uh, expedition through here, they were the first to discover it. It's been repainted.

GT: Yeah. I...

JB: That's an Indian folklore whatever you want to call it. But the Piasa bird. Granite City used to make the first... That's where we get Granite Ware. You know, the granite pots. That's where it first was produced in Granite City. All Granite Ware and refineries. We always had a lot of refineries in Madison County. Factories. The steel mills. The steel mill. It could've been mills. It could've been plural. I don't know.

GT: [laughs] Yeah.

JB: We had the largest ketchup bottle.

GT: [laughs] Oh, yeah, I did hear about that.

JB: And it, when you crossed the tracks going, leaving if you look to your left, you'll see the top of the ketchup- Brook's ketchup bottle sticking up.

GT: [laughs] Yeah, I think, um ...

JB: That was a ketchup factory.

GT: Yeah.

JB: But then also, canned other vegetables and ...

GT: I think, uh, like roadside attractions like that, I guess, is the best term for those, they're so ... They're so fascinating, because I just think of like the person who just like, "You know what we need for our company? A giant ketchup bottle."

JB: A giant ketchup bottle.

GT: Right [laughs].

JB: I know.

GT: It's so strange.

JB: And this was some years, a few years back, wasn't that long ago. But I was driving by going to Fairview Heights and it just caught my eye. The Wiener Mobile was there...

GT: [laughs]

JB: and I thought ...

GT: That's great.

JB: "Well, how classy." You know, the Wiener Mobile next the big ketchup bottle.

GT: That's amazing. Yeah.

JB: And we're the horseradish capital of the world.

GT: Yeah, that ... I was, uh ...

JB: And that's been for a long time, because of Germans, from what I understand. Because we did that in German class.

GT: Yeah.

JB: Horseradish means some kind of ... It's ... I don't know how it translates. I don't even want to say, but it's a German word.

GT: Yeah, I, I don't think I'm that far yet. [laughs]

JB: Oh, yeah, your instructor will know.

GT: We haven't gotten to food yet, yeah.

JB: Uh, but, uh, yeah. The horseradish capital of the world.

GT: Yeah, when I found that out, that is not, uh, what I, I never would have thought horseradish. Because

I mean, you know, Illinois's known for co- You know, corn.

JB: Oh, right. The farmer.

GT: Right.

JB: Dairy products.

GT: But, yeah. No, I never would have thought ... Like I would have thought, okay, maybe just in the state, not the state, but the country. But, no like they export globally.

JB: Oh

GT: It's insane to me.

JB: From what I hear, China, Japan

GT: Yeah.

JB: buys it up before it's even harvested a lot of it. Uh, but it's the, the bottoms, the bluff area

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: the bottom areas...

GT: Real ...

JB: ...you know, which is the rich soil from the Mississippi...

GT: Yeah.

JB: ...and that's where it grows. It's, um ... real labor intense product too. A lot of handwork in it. But I remember when I was little too. I don't know whether it's true or not, but my dad said some of these farmers would load their truck up with horseradish and drive it to St. Louis to the market to be sold. They'd come back with a new truck and pockets full of money.

GT: [laughs]

JB: So, I mean, it's ...

GT: Yeah.

JB: it's good cash crop.

GT: It's big business. Yeah. Um, oh, you, you did mention that you had a farm, um, where ...

JB: On Paley Hill. The top up there.

GT: Okay.

JB: I'm not saying like a big farm, but we had ... Grandpa, he had hogs, chickens, steers. We had the huge peach orchard. We'd sell peaches. He'd got 1500 tomato plants started from scratch.

Seeds, and he sold basically to the Italian community the tomatoes.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: But a lot of people, they used to all talk about his peach orchard and his produce. And Grandpa'd take orders ... Grandpa'd fill it and drive us around town and my cousin and I were the only two from that generation. We'd run the bags up to the house. [laughing] So, yeah. [thumps desk] Uh, it was ... They just worked. Everything worked in the mine, they worked in the fields. [thumps desk] And we didn't have to get much from the grocery store, because we had all our produce and had meat. [thumps desk]

GT: Yeah.

JB: And big can. So,

GT: That's

JB: make our own sausage and everything.

GT: Yeah, it's uh, I mean, even then I'd say that's ... to just be like completely self- sufficient

JB: Mm-hmm

GT: Is not only rare, but like that's a really nice testament to, yeah, how proud and determined immigrants are ...

JB: Oh, right.

GT: Uh

JB: As long as you had food, you know, and ... a roof over your house, you had it made.

GT: yeah. Like I mean, you guys honestly were probably doing [laugh] better than like most of the people in Collinsville.

JB: Really? I didn't realize it until I probably got into college and that, you start getting into gourmet foods

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: and it's like, "Oh, my god. I grew up with gourmet foods."

GT: Yeah [laughs].

JB: You start to [crosstalk] and every meal was like a gourmet meal and I didn't realize that until...

GT: [laughs] Yeah.

JB: later. And now, you know, I cook for all my friends, you know?

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: They want me to cook, because I can do all the stuff.

GT: Yeah.

JB: But I didn't realize that was gourmet food then. It was just our common every day.

GT: Yeah.

JB: That's how they cooked.

GT: Didn't realize it until you ate some campus food? [laugh]

JB: Right. Yeah. Hey, you know, it wasn't that bad up there back ... I think it is now. I ain't been up there because you got too many fast...

GT: Yeah. It, it's ... And ...

JB: ...we had a good cafeteria back then. I think, I think a Zepatelli ran the [student] union down there. I'm not sure.

GT: Hmm.

JB: But it was like real food.

GT: Yeah.

JB: It was like real food.

GT: Yeah, well some of the, uh, like the main cafeteria stuff, I learned ... Some of it's real good. Some of its iffy. And some of it, no. [laugh]

JB: Mm-hmm

GT: I know to avoid beef stroganoff.

JB: Sure. Okay.

GT: Uh, there. Uh, which I, I was disappointed, because it's ... I like, you know, it, it's a good dish, um, but yeah. There is really heavy on, uh, fast food know.

JB: I noticed that when I went up there. You know, every once in a while, I'll go up and walk around just to see what's new.

GT: Yeah.

JB: And going to the union. And that's the other thing I noticed in that ... Goshen Lounge, I guess you still call it? Or that sunken lounge.

GT: Yeah. Mm-hmm

JB: There was that sculpture that was hanging from the ceiling. It was a box upside down

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: with all these sticks that hung down. They took it down. It's not hanging there anymore.

GT: Oh, my ... yeah.

JB: And, uh, I asked, and they said some of them had ... all of the sticks had fallen from the strings or whatever.

GT: Oh.

JB: So, they took it down and put it away.

GT: Yeah. [laughs]

JB: But are they going to put it back up? Because that was the thing. I mean, you sat in that lounge ...

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: Back then, it was ... They said, "No, they're not going to put it back up." So ...

GT: Yeah.

JB: I think it's after I let her.

GT: Yeah. There you go. But, yeah. I went through there last month at some point and I guess I just didn't, uh, notice that ...

JB: That's the first thing I notice when I went up because of my ring.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: That [crosstalk] I wanted to get some information and I noticed it was gone and asked about it.

GT: Mm-hmm. Um

JB: And we had, uh, Shamika was up there. We even had the cougar. It was alive and a real animal.

GT: that seems incredibly dangerous. [laughs]

JB: And one thing ... it has it's, uh, fangs removed, his claws removed.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: He was neutered.

GT: Huh.

JB: And they had a staff of students that would walk him around campus, take him to games. He had a cage out behind the union and that's where he stayed.

GT: That, that is just incredible to think of just like ... [laugh]

JB: Yeah.

GT: I can't imagine seeing someone walk a cougar around, regardless of if it's ...

JB: He, he was a [laughs] tame cougar. He wasn't a wild one.

GT: [laughs] yeah, but even ... yeah, even like the ... like-

JB: I can see that's not a good animal right.

GT: oh.

JB: People would be real on top of that right now.

GT: oh, they [crosstalk].

JB: They don't need to be there.

GT: [laugh] Yeah.

JB: That's just from the past, but I saw him and knew him when we was real.

GT: Yeah. It's like ... Well, yeah, because I guess that's a statue of him.

JB: Right.

GT: Up there. Um, actually my first-

JB: I think, isn't he buried on campus? I was was out ... He, you know, died after I was graduated.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: But, I thought maybe he was buried out there somewhere.

GT: Hm.

JB: I could be wrong.

GT: Um, but I do remember that, yeah, that big statue that they have in front of the, um, the, the Morris University Center

JB: Mm-hmm

GT: Is [laugh] and I think they finally took it down, but I ... And I, it took me a while to notice. Like a few months of walking past it my first semester. And I just, one day I looked up at it, and it ... in the eye slots, were googly eyes.

JB: Mm-hmm

GT: Um, which I don't, I don't know who put them there. I don't know how long they were there. And it's kind of ... Yeah, it's a bit disrespectful now, but it was, it, it made me laugh.

JB: It just ... yeah

GT: It gave me

JB: well.

GT: a chuckle.

JB: Walking man in the library is still there. The Henry Morris sculpture. The big, you know, walking man?

GT: Uh ...

JB: It had no head on it.

GT: Um ...

JB: I'm sure it is.

GT: I'm trying to think of ...

JB: As soon as you go in the front doors, it's standing right in that entrance there. Not in the entrance but it's in there. They used to put a pumpkin on top of that every year

GT: [laughs]

JB: at Halloween.

GT: Yeah.

JB: We'd put up there. ... It has to be there.

GT: It probably is. I'm trying to think of, um ...

JB: You probably don't go to the library. I lived in the library.

GT: Yeah, no. It's easier to just study in my dorm, yeah.

JB: Well, right, wrong. We had card catalogs then, believe it or not. You probably don't even know what those are.

GT: [laughs] No.

JB: That's how you looked up the books you needed and got the number and went to the stacks and pulled your books. It was a lot harder than-

GT: Yeah. The, uh

JB: much more time consuming than now with computers.

GT: in the ... yeah, I guess we still use the Dewey decimal? I guess, everyone still uses that, right?

JB: Yeah, right.

GT: Um ...

JB: I'm obsolete.

GT: [laughs]

JB: When I worked on my masters, I remember on the stat class, the professor brought in a, a calculator. And we all could use a calculator that...

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: Oh, man this is really neat. A calculator. [laughs].

GT: Yeah. Well, oh gosh. That's something that always annoyed me, uh, trying to learn math is, um, so ... in high school, they're like, "All right, were going to teach out how to use this calculator." And we're going to spend months on, you know, buy this kind of calculator. Okay, here's how to do it. Okay, well here's the tests and exams, um, you can't use that. But that's how we've been telling you. I, I'm just kind of like, "I don't know how to do it now." You know? Um, I think that's probably ... Just speaking of change in general [laughs] ...

JB: Oh, sure. No.

GT: Yeah.

JB: Computers? Great.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: I mean, you do Google anything and find what you need for papers. I mean, it would take days sometimes just to find a book that had a part of an article that you needed. So, I mean it was a lot more ... It was a lot more labor-intensive.

GT: Well, yeah. I can actually ...

JB: Like more exercise is going up and down the steps reading books than sitting in a chair with your laptop.

GT: Yeah. I can't imagine trying to have done like back my research on Collinsville. That would have been much harder.

JB: Oh.

GT: I mean, it, it'd be easy, because it's so close. But ...

JB: Yeah. No, everything was difficult.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: But, you got, you learned how to use it. You got your books and carried them around. And so, [sighs] whatever. That's just the way it was. I don't know want to take any more classes.

GT: [laughs] Yeah, I feel that. Um, oh, um, so, I know it, it's a pretty rare occurrence, but in Madison County, because of all the, the mining, occasionally, you know, homes or ...

JB: Mine subsidence. [crosstalk]. Mm-hmm

GT: Um, can you think of any examples of it happening here?

JB: Well, the old high school on 159, which now is not a high school and some kind of a church. And across the street from it was our football bowl and there was a grade school there and some houses there. They had to wipe all that out because it was mine subsidence there. The school just started cracking and

GT: Oh, that would be ...

JB: and I know there's other places in town. I hear, I've heard about houses that have had it you know, we buy it on our home owner's insurance.

GT: Yeah.

JB: I have, I have mine subsidence on my policy in the event of ...

GT: Yeah. Totally ...

JB: Because there's mines all over here. And it's not just because Lumaghi mines' four miles from here, that doesn't mean it's not under my house.

GT: Yeah, who knows where they lie?

JB: Right. Because I know, uh, the last mine my dad worked at as a mine inspector was, uh, Saint Helen Mine in Fairview Heights.

GT: Okay. Yeah.

JB: And, uh, he said they were actually ... That's why they shut it down. There was a lot of coal and it was a good, good mine. But they were mining under Scott Air Force Base.

GT: Oh.

JB: That's how far they were ...

GT: Wow. That's ...

JB: Where they went down. And it was the problem of the cost of getting the coal from the face of the mine where they are mining, all the way down and then out.

GT: Yeah. Oh, and like uh, I can't ima- I cannot imagine the Air Force were very happy, uh, when they found out.

JB: You know, I don't know if you're down so far. My dad, like I said, he had to go down every mind and inspect it in the morning before the men could come down. And he would check for like collapse or whatever. He said, "Mine's will usually push from the bottom up."

GT: Huh.

JB: It's not like down

GT: Yeah, I would have thought it would be down.

JB: it's a push up motion. He said he's already had to get like, "Okay, get the equipment out. Get all the miners out. Get all your equipment out of here." And in like four or five days, the bottom had pushed up to the, to the top.

GT: Geez. That's actually ... I think that's a little more terrifying ...

JB: Oh, yeah.

GT: than it falling is just

JB: I had no interest whatso-

GT: yeah.

JB: That was always the incentive. Okay, I'm going to college. Dad's going to end up paying for us to go to college. Go to college. "Oh, if you don't do well there, you can always be a coal miner."

GT: Yeah [laugh].

JB: And I thought, "Oh, I think I'm going to do pretty good in school."

GT: Yeah, exactly.

JB: I have no interest in going underground.

GT: Oh, I've got none. I, uh, I was a Boy Scout for a bit and they'd always have us ... you know, they're like, "Come explore caves and stuff." And

JB: Nah.

GT: Not a fan. I've, uh, got friends that are always like, "Let's go explore this random cave." I'm like, "Really, that's very ... I"

JB: It doesn't sound like a good idea.

GT: Real unsafe.

JB: Yeah. Now, don't like that. I had a geology class at SIUE. I had Dr. Gore, I remember, Phenomenal instructor, and we, uh, we had a field trip. The only field trip I ever had in college and we went to the Galena mines in Missouri. She took us one weekend and, uh, okay, and that, that ... actually the day we were having, going through some of these, there was an earthquake. And she was so excited about the earthquake.

GT: Oh.

JB: It wasn't a major one, but it was about to shake the whole area here. And, uh, she was on the phone, calling campus and wondering where the epicenter was and everything and made her day. Not ours, because ...

GT: Yeah, I was going to say, I can't, uh, I, I would be quite ... like I would be terrified. Uh, and I'd just be, I'd be real confused with my teacher [laughs].

JB: Well, at every single class she was a great instructor. I still love ... That was a good class. I think then, because we were on quarters, I bet we took more classes than I bet you take in

GT: Probably.

JB: two semesters.

GT: Mm-hmm yeah, I take a pretty light workload. Um, typically 12 to like ... or, not 12. Uh, what is it? I take about four or five classes.

JB: Yeah, because I mean like every quarter you were changing, so I ...

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: Then I had, you know, weather, climate, earth science, chemistry, genetics. I mean, world history, American history. Just about every class you could imagine, I had a class in it ... in general studies. And I know my son didn't have that many when he went. So, I think that was an advantage that I had then. Exposure to more ... areas of expertise.

GT: [laughs] Yeah, I uh, I switched my major a few times. So, I've

JB: Oh, that'll do it too.

GT: yeah. I started out, uh, bio, uh, mec- Biomedical engineering.

JB: Oh, wow.

GT: Well, because I, I, they had a recruiter come to my school, my high school. And, uh, I asked him if, you know, it was ... It's still a pretty new field so I asked him, "Would you be getting this?" And he said well, probably. You can do combine whatever. And then found out later, my first year [laughs], they don't have it. So, I'm like, "All right. Well, environment management is what I'll switch to after I get all my classes lined up, all this, a few days later someone stops me when I'm with some friends and it's someone from the engineering, uh, like department or whatever, and they're talking us, asking what our things are. And he said ... I told him that I switched. And he said, "Oh, we're getting that now." [laughs]

JB: Well, see, when I was in the department of architecture and design back then there was no degree in architecture. SIUE did not have it then.

GT: Huh.

JB: So, I took every design class up to that and I remember, the head of the department said, "If you want a degree in architecture, you got to transfer like to WashU or whatever then." and that was totally out of the picture.

GT: Yeah.

JB: And financially ...

GT: Yeah, I was going to say, WashU, way too expensive.

JB: ...for me. But now, I know SIU does have a department of architecture. They have it ... it was called the department of architecture and design. That's what you graduated from, but they didn't have a degree

in it.

GT: Which is odd. [laughs]

JB: Well

GT: To not have a ...

JB: I mean, it was a new campus. I mean, there's a lot.

GT: yeah.

JB: And I had a science, health science minor. I had as many science classes and I wish I had gone more into the ... I don't know something in that field, but it was a bad time with Vietnam and everybody was trying to get a degree. And if you didn't have good grades, you were out and gone and ... so, but anyway, that's the way it was. And I'm still surviving, and I love my campus and every class I had.

GT: Yeah. Um, I guess speaking of Vietnam, uh, I mean, obviously since you were in college, you didn't get sent to ...

JB: Right. I didn't.

GT: Did you know anyone ...

JB: But as soon as you graduate ...

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: I mean, I got a job. I had a job before I graduated. The head of the department knew that they needed someone to run the fine arts department, so he recommended me and I got a job the last semester or whatever. I interviewed and got it, which I mean, I jumped on the first opportunity to get a job. Then, I had other ones which I wish ... anyway, that's then. But still, I got a ... you get that letter, "President Johnson", you know, it's just, "Wants to thank you for your service and here you go". [laughs]

GT: Yeah.

JB: Take your physical. I flunked it. I flunked my physical.

GT: Oh, wow.

JB: So, I did good in that.

GT: Yeah, I was going to say, normally that'd be a bad thing.

JB: I know, but [laugh] ...

GT: In this case, it's a blessing.

JB: I know.

GT: Yeah.

JB: That's terrible to say, but Vietnam was not a good thing.

GT: Yeah. No.

JB: And I was in college, uh, when the Kent State Massacre...

GT: Oh.

JB: ...the Kent State Shooting.

GT: Oh, yeah.

JB: When [inaudible] where there

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: Because there was a lot of protests going on when I was in college. We protested, you know ... we were ... everybody was protesting the war. And, uh, we close- closed SIUE down that day.

GT: Gee. Yeah.

JB: We shut down the roads. Everybody walked out of the classes. Even the- a lot of the instructors were- most of them were on our side too.

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: But we closed the campus down that day.

GT: Just ...

JB: You guys don't protest enough.

GT: Yeah, I was going to say ... like ...

JB: [laughs] Your generation does not protest.

GT: [laughs]

JB: Stand up for your rights. Get out there and let people know. Vote.

GT: Yeah. Oh, gosh. And then, that's the ... Being over here, any time ... Elections, you know, elections are coming up, uh, but I can't vote here. [laughs]

JB: Oh.

GT: The problem is all I see are ads for Chicago and Illinois, so it's ... and then, then with just being a full-time student, it's so hard to stay informed. But, yeah my generation doesn't vote enough for sure.

JB: They don't. You got to get out there and vote and you've got to be involved. And you got to read the legitimate newspapers and know what's going on in your country. Our country. Our world.

GT: Yeah.

JB: Vote. I'm an election judge by the way.

GT: Okay. But ... yeah.

JB: I'm involved.

GT: But yeah, it's just, uh, yeah that, that's one factor. Even though I'm 30 minutes away from St. ... you know, where I live, um any ads I see ... Uh, well actually, no. This year I've been seeing some, some for Missouri. But, it's always you know, vote for whatever Chicago and I'm like, "I can't at all."

JB: Right. Don't they have anything on campus where if you're an out of state? ... Yeah, because you can mail in your ballots.

GT: Yeah. They, um, they do a ...

JB: Right.

GT: you can, you can vote on campus for your ...

JB: Right.

GT: whatever. But ...

JB: State. Whatever state you ...

GT: Mm-hmm

JB: Yeah. Do it. Get out there. Put that vote in. It's important. Every vote's important.

GT: Yeah. Um, but, yeah. Things are not going, uh, super great. Especially with the EPA.

JB: I agree. There's a lot of bad things going on, without...

GT: And

JB: ...getting into politics and my views, but I have very strong views.

GT: Yeah. I think most people do. Um, which is ...

JB: And I noticed coming back from Greece, I heard a lot.

GT: Oh, yeah. I'm sure.

JB: And I was in Italy and a few months before that and I heard a lot there. And then you meet people from Australian and Germany and whatever and they all have the same question. I'm almost ready to say I was from Canada.

GT: Yeah, [laughs] exactly. Um, but I think we're probably the only country that makes every issue like a partisan thing. I think, because a lot of environmental stuff is not

JB: Yeah, well, I

GT: Uh

JB: It shouldn't be, but it is.

GT: Yeah.

JB: It is. People don't understand the Republican Party, the Democrat Party. They have a platform. And, you know, who your candidate is, they're going to follow that platform that is so determined by the DNC or RNC. So, you have ... people don't understand that, and they can't just vote for a person, because they ... "I don't know if I like what he's saying." "They all say bullshit." Excuse the expression. Both sides. So, you got to kind of figure out what's going to happen, and you want an educated person that knows about how the political system works, and that reads books.

GT: Yeah [laughs]. Um, but I think, especially with, uh, I mean the Midwest has a big problem with just like ... and especially Illinois, and especially this area like Madison County and St. Louis County have a big problem with, you know ... back in the day, there weren't very many, uh, restrictions on what you could put where and ...

JB: There weren't any

GT: all that kind of stuff, yeah, exactly.

JB: that I'm aware of when we were growing up.

GT: Yeah [laughs]. Like, I mean, my backyard, uh, I live near Cold Water Creek in, in, in Missouri. Uh, so, and they put, uh

JB: PC.

GT: Waste from the Manhattan Project ...

JB: Right.

GT: in there.

JB: Mm-hmm

GT: So, uh, a neighbor a few streets down, when I went back home, I found out that they don't have a backyard now, because the, uh, Army Corps of Engineers just came and dug it up because all that soil was bad.

JB: Well, now you say that, Collinsville, uh, I don't know if you saw by Aldi's, there's a subdivision there, um and, uh, there was a lead mine there that was closed before I was born. But it was a big, big lead mine. And so, everything was spread out. This contractor built all these really neat houses and everything. And then about maybe 10 years ago, it could have been a little bit longer than that, people were digging in their yard for a flower beds and they were bringing up all this lead slag.

GT: Oh....yeah...

JB: And then the word got out. So, it was an EPA recovery thing. They came and dug everybody's yards up and

GT: But, uh, I mean, it's good they found out.

JB: I mean, everybody in town knew about it. But nobody said anything about it.

GT: Oh.

JB: And all these big homes were built over the top of this lead slag. But, uh, down on Lebanon Road, there was ... It's called ... There's a Glidden Park now. And there was a Glidden Paint factory there

GT: Lead paint?

JB: yeah well and the creek that you crossed over tracks and then the little creek it's called Canteen Creek. As kids we thought it was really cool cause some days it'd be blue, and some days it'd yellow [laughter] and some days it'd be ya know green and they just washed out I guess everything they had and it was right along the creek and that's was okay then cause what goes downstream you don't see and you forget about.

GT: yeah it it just goes to the ocean everything's fine.

JB: So we'd play in it, we'd play in it and we thought it was neat. [thumps desk a few times]

GT: Yeah and think back about stuff like that now

JB: Yeah, right.

GT: and you're just like

JB: [crosstalk] I could a been maybe two points higher if I didn't play in the creek. [laughs]

GT: or it's like thank god [laughs] I didn't- nothin super bad. ... Um but yeah its ...

JB: That's just the way it was. I mean the refineries. Yeah right now we have a lot of EPA but in the day

in those refineries [unintelligible] refineries had been there since the turn of the ... turn of the twentieth century I'm sure that ground up there is so saturated with chemicals and about everything you could imagine well ... not to many years ago they said you could dig a hole in what Roxanna or whatever in your yard and throw a match in and it'll burn.

GT: oh Jesus.

JB: so we do pollute

GT: Yeah quite a bit [laughs]

JB: Mm-hmm that's what man does.

GT: yeah ... but uh. ... Yeah, its

JB: I forgot about Glidden park, yeah that was down there- well Glidden park, Glidden ... factory it was a factory before that it was ah not lithium it was something else they made there, another chemical which is in the creek too probably.

GT: [laughs] well that's more [laughs] good you know just more good news.

JB: Yeah never found any fish or frogs but [crosstalk] find one and then they got six legs but [laughter]

GT: Um ... yeah I think just thinking back on um ... and I mean things were- ... uh or like with radiation I don't know if maybe any of your anyone from the community [unintelligible]?

JB: Not around here, I don't recall any of that- uh of course you know way back then there wasn't any trash pickup, so everyone had a trash burn pile in your black- backyard you burned everything. [coughs] And uh ... that's how you got rid of it. Now of course we got all these really neat trucks and they pick up our trash in nice little bags and where does it go? ... you know. [laughs]

GT: Yeah exactly. [laughs]

JB: yeah so, what's better? Burning it in your backyard or leeching out and going into the river and a hole somewhere so ... that just yeah, I guess until we destroy our little planet maybe we'll start thinking.

GT: Yeah um but yeah cause when uh radiation you know when it was- radioactivity, brand new thing, every- everybody thought it was great um and I guess do you remember- cause I mean back in the day people were putting it in like ... everything in products and a lot of it ... I mean they're puttin it in water and ... do you remember anything by any chance of?

JB: No I just remember as a little kid when they were doin uh atomic bombs, they'd set em off in ... what, I'm sayin Nevada but probably New Mexico. ... We thought it was a cool thing you know [laughter] to watch it on tv. Oh, wow get a bigger bomb ya know, you didn't realize how bad it was and it's all coming our way from west-east the winds. But I remember uh we'd always make snow ice cream I remember you couldn't the first two snowfalls you could not make snow ice cream because it was taking all the radioactive and all the fallout out of the air [thuds desk] down so the third snow we could make

snow ice cream.

GT: [crosstalk] Then you could do that yeah kickin' a

JB: Right.

GT: I tried doin' that I uh a few times a few times as a kid [interviewee coughs] don't know if I did it wrong or if the snow just wasn't the uh ...

JB: Yeah it never was what you call great it was just a fun thing to do, throw some sugar in and ... vanilla.

GT: roll a can around or do whatever, however you make it yeah.

JB: So but yeah I remember it always had to be the third snowfall cause there were to many pollutants in the air. ... But uh ... other than that you know no one thought about the lead paint. ... None of that we never thought of any of that. The biggest scare I guess when I was little but then we got the Sack...Sock...Salk I guess vaccine for polio was like ... getting Polio. Cause I remember two two people on the road over there, they were older than me they got Polio.

GT: Ooh.

JB: Yeah and no one knew how you got it I guess every- I don't know, we didn't but ... couldn't walk barefooted after it rained in the street [unintelligible] cause you thought that's how you got it. ... And I don't know but then-

GT: I mean you'd be more likely to get Lockjaw or something [crosstalk] that way.

JB: [crosstalk] yeah it's something you didn't know. [crosstalk ends] It's just all- but I remember that, and I remember, yeah scary thing that ... the neighbor, matter of fact she got it when she went to nursing school in uh St. Louis at Barnes. Uh she contracted Polio and she still became a nurse and she was in a wheelchair her- became head of nursing at I think at SLU and just died a few years ago, but she always was in a wheelchair. So, kids did get polio then. And now we have stupid people I hate to use that word, but they don't wanna vaccinate their kids ... cause they think there's mercury or whatever in the vaccine

GT: Or that it causes

JB: So now, polio's starting to come back, and some other things are coming back.

GT: yeah, I mean they think it causes Autism which is

JB: Right.

GT: I think my favorite thing I I saw a headline uh last year. [laughs] It was um ... uh anti- vaxxers or whatever they're called um sue scientists ... becau- so they had paid [laughs] the scientists to prove that- to do research cause they wanted em to prove that it causes autism and [laughs] the scientists said ... they can't find any evidence ... saying that it could possibly prove it.

JB: Right.

GT: And so of course for some reason they're like, they decide to take em to court which ... I I just love it's ...

JB: I know there's just a lot there's a lot of- won't vaccinate their kids. I did all ours, I mean I believe in it one hundred percent. But like I said now, you know it's startin to come back. Polio we had about wiped out and then ... now it's returning, ugly thing.

GT: Yeah ... but, well yeah smallpox is back [unsure tone] uh ugh.

JB: Oh that Ebola virus in Africa that's a scary thing.

GT: Oh yeah.

JB: And then with the travel like everyone's on planes and like you get on those big planes like ... comin home, you have every nationality from every ... corner of the world on a plane for nine hours,

GT: [laughs]

JB: Coughin' and sneezin' [laughs] I take all the sanitary- I'm wipin everything down.

GT: Yeah, well I, I remember hearing about once it got to uh Texas or whatever. I was horrified ... just cause I mean yeah even- like ... uh honestly had no ... real reason to be, where I was, horrified but you know when ya here like ... you know this disease- it made it all the way here

JB: Oh exactly.

GT: It's, it's terrifying.

JB: It's it's, ... it could happen it's you know very easy that it could be ... pick a place. So, I don't know were just that kinda world anymore. ... and if you don't have- I don't have any other input on Collinsville or coal mining or Madison County I can't think of anything else for like we're like basically a coal mining community with a lot of Italians in our area. [thumps desk]

GT: Yeah, I'm uh [laughs] I'm uh struggling to-

JB: So, you have to make a ... an oral presentation of Madison County?

GT: Um this is for ... the Madison County um ... Historical Project is what I wanna say

JB: Okay the one in Edwardsville? That

GT: Yeah, the uh like the website.

JB: That's, yeah that's one of the ... that's one of the papers is from there I believe. Oh the-

GT: [interviewer looks through the papers they were handed] I think it's this one actually.

JB: Right, yeah right that's what I got for you. Wow so you're doin' it for that?

GT: Yeah.

JB: For a class project or?

GT: Uh yeah... Um so, yeah I guess that uh concludes the interview.

JB: [laughs] Okay, hope I could have helped- hoped I helped a little bit.

GT: Oh yeah now, this was amazing like there's ... I learned so much that I didn't think I would've ya know.

JB: Okay well that's a good thing then.