

Interview: Leland Ambuehl
Interviewed By: Joshua D. Koenig
3:45 PM October 28, 2001
Lincoln Place: Granite City, Illinois

Koenig: This is Joshua Koenig, interviewing Mr. Ambuehl on Oct 28, 2001 at 3:45 PM.

Mr. Ambuehl, could you please state your full name and spell your last name please?

Ambuehl: Leland D. Ambuehl: A-M-B-U-E-H-L

Koenig: Mr. Ambuehl, can you please state some background information about yourself?

Ambuehl: Yes, I was born in Highland, IL, in 1922. I grew up there, went to school through one year of high school, then we moved to Granite City.

Koenig: What did your parents do for occupations?

Ambuehl: My mother was a homemaker. My father had various jobs. He was once part owner in a tire and battery shop, he worked for a hardware store, he was city clerk at one time in Highland. One time my mother and her sister-in-law ran a restaurant; mostly she stayed at home.

Koenig: What pulled your family to Granite City once you left Highland?

Ambuehl: My parents divorced when I was about twelve, and my brother was four years older than I, and there was no good jobs in Highland for him, of course I was still in high school. He got a job here in Granite City at Granite City Steel, and that prompted the move to Granite City... to be close to where he was, to where he worked. They moved over here fairly early in the year, and I stayed at my grandparent's house to finish out the school year, and I had a job over there in a restaurant/soda shop during the summer. I moved over here in fall to start my second year of high school here.

Koenig: Did your family move straight into Lincoln Place, or was it elsewhere in Granite City?

Ambuehl: No it was elsewhere. They moved downtown around...we lived at three different places/houses, all within a half block of 22nd and State Street, in that area. We lived there. I didn't even know anything of Lincoln Place until somewhat later.

Koenig: What did you do after high school?

Ambuehl: After high school, like everybody at that time, jobs were hard to get, I worked at Granite City Steel about three or four months as a laborer, then got laid off there. I took a job with Bell Telephone Company. We went down to what is now Fort Leonard Wood; they were building Fort Leonard Wood at that time. And from there they wanted me to move down further, I think it was to Camp Crowder, which was farther down in Missouri, and I just wanted to get back here. So I quit that job and came back. Then I had a lot of little jobs. I worked as a messenger for an insurance company/ mortgage company. Hamburger, flipping hamburgers, parking garage in the.... Any number of jobs for about a year or so. Ultimately then, the Granite City Engineer Depot opened up, and I got a job there. That of course was pretty good job at that time, didn't pay much, but nobody did. That was a good job then. I worked there until I left...until I got drafted into the army.

Koenig: How long were you in the army?

Ambuehl: I was in just a couple weeks shy of three years.

Koenig: What were your duties in the army?

Ambuehl: I was clerical... clerical jobs. Some... let's see, it was always around, it was in the army-air force at that time, and it was always around in aircraft maintenance

engineering or flight plans. We, I was in where the pilots made the flight plans. It was all, I mean, various jobs. I went to school at Arkansas State College in Jonesboro to learn how to be a clerk, army style. That was three months. Then I spent about a year and half down in Congary Army Airfield near Columbia, South Carolina. Then from there, I came home for a little while, and then we went overseas to Italy. For about thirteen months I was in Italy.

Koenig: What was your experience in Italy like?

Ambuehl: Very interesting. I got sent over there as a rotation for someone who was leaving, from, it was from payroll, and I didn't know nothing about payroll. Ultimately got changed into an air-engineering job, because I did not like payroll at all. It wasn't my thing. But this was a good thing, I got to work for a major who was, just a jewel of a person. He took good care of me, and I took good care of him, and together we got along fine, and I got to do a lot of things that wasn't readily available to some people, but because we got along so well, obviously I did my job well, or else he wouldn't have done it either I guess. But it was good experience. Italy was a bad place at that time, just had been just pounded by the Germans, and by us, and was not to great. But, I was at an airfield stationed near an airfield near Grosseto, which is about half way between Rome and Pisa. It was a nice place, a nice little town there; fascist town, very fascist, but we got along alright. No trouble there. Right near the end of the war, we got moved up in the foothills of the Alps, still in Italy of course, and we moved up there and spent about a month up there. In fact we were scheduled to take off, we flew there, they flew us, and we were scheduled to take off early in the morning, and we couldn't go because the Germans still had the airfield. And we left then early afternoon and flew up there. That was quite

an experience because it was right, Germans were right all around there. But we, I never had any, you know, no problems. Well I saw some, they captured some. Some of the infantry around, they captured some, and I saw them. But, it's a beautiful place in the foothills of the Alps. You could see the Alps from there. Beautiful, beautiful little town.

Koenig: So you had said that earlier, that you had known nothing of Lincoln Place until later on. How did you eventually come to find Lincoln Place?

Ambuehl: To be honest with you I don't know what brought me to here. Some friend obviously, I can't honestly remember. Apparently some friend brought me, or told me. They had dances every, I don't know whether it was every Friday night, but at least some Friday nights here at the community center. And some of the local kids, one of them had an orchestra, and as far as I know they played for nothing, it didn't cost anything to get in. Some how or other I came, came down to one of those, and that was the change of everything. I met my wife there, and we started dating. She, when I went off to the military, she stayed and waited, and wasn't three years later we were... I wasn't quite out of the Army a month when we got married, and we've been married ever since.

Koenig: So tell me about your family life, if you don't mind.

Ambuehl: My family life, well, as I say we got married, her parents lived just down the street about five houses. We stayed there for a little while. We bought this property. There was an eight room, what we call a shotgun house, a duplex, here. We tore that down, built the garage, and put all the lumber in the garage, did that one fall. Then the next spring, we started building. Her dad was a bricklayer, by trade. One of her brothers was always home, and she had one brother two years older, and one brother four years younger. And one of them was always here, and between one brother and I and her dad,

we built the house. We stayed in it ever since. Well then, family life, well then when I came back of course, from the army, I went back to the depot to work. At one point, I did civil service of course, and at one point I just got so fed up I couldn't stand it anymore, and I quit. And then I went into the filling station business for a while. I owned a filling station out on what was then old highway 66, just north of Granite City. Had that for about two years. We got word, news was coming that they were going to build a new highway, and change that highway, so I thought that I better get out while I could; while the getting was good, and I sold it. And then I went to work for a contractor working for the government. And of course my previous experience helped a lot. I really liked that because, if you worked hard you got ahead, and if you didn't you were gone. Worked there about nine years, and then the government decided it would be cheaper to have those jobs civil service instead of contract, and they blanketed it all straight into civil service. And there I was back where I didn't want to be again. And then I was in my mid forties I think by that time, and I figured I better go and not go looking for a job in my mid forties. So, I stayed, and of course it paid off because I ultimately retired from there. After we built the house and moved in, we later found out we were unable to have any children, and we, my wife's folks immigrated here from Macedonia, and she still has, or at that time still had a grandmother and several aunts over there. Ultimately through correspondence back and fourth, and the, I forgot one of her first cousins was married to a Yugoslav colonel who became the military attaché in Washington from Yugoslavia, and they came to visit. And they said, "Oh boy, you want kids?" We had tried to adopt, locally, and weren't getting very far. And said, "Oh you can go over there and get them." Because of her background, you had to have, somebody had connections, you

know. What do you call it, be Macedonian, and she was so, we could do that. We laid all the groundwork, and we went over there. I took about three and a half weeks off of work. We went over and adopted two children over there. Actually on my birthday, in 1958, 58, 1958. No 1959, 1959 on my birthday we adopted the two children. One was two and a half, a boy two and a half, and the girl was eleven months at the time. We brought them home, like I say we were back home in less than a month, and it has been great ever since. The boy lives here in Granite City, is married, and has three girls. The daughter is married, has two girls, she, about five years, about four or five years ago, I guess five years ago, moved to Panama City, Florida. That's where they are living. In fact we just came back from there last Monday. We had spent a week with them.

Koenig: You had mentioned that your wife is of Macedonian descent, and you had also mentioned previous to the interview that are from German and majorly Swiss decent. How have the two cultures been preserved in your family?

Ambuehl: Well, actually the Swiss and German, oh, what shall I say, is not a big thing because I don't, outside of a few words maybe, mostly words you wouldn't want to hear, like, you know in all language you learn those words first. But I don't really know German to speak of. My Grandmother and Father spoke a little German, but I was not around enough to learn. As far I can see, that was not an issue. I could have been Irish, or anything else, and it wouldn't have mattered. Wouldn't have made any difference. Because I think it was four or five maybe six generations that they, earlier that they came over here. So that was not an issue. Like I said, my wife's parents came over though. They were married in, over there, in Europe. But they came over, so that played a bit of a role, because they, they spoke in their language, in Macedonian a lot around then. My

wife still speaks it well. I was around it enough I never learned to speak much, but I always told them that I understand enough, so you better not talk about me, because I'll know what you're saying. That's sort of a joke that I always tell them. I don't see that there was any, you know...my wife was born here, went to school here, and although she probably didn't speak a whole lot of English when she to, well she did, because there other ethnic groups around here that she played with growing up. She had to speak English to get along with them, because some of her best friends were Armenian, and those languages are not close enough. They had to speak English together. So, I'd say, I don't feel that it's been any problem at all. Maybe she'd tell you something different. It would be just me not the ethnicity.

Koenig: Speaking of the different ethnic groups in the area, in the past, from my research I've seen that Granite City has sometimes put Lincoln Place on the fringe, and sometimes ignored Lincoln Place due to the different ethnic groups. Has that affected you any, or have seen examples of this throughout your time being here?

Ambuehl: Yes, I am well aware of it. When I was going to high school, I knew that Lincoln Places, and for that matter, West Granite was not considered some of the best, you know, the best families to live there. The well-to-do families all lived around the Wilson Park, you know, in the nicer area. What they called then the nicer areas, but personally, like I say, I was aware of that, and in fact when I first started dating my wife, I know my mother told me, "be careful" she said. "I hear that there is always trouble down there. There are people knifing each other and slicing each other. Be careful." Well those weren't the people I was going to see, but of course I had to walk through areas. I walked back then, but I never had any trouble, I never had any problem with any

one, anytime, because ethnicity. I think a lot of that changed to a great extent in 1940 when the Granite City high school basketball team became state champions. Well, not everyone, all but about three or four of the team was from Lincoln Place. And, every Hungarian, Macedonian, Armenian, every nationality but American except those four, and that changed things a lot in my opinion. From an outsider I think I'd be more objective of it maybe than anything. I've never, I mean there is, people often say, "You live in Lincoln Place?" Yes, I'm fine down here. Most of our friends, who use to party with us, or have visited, most of them have moved out, but I'm very happy here. We have good neighbors. No problem, actually, I think there are less problems for police down here than there are in some of the much better parts of town. And, I know that for a fact. I don't see any, I have no problems.

Koenig: You were speaking of all of the different ethnic groups around. Is there a sharing of other people's culture and ethnicity amongst the residence of Lincoln Place?

Ambuehl: A sharing, I'm not too sure what you mean. I would say that there is understanding. And even back, like I say, most of the, there are very few left here really. Very few ethnic people left. I could probably count them on a couple hands, of the original. The people who lived here when we built our house, there are very, very few left. But going back some years, there was understanding between them, yes, and there was a lot of similarities that, you know, parents always told their kids, "Marry your own, marry in your own group. It's better. You get along better." Well, maybe. But, I can count a lot of them that didn't get along in their own groups, and a lot of them that did marry outside their own groups that did get along. But, I guess it's not for me to judge. I think there is a lot of understanding. I don't know about sharing. Probably sharing in the

sense, back... there was a little bit of, what shall I say, a little bit of feeling about the people in Lincoln Place, and of course, they commonly shared that, because it was directed at anybody who was from here. So, they shared in that regard.

Koenig: You had spoken of change throughout time, people moving out and moving in. We had taken a walking tour, and seen all the buildings, and buildings that are not there any more. What do you remember about change from Lincoln Place?

Ambuehl: Well, in the, this house is, we moved in 1947, so this house is almost 50, about 54 years old. I think it was October for that matter. I could tell you this, there is probably only, I bet there aren't ten houses that have been built since ours, down here. So, that shows you some change. But, now there's been a number of them torn down, and just not replaced, because you see quite a few of the empty lots. But there has been in the last, maybe ten years, I see a big, you know, about that length of time, a big movement to improve their homes. A lot of the homes have been updated: siding, fixed up considerably. That is good for an area. Of course, getting rid of some of the bad houses, getting them torn down into empty lots is good too. It hasn't changed a whole lot, of course like I say; the people have almost completely turned over around here. I don't know the people like I used to know them. I used to know half or more of the people here. I could right to their house, I knew their name, I knew everything and now I don't. Very few in fact.

Koenig: On that same note, is Lincoln Place improving with this change, or digressing with this change, because your neighborhood isn't as friendly possibly anymore?

Ambuehl: Well, its, I think I would like it better if our friends were still here, and close. However, I don't think that it has hurt a great deal, like I say; I see the neighborhood and

the buildings improving considerably. We still have the same friends, even though they live in another part of town. I think that is the main reason that I don't know as many people down here any more, because I'm not going out looking, and not particularly interested. We have our friends, either the church or the old friends that we had, that she grew up with mainly. My old friends that I grew up with in school, when I went in the army, we scattered to the four winds, and most of them, one of my good friends got killed in the war. Most of them married out of state somewhere, California. A couple of them various places, and I've never seen them since. Never seen them, and I don't know what they do. Even the minister of the church I went to. I went to the Presbyterian Church there, his son...he was devastated. His son even got married in California, and didn't get married by his father, and he was devastated. It's one of the results, I guess, of the war. We just scattered away, and we never saw each other again. So, I had to make new friends, and of course I made new friends. Mostly of her friends. It has been fine with me.

Koenig: In the future, how would you like to see Lincoln Place preserved, or remembered?

Ambuehl: I guess the way I would say that it would be remembered is, as a mixture of mainly foreign people back in the older days, remembered as being honest, hardworking people. Mainly that. All honest people. When my kids were in school, in grade school, sometimes she worked, sometimes she didn't, but when we did, we left the door open so kids could come home from school and come in. Well, although our door is usually open most of the time during the day when we're here, but when we leave it is locked. That's some of the changes, probably all over town. That's not just this place or another place.

I think that's just a change of times. Back then, you just didn't worry about things like that. Everybody was honest, hardworking, very hardworking people the foreign people. They are very hardworking, and lived good lives for the most part. That's the way I would like to see Lincoln Place portrayed and, or remembered.

Koenig: My information had said that you are a member of the Lincoln Place Athletic Association. Would you please tell me some about that?

Ambuehl: That's the Lincoln Athletic Club. Not the Lincoln Place.

Koenig: Ok

Ambuehl: We tried to do away with Lincoln Place. It is just Lincoln Athletic Club. That was a club that was formed back in 19, best of my recollection; it was started in 1946 or '47. I'm not real sure, not real sure which. And I don't think that I was a charter member. Her older brother was a charter member, and quite a few of our friends were, and I think that they had chartered, and maybe were going about five, six months when her brother said, "Come on over, come to the meeting." And I got involved. I've been secretary here of late for a long time. So, I know what the purpose is, because I have to fill out the forms that get sent to the state every year. It is to further develop the athletic, civic and athletic, something of the community of Lincoln Place, the Lincoln Place community. Over the years we have, well we've had up to, oh we've had at one time, at the best time we probably had 150 members in that club. At the worst of times, which is right now, we have about I think 8. A lot of them died of course, and just moved away, and quite. Just various things. From time to time, we started out meeting in the community house. Later on, we got a little money, and rented a little storefront building. Back in the old days, when slot machines were legal, we got slot machines, and we made

bushels of money. Of course, we had money to help kids that needed help. We spent a lot of money sponsoring athletic teams. I myself took a group of boys. I was in baseball. The old Khoury league, which you or may not have heard of, from St. Louis. I took a group of boys at age eight, and I took them until they were age sixteen. That was the maximum in the Khoury league. You had to get out then. I had that team all the way through. Many of the boys were the same boys throughout. Some would quit, and others would come in, various things. You know. There was a nucleus of the same boys all eight years that I had it. One year we won a championship. I think it was one of the last years that we won a championship. The boys just have never forgotten that. I run into one sometimes, and I vaguely think, "That might be so-and-so." "Oh, how are you Mr. Ambuehl?" Its still Mr. Ambuehl you know. They just, I got a world of benefit from it, and I know all of them did too. They enjoyed it, they remember it, it makes me feel good that I was able to do it. I can remember, I use to pick up the boys, some of them right here at the club house. Most of the games were at the park. I'd fill that car. There would be seven, six in the back seat, four of us in the front seat, and two or three sitting in the trunk with their feet hanging out. Of course you couldn't do that now. We would get them all out there. It was wonderful experience. In addition to that, one of the fellows was into boxing. We, the LAC club sponsored a boxing team for, oh gosh, four, five, six years. I don't know. They did pretty good. They went to Golden Gloves, and various competitions around. All of it, I think, went up to Golden Gloves. We would have parties, we sponsored parties. There was a mother's club down in Lincoln Place too, that we worked with closely, and they would, we would furnish, for the most part furnish the money, and they would do the things. We've had Halloween parties for the kids,

Christmas parties, Easter egg hunts, and things like that for the kids. We spent a lot of money, and I think did a lot of good. Like I say, these kids remember that, even though they are up about some of them, nearly ready to retire now. They remember that. It was a good thing. It helped a lot of kids, probably kept a lot of kids out of trouble, because that was one of the things that most of us who had teams of some sort, I know the boxing coach did it, and I did it, you get into trouble, you're probably not going to play. You want me to relate a little story that I just always will remember until I die? One day, I'm picking up the boys, and I head on over, I won't say who, but near his house to pick him up. They know where I'm going. They say, "So-and-so is not going today, he can't go." I said, "How come, we need him. He is our first baseman, we need him." "No, he can't go today." I said, "Come on. What's the matter, what's the trouble?" "Well, he's in jail." I said "What!" This is about a fourteen-year-old boy. I said, "What! What happened?" Well, he got caught stealing some tires off a car parked in the street. I said, "Oh my gosh." I said, "I guess I had better not park my car in the street then." "Oh no! No, he wouldn't take yours! He likes you!" (Laughing) I'll remember that forever. He, he had it, that poor boy had some bad influence. Some much older people were influencing him, and I think he spent some time in prison. I felt sorry for him. He was just a wonderful little kid. He just got off on the wrong foot. I tried, but the other guys had more to offer I guess than I did. What are you going to do? But, like I say, we had the slot machines for a while, and then they would be out, and then they would be in. You know. Then we bought another building, a bigger building when we were in our heyday. Its still there, and it is a tavern today. We, I think we did a lot of good with kids, a lot of good in the neighborhood. We just did a lot of good things, good things with the

money we had. We spent our money well, and there was a lot of it back in those days when the slot machines were here.

Koenig: What activities is the Athletic Club currently involved in?

Ambuehl: Practically nothing. There is so few, we only meet once, twice maybe three times a year. We are going to meet in December, and go out for a Christmas party with our wives. We had a meeting, like I said to you earlier, some of them wanted to disband. In fact I was one. I would have been ready to disband, because we're really not much. We have given, given a lot of money away to various things. We gave quite a bit of money to the sports hall of fame out at the high school. We gave some money for new lighting for the football field. We just gave some money for a sign that they are putting out at the high school, an electronic notification board that will be out there replacing one where you had to put the letters up in. That is going to be dedicated in the name of Andy Philips, who was the captain of the 1940 state champion basketball team, and who had died about a year ago incidentally. That's going to be in. We gave quite a bit of money. We've got around, I think, five thousand dollars left. Four or five thousand, and we give it from time to time, when we see a good, worthy cause. Mainly to do with kids, the high school, or getting something special that isn't in the high school budget. Something like that. It's going to be very, not a whole lot for it in the future, I don't see. Because we're all getting old (laughing)!

Koenig: What was the main reason that was decided to...

Ambuehl: Continue?

Koenig: Yes.

Ambuehl: Some of the younger ones just don't want to give it up, their memories of the organization. A couple of the boys were on my baseball team, but they're now members and they just don't want it to, they just have such fond memories of the Lincoln Athletic Club, they just don't want it to die. They mainly voted. I wasn't strong either way. I, they want to keep it? Fine I'll stay. As long as I'm around, I'll stay. So, they voted to stay.

Koenig: Do you think that there is still hope for the club? Maybe there can be a...

Ambuehl: Revitalization or something? I sort of doubt it, because, like I say, it started when all the people lived right down here. That was the thing to help the neighborhood. Now the members are scattered all over town. In fact, let me think real quickly. I'm sure, yes; I'm the only one of the members, the eight that still lives here. The rest, in fact, on of them lives in Maryville, the rest various places around town. I just don't see, younger ones coming to sufficiently to revitalize it. I hope I'm wrong. I just don't see it.

Koenig: Ok. Were you involved in any other organizations throughout Lincoln Place?

Ambuehl: No, not actually. No

Koenig: Ok, just curious. What is your fondest memory, or your fondest story of living in Lincoln Place?

Ambuehl: One of my fondest stories is the one I just told you, which isn't a good story to have to tell, but it is amusing. I guess I should say that it is an amusing story. One of the fondest stories, I don't know. We had a, there was a family living over I think on Spruce Street. That's another thing that I will never forget. I don't know, its sort of sad in a sense. Probably started some Halloween. We would give out nickels and a piece of candy, you know. These kids, this family, they had about twelve, thirteen kids. The

father was a drunk, they were hurting. They would come, I know on Halloween, they would come back three, four, five times for that nickel and that piece of candy. It got so, if we weren't home, well I guess they would knock on the door. I know they did, because if we were home they would knock on the door, "Can I have a nickel?" I usually gave it to them. I was working, not making a lot of money, but I had a good steady job with the government. Some of those little kids, if we weren't home, they would sit right out there on that little curb by the sidewalk and wait for us to come. We'd come down the street, turn in the driveway, and there they were, two or three of them sitting there. I knew what they wanted. They wanted nickels (laughing). It was sort of amusing and funny. Oh, I don't know. I guess some of the good memories too would be when we gave Christmas or Halloween parties, or something over at the club house. The kids would just swarm in, you know. Back in, forty to fifty years ago, you know, things were a little tougher than they are now. Kids didn't have much. They got a good size candy bar, or some other refreshments, apples or oranges, or a bag of something at Christmas. That was a big thing for them, and to see their faces...that was very rewarding. Very rewarding. (Pause) Like I say, I'm very, still very happy living here. It's not like the old days. You know, I won't see those happy faces at the clubhouse this Halloween. But, still, it's a good area. It's a good area. I like it. Like I say, there is very little trouble. There used to be trouble. Ten years, six, seven years ago, some kids down there tried to form a gang. They were making a little trouble. Breaking in here and there. But, that has past by the wayside. I guess one or more of them has been in prison. The other ones thought better of it. They didn't want to go I guess. So the changed their tune.

Things are very quiet. I just don't think that I would be any happier living out two doors from the park, than I am here. I know I wouldn't. I'm very happy.

We had our family get together, mainly with her family. I only have one brother. He lives over in South St. Louis. We saw each other, but not as often as we saw her family. We would be together with her family more, either at her folk's house, or here at our house. The kids, her younger brother's kids, because we were a little older when we got our kids, so our kids then were about the age of her younger sister's and younger brother's. They would just have a ball together, you know. Her sister had a boy and a girl. Her brother had, I think they had a boy and a girl too only. They just got along famously. We had a lot of good times together, at Christmas and Thanksgiving. Often we would have them over here, and go down in the basement, have a big long table, and have a spread. Everybody would run around and do what they wanted to, sort of. I don't think there was anything collective with the ethnic stuff. It was all American. Her parents tried to push the American stuff as opposed holding down, like some families they knew tried to keep their kids on the ethnic side. Of course her parents wouldn't, because her older brother married other than Macedonian. My wife married other than Macedonian. Her sister, married, did not marry. Only her youngest brother, who is, I think ten years younger than my wife, he married a Macedonian girl. The rest all married others. So, that sort of put a crimp in any ethnic things, in my opinion. Maybe she'd tell you differently. That's the way I see it. There was nothing real special. We just had family, close family things, that's all.

Koenig: How do you believe living in Lincoln Place has changed you personally?

Ambuehl: Me personally, well let me go back a lot farther if you want to. I've always said, my moving to Granite City might, might have saved me from getting into a lot of trouble. One of my best friends ended up in prison. And I just, the thought of it sometimes makes me shudder that, who knows maybe that night, or whatever happened then, I really don't know for sure what happened, but I might have been with my best friend. And who knows what would have happened. But, the moving to Granite City, I had to make good friends, new friends I mean, and of course that put a little, what. Well, I got into, I was very lucky. Where we moved, I was just a short walk away from a Presbyterian Church. So, we went to that church. Those, for the most part, well I'd say one hundred percent; they were all real good kids. Good homes, good kids, and I bummed with them, and now coming on to Lincoln Place, I don't know, I feel that it was nothing but positive, nothing but good. I'm not sure that I can explain it. Only that probably the only thing I can say is, that the people down here, all her friends, which are my friends, came from like I said earlier, from hard working, honest hardworking families. They, for the most part, turned out honest, hardworking people. I think that was a good statement. That's about all I can say about it. I mean, I really feel that it was positive for me, moving down here, and marrying like I did. I think it was positive, definitely positive thing for me. I don't know what I would have done, or been if it hadn't gone the way it did. But, as far as I'm concerned, it couldn't have ended up much better.

Koenig: Ok, well, before we wrap up, I wanted to give you an opportunity to express anything, thoughts or ideas that you would personally like to share. If there is a story that you had thought about before the interview took place that you had wanted to share.

Ambuehl: I don't know any stories, I could just tell you a little more maybe about myself.

I, like I said, I got back into civil service then. Ultimately retired. I retired from civil service with thirty years time, on my sixtieth birthday. That has been, I've been retired now a little over nineteen years. We're both very involved in church work. Sometimes, I just don't know. I can't get anything done here at home because we're so busy. I also have a little, I don't know whether you'd call it a part time job, it isn't quite considered that, but I have an appointment in the city. I'm a police commissioner. Mainly the police commissioners, what we do is hire, promote and discipline firemen and policemen. We don't have anything to do with running the departments, but we hire, promote, and discipline. If discipline is necessary, hopefully it isn't. That takes some of my time.

When we're in a hiring mode, you know, we have to go through the hiring process every two years, whether we have anybody to hire or not. That's state law. We are very, quite busy, and I spend quite a bit of time. Otherwise, in the last, maybe even six months I'll bet I haven't spent, other than a couple meetings, I haven't spent six hours on it, in five, six months. But, there will come the time when we will be very busy again. And I spend more time on it, but it's just that I want to. But I haven't had that much to do. Very interesting, I hope that, well as long as I think this mayor is mayor, I'll stay on, because he appoints us. We're appointed. I enjoy very much my association with the departments, and the people in it. I just enjoy it. I don't know any stories.

Koenig: How did you become appointed to this position? What was the process?

Ambuehl: I would have to say; I feel that a fellow who grew up two doors away from me, at that time was the chief of police. He had been appointed police chief. His brother was an alderman, like I said, they grew up there. The brother still lives there, the alderman,

with his mother. The other fellow, the chief was married, and lived somewhere else. But, the alderman one, one had, a commissioner was going to resign, or had resigned, I'm sure, I think was going to. He recommended to the mayor that he appoint me. I may add one more thing, at least one of the commissioners, there are three commissioners, at least one of them has to be from the other political part that the two are from. Well, I joke about it, I tell people, "Well, the reason I got it, is because I'm the only Republican in Granite City." (Laughing) Well, that isn't quite true, but its close. In reality, a friend of mine, and he was a good friend, an alderman, and he recommended the mayor, and I'm sure that the mayor spoke to the police chief, who also knew me for many years. I'm sure that without his ok, I know wouldn't have gotten it. He obviously okayed it, so I was appointed. Then, during, while that mayor, I think he was in five or six years. Then we got a new mayor, who is the present mayor. He had been a policeman, and ended up assistant police chief while I was a commissioner, and we got to be very good friends. He understood me, and I understood him. He knew that I was sincere and honest, and wanting to do the best I could for the departments, and was obviously convinced of it. He has been mayor now, I think he is in his third term. So, I feel that he is obviously happy or satisfied with what is going on. I assume I'll stay for some time to come. We're appointed in three-year terms, but if he wanted me out, I'd leave for whenever it was. If I knew he wanted me out, I'd go. Like I say, I enjoy it. I think we're doing some good. Keep trying the best to keep politics out of those things, which from time to time get in some of them. We're trying to keep politics out, and get the best people on the job, and I think we're doing that. It's very, very rewarding for me, at this old age, that I can do something like that. Do some good for the area.

Koenig: My final question is, what would you tell somebody who is thinking of moving to Lincoln Place? What would your message be to that person?

Ambuehl: I have to say, I doubt whether that will happen. (Laughing) Just because I know history, and I know people. But if somebody asked me, I would recommend it. If they can find a house down here that they're happy with, I would certainly recommend it. I think it's a good place to live, a safe place to live. I, like I say, I personally think it's just as good as any other part of town. I know that over the years it has not had a good reputation, for on reason or another. Having lived here, I can only say that it was a reputation. It was not true, because I know it wasn't true, most of it, you know, the bad things they said about it, it's not true. But, it was a reputation it got. Lower end of town, the wrong side of the tracks. I think that's one thing. Those railroad tracks up there about four or five blocks that go right through town, anything that side was the wrong side of the tracks. Well, that's a mental thing I think. I know there is, being around the police like I am, I hear where calls go. I know where they go, and where the trouble is. I know the downtown area, and East Granite area is much worse than this bad side of the tracks. That's where all the calls are. They have very few, every time I get around a policeman, I say, "Have any calls in Lincoln Place?" "No, no not any." That's a fact. They haven't had any. There may be an accident down here or something, but there just isn't any trouble here. That's, that gives me a good feeling too. Like I say, I would know if, because of my contacts, if there was any trouble down here, and I'd be watching. But, there just isn't any, and it's great. I would, like I say, the problem would be, in somebody wanting to move to Lincoln Place would be, that they may not find the kind of

a house they want to live in. But if they do, go for it, because it's a good place.

Absolutely, I'd recommend it highly.

Koenig: Well, Mr. Ambuehl, thank you very much. I appreciate your time.

Ambuehl: Alright.