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Jesiek, William and Lois Jesiek-Kayes Oral History Interview: Longtime Residents of Macatawa Park

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Interview With Bill Jesiek
and Lois Jesiek-Kayes

Conducted June 5, 1991
by Joseph A. Kuiper

Hope College Oral History Project, 1991
Subject: Macatawa Park

Joe- Can I have your name and your current address please?

Bill- I'm William A. Jesiek, and my summer address is just Box 7, Macatawa; and winter is Punta Gorda Florida; do you want the complete address?

Joe- Sure.

Bill- 3265 Sugar Loaf Key Road, #44b Punta Gorda, Florida, 33955; and in the summer it's Macatawa, Box 7, Macatawa, 49434.

Lois- And I'm Lois Jesiek-Kayes, 2085 South Shore Drive, Holland.

Joe- Now, what years do you recall being at Macatawa Park?

Bill- Well, I was born at Macatawa Park in 1918, August 27, 1918, and lived there pretty much all my life except for World War Two, but then I came back and worked at the shipyard until 1973.

Lois- I was also born at Macatawa Park and right after high school I went away to college, got a job and then married and did not come back until recently; I spent summers there but I have not lived in Holland until about five years ago.

Joe- When you lived at Macatawa where did you reside?

Bill- Well there were actually, there were two places where I resided. When I was very young there was an apartment situation, associated with the shipyard, and that's where I was born and raised and we left there when I was five years old, and my father and uncle built two houses across the street from the shipyard, and one of those is still standing and one was demolished about five years ago.

Lois- Oh, ages ago.

Bill- That long? Was it? Okay, ages ago (laughs). But Lois
where were you . . .

Lois- I'm wondering about the five years Bill; you and Don and
Harold were born above the shipyard, and then the house we
lived in was built for me the year I was born.

Bill- So it was later.

Lois- 1925.

Bill- It was. Okay.

Lois- And I think all three of you were born over the shipyard.

Bill- I think so, I think so.

Joe- So living in that area, you spent an awful lot of time at
Macatawa Park, especially during the summers I would
imagine.

Lois- Oh all year round. You know back at that time nobody
travelled we were there twelve months out of the year; all
the way through high school really I don't think anybody
went very much.

Bill- (To Lois) During high school, what?

Lois- Nobody went very much, everybody was there year round. It
was after that mother and dad went away for maybe six months
out of the year and you guys got to traveling, but otherwise
we were there the whole time.

Joe- Today when you look back on Macatawa Park, what are the
first things that come to mind.

Lois- I loved it.

Bill- It was a very enjoyable place to grow up, very enjoyable.

It was all the, it was especially nice because in the summer time we would meet a whole different group of people. And then in the winter we'd have all of the wonderful friends from the schools and that sort of thing; so we met many people from St. Louis and Grand Rapids and that sort of thing. The beach was great, and we were both active in sailing and racing when we were young. And so it was a super place. Great place to grow up.

Lois- As a child I can still remember Labor Day, and that was probably one of the loneliest days of my life. All of the resorters closed up the cottages, packed up their suitcases and went home. And there were maybe four or five other families and ourselves at Mac for the whole winter then. The post office was open, still the postmaster was there, the Coast-Guard station was there, and maybe three or four other families at the most. So it was lonely but it was wonderful.

Joe- So a lot of the families who lived there year round actually left at the holidays?

Lois- At that time most of the cottages weren't year round; everybody left and came back around Memorial Day.

Bill- Oh yeah, everybody left.

Lois- Yes, oh it was terrible, I can remember Labor Day as just "sigh" (laugh).

Bill- Well we used to say now they give the place back to us, you know. But none of the cottages were winterized or had any

kind of heating equipment or anything, they were just cottages.

Joe- I understand an awful lot of people arrived at Macatawa by steamship. Do you remember any of those?

Bill- I don't remember the exact names of those boats, but that was a big part of the area. They would come from Chicago, and there was the Ottawa Beach Hotel, and the Macatawa Hotel, Waukazoo, (To Lois)- any other? And this was part of our dad's original business activities, in that the boats, the large boats, would stop at either what they called the Interurban pier, probably the Interurban pier, and then the passengers had to get to the Ottawa Beach Hotel, and Waukazoo, and so dad had these small ferry boats and transferred many, many people in those things. And then the traffic back and forth between Ottawa Beach and such was active for quite some time. (To Lois)- Anything else?

Joe- How often do you recall the boats coming in to drop off passengers?

Bill- I don't remember their schedule, do yo Lois?

Lois- I don't. That's a little bit before me. I remember them coming in by cars and trains and things. I don't remember all this with the boats.

Bill- Well, they had a definite schedule. And, I remember seeing them come in, the big side wheelers back in those days, rather than the direct propulsion boats.

Lois- Except for the hotel people though, the resorters came down

and spent the summer, they really moved in with all their help and everything else.

Bill- Well, that's true.

Joe- You mentioned that most of the people you remember coming down to the park came by rail or by automobile. I have heard stories about the Interurban. Is that where many of the people came from?

Lois- Yeah, came down that way. The resorters, no, I don't know about the people coming in on the boats they were just maybe vacationers, week at a time, staying at the hotel.

Bill- That's probably true, I remember there used to be such a big thing about these, oh sort of, not summer camps, but summer activities you know. (To Lois)- Remember Bob Wilson used to do so much of that? He would go to Ottawa Beach and then be the swimming coach for the summer, and the softball coach and that sort of thing and then all the people would pick up and go back. And they used to have softball teams, and Macatawa would play Ottawa Beach and Ottawa Beach would play Castle Park, and they had kind of a tournament type of thing. But these boats did come in on quite a regular schedule, I remember seeing them now. And it must be that in some cases they went on into town or something like that, because I remember we used to. . .

Lois- They stopped at Jenison park, I think.

Bill- Well they did, because I remember when they were coming back they used to pull, pull water into them so much, and as

little kids we would be on the beach and when that water went out we would see how far out we could run on the beach and then when it came back we would run back (laughs). And I remember doing that quite often so as I said they must have had quite a schedule.

Joe- Did you ever get on one of the boats to look around or anything?

Bill- No, I never did, I never did.

Joe- Did you ever ride the Interurban?

Bill- Oh yeah I did, just a short distance. It used to go right down past the ship yard, and it used to go right down the city of Holland and out along the shore. Yes I remember riding that thing one time, in fact the guy let me turn that big switch and start it up and run it a little bit.

Joe- What was it like to ride in; was it a smooth ride?

Bill- Well I thought they were kind of you know, before the days of springs and things like that. It was kind of caboose-like.

Joe- Do you recall any particular people who stand out in your mind when you think back to Macatawa Park?

Bill- Prominent people?

Joe- Any people that you recall who come to mind when you think about it.

Bill- I didn't, I mean all those friends I had, the Kellies, the Martindales, and the, Pattingales, Walkers, and . . .

Lois- A lot of them would be people that kept their boats at the

shipyard that Bill would know. I think more so than the people down at Mac. Like I remember Capt. Clemens and some of these people at the Coast Guard Station that mother and dad knew. . .

Bill- Yeah, that's right.

Lois- Van Regenmorters, Rosies, and . . .

Bill- Yeah, I didn't think about that.

Joe- I understand the man who wrote the Wizard of Oz, Frank Baum, used to stay down at Macatawa Park in the summers, did ever meet him?

Bill- I never met him, he was an older man.

Lois- I didn't know anything about him.

Bill- Because he, if you look back in the history of the Macatawa Bay Yacht Club his name shows up as being on the board of directors or something like that. That was before the turn of the century. So I never knew anything about him.

Joe- Do you recall the Macatawa Hotel?

Bill- Yes.

Lois- They had the smoothest sidewalk in the world for rollerskating. (laughs)

Bill- Yeah, I remember it. I remember the lobby, and I don't know why I remember being up on the second floor, and I don't think I was ever in any rooms or anything like that, but, then they had a restaurant. . .

Lois- They had a separate dining room, for quite a while. That separate building on the left hand side.

Bill- Yes.

Lois- No that was the kitchen I guess.

Bill- That was the kitchen. They actually had a dining room in the main hotel. Then they also had kind of a strip mall type thing, you might say if you want to describe it that way for back in those days. They had a grocery store, another post office, and Mr. Camburn used to have kind of a . . .

Lois- The drugstore. I worked in the drugstore serving ice cream and worked behind the counter.

Joe- Would you say that the Macatawa Hotel played a prominent role in the social atmosphere of the whole park? Was it the center of social attention, as it were?

Bill- I don't really know how active the whole thing. . .

Lois- We were so involved with the shipyard we didn't really go down there that much because everything you know by. . . the shipyard was a summertime business so we were busy there, and I imagine Angel's Flight and the hotel were probably really biggies, because something drew the people down there. And of course the beach was phenomenal. But as far as joining into the activities and things we really didn't.

Joe- Did the marina that you were running at the time rent out boats and that sort of thing? I understand there were a lot of liveries and so forth that would rent out paddle boats and things of that nature.

Lois- In the beginning it started a lot as row boats and fishing,
(To Bill)- Didn't it? See they started in Jenison Park and
then they moved down to where the, the present one is, and
they built boats at Jenison Park too. . .

Bill- Yes, they did, they built some of the boats they used for
ferrying the, the. . . .

Lois - And lots of fish shanties, lots of rowboats, lots of
minnows, that type of thing was the very basic beginnings of
it.

Bill- And then Jenison Park thing, in I don't know what year it
was, burned down. And then dad was encouraged to move over
to the present site. (To Lois)- Isn't this true that he was
encouraged a lot by, he always used to speak about a fellow
by the name of Charlie Floyd who was marketing director for
the Interurban Railway. And he was always, as I remember,
interested in seeing that that little fishing business would
prosper, because he wanted people to get out of Grand Rapids
and pay a dime a head, and become involved in his fishing
activity. Course that great big Jenison Park thing was a, a
big amusement park. .

Lois- That was amusement. I think they mostly built boats there,
I think its when they started the present marina that there
was a lot of fishing boats and fish shanties. I've got
post-cards where dad's marked how many fish shanties are out
on the lake, and that type of thing, he was proud of that,
so maybe it went from building a boat or two at Jenison,

into a big fishing thing, and then from there to building more boats and then storing boats.

Bill- Well, they slowly, when that passenger delivery business began to slow up, and that was mainly because of the automobiles, people started to drive over from Chicago and take trains and such rather than those ferry boats, and then that Ferry boat business kind of, kind of diminished, and that was when they slowly turned their attention to putting anchors out, and having sailboats out there, or boats on moorings, and exactly when they built those first docks with all those covered slips and all that sort of stuff I don't remember when they built that or if it was before I was born that they built those things, but that was a transition to start and to. . .

Lois- Pleasure boating more. . .

Bill- HMMM?

Lois- Pleasure boating, kind of.

Bill- Yeah, staring into the pleasure boating business.

Lois- People owned their own boats and. . .

Bill- That's right. And, at one point they built this small marine railway and it had to be before 1934 that they built the first marine railway, and started, and really kind of started into the concept of the marina business as it has finally emerged today. And dad used to remark about the automobiles, how when the automobiles came in it just, everything kind of stopped and they had to turn their

attention to other things, and that's when they, that's when they really started into the pleasure boating business, taking care of boats, servicing them. And they used to, they used to have two big twenty eight foot Chriscraft speedboats and they'd go out to the pier and you know hawk rides you know twenty five cents a piece for down to the Kollen Park or Saugatuk, and they did that for quite a few years.

Lois- And people would rent the speedboats by the hour, by the afternoon. . .

Bill- Yeah, that's right, that's right.

Lois- A famous one to us was the Blitzen. (To Bill)- Doesn't that mean lightning in German or something?

Bill- Yes it does (laughs). And then they had a sailboat, and they would have a professional aboard the sailboat and you know rent it out for half a day, anything to generate income.

Lois- But before the speedboats, I can still remember the ferry boats going back and forth that dad had, whether he was taking people over to Ottawa Beach or what he was doing, but I can remember the ferry boats.

Bill- That was all part of the, of the, of the large steamers coming in, and then that was still, after the steamers ceased to come quite as often, there was still an activity of running people from Macatawa to Ottawa Beach, and I even remember they had a contract to take the mail from the

Macatawa side to the Ottawa Beach side. I can still see those little mailbags. In fact I used to run them over myself once in a while. But that's true, the ferryboats stayed quite a while.

Joe- Since people were taking ferry boats over to the Ottawa Beach side and so forth, did it seem to you that there was a lot of interaction between people on the two different sides, or were they more isolated groups?

Lois- I think they wanted to be on one side or the other.

Bill- And then I think they were visiting

Lois- I don't think the people at Ottawa Beach came to dances at Macatawa Park or anything like that.

Bill- I think it was more a matter of, they were just kind of visiting back and forth, or some how or other they would wind up on the Macatawa side, maybe they drove up on the Macatawa side and they had to get across. But that, when it started to diminish it . . .

Lois- Well the Ottawa Beach Hotel burned down a long time before the Mac too.

Bill- That's right.

Lois- In fact what, the Ottawa Beach was gone what, the early twenties I think.

Bill- And when that burned that, that really did in the ferry boat business. (To Lois)- When did that burn, 25?

Lois- Early 20s some time.

Bill- I remember that thing burning down.

Joe- You saw the fire?

Bill- Yeah.

Joe- What can you tell me about that?

Bill- Well we had a fellow that worked for us, Stan Easter, and I don't know why, but he and I were in Holland quite late in the afternoon, and I think it was evening, and we were coming out of Holland and we were at the Y on the west side of town and we could see these huge flames, and that of course was an old wood structure and it went. And, I remember finally getting back out to the, oh near our house, our residence or whatever it was, and watching this thing, you know just going up, and I remember something about the fire departments and their attempts to try to save it and they were doing this and they were doing that, but it was impossible to save because, again it was wood and that funneling effect.

Joe- Very sad event, I bet, to see it burn.

Bill- Well yeah it was. I have no idea why, what caused it, somebody knows, but I don't know the reason for it.

Joe- You've mentioned Jenison Park several times, and you mentioned that the marina started there and moved down, did you ever spend much time there when it was an amusement park?

Bill- Well, I remember it very well as an amusement park, but I think dad had left when it was the amusement park and moved over to where they are now. But it was quite an active

park, had a ferris wheel. (To Lois)- You'd remember that.

Lois- The only thing I can remember, it must have been gone by the time I was old enough to walk down there, and I can remember looking into the little round building that had the merry-go-round. And peeking through the little knot-holes in the woods and seeing the beautiful horses and things. But it was before my time, I think when the Interurban went out. (To Bill)- Isn't that when Jenison Park really fell apart.

Bill- Yeah, probably did.

Joe- About what year was that, when the Interurban fell through.

Lois- Almost before me too, that was . . .

Bill- It was, I don't know, I can't remember.

Lois- Probably about 1925 or 26.

Bill- I would think so because I remember when they were taking the tracks out, and I remember Russ and I got up on one of those. . .

Lois- Russ is our cousin that. . .

Bill- Pardon?

Lois- You mentioned Russ, and I'm just putting in here that Russ is our cousin that lived next door to us in the two houses.

Bill- Yeah. But he and I got on one of those hand cars and were pumping it along and we were so small we finally got it to move, but then there was a big, an Interurban coming (laughs) and we didn't know how we were going get out of the way of it, so we were trying to lift it off the tracks and

all sorts of things. So I think that would, really would be about 25 when they started to demolish that. That interurban of course ran into the site of the present Macatawa Bay Yacht Club, and the Macatawa Bay Yacht Club, the one that burned down, was the old Interurban pier, remodeled as the yacht club. And I can still visualize all those tracks as I look at the club I can see where all those tracks went in, I can see where, I can envision the walk that went in and out of Jenison Park, that was really quite a, a park, and I almost want to say that they had a rollercoaster, but I'm not quite sure of that, but they had all these things like, you know, twenty two guns that you would shoot at targets, and throw balls at things, and they also had a dance hall there, and how active that was I don't know.

Lois- It was used a lot for church picnics and things, big company picnics and that sort of thing.

Joe- Did you spend much time around the cottages, actually down behind the Macatawa Hotel in that area?

Bill- Well when I was young I used to spend quite a bit of time on the beach, and until I got old enough to learn how to sail, but again I remember those cottages, the Martingales and the Pattingales, and couple of other people I can't think, can't remember their names now. Charlie Ellis, but not a lot of time. I spent a lot of time on the beach, but as far as actually being in those cottages, you know I'd go in for small lunches and things like that.

Joe- What do you remember about the social atmosphere?

Bill- Of Macatawa Park? Well I was so young I really don't remember that. I remember as kids we had all we wanted to do during the, during the day. And, what kind of activities they had at night I, I really don't know.

Joe- Do you recall any of the major catastrophes that struck the Macatawa Park Cottages?

Bill- Oh I remember those fires, that burned down the, the group, that one group of cottages along the front of the . . .

Lois- There were all, there were a couple of fires, and then the Grand Hotel burned too, but see I don't remember any of those things.

Joe- Did you ever see any of the fires at the cottages?

Bill- Yeah I don't know which one it was, but it was one fairly close to the channel in that area there, cause I was at somebody's cottage for some reason or other, right along near the Coast Guard group station there, and I can remember seeing those flames out on the other side of the hill, and I guess we were so young we weren't allowed to go over and look, or something like that.

Lois- As far as the social life, the one thing I remember is the resorters would bring their cooks and their cleaning people, and the black women would take care of their children and the whole works, and I can still remember Thursday afternoon was their afternoon off, and of course they had no place to go, they had, blacks didn't have a car, they couldn't go

anyplace, and we had a restaurant at the shipyard, and at that time the blacks didn't even come into the restaurant with the white people, and I can just remember them lingering up and down the streets in their starched white uniforms with no place to go, nothing to do.

Bill- I forgot all about that.

Lois- I can remember them very well, just walking around feeling sorry for them.

Joe- So were the people who stayed at Macatawa a pretty exclusive group?

Lois- Oh yes, oh very rich. The cottages are huge which I mean they not only brought their own family, but these people they brought to take care of the kids and the cooks and that sort of thing. And that's why some of them now I think are being sold, because of the such a change these kids growing up now days they just can't take care of these great big houses. They're too big.

Bill- Well all the prices have become so inflated that . . .

Lois- And people can't take the whole summer off, I don't know how they did it before, but they used to take the whole summer off. The family would come, and the man, the husband would come on just the weekends or something like that , and our whole society has changed, you don't do that anymore.

Joe- You mentioned the beach a few times, I understand it was a pretty big attraction. What do you remember most about the

beach?

Bill- Clean water (laughs). Oh it used to be just crystal clear out there, and it was just fun just swimming and I don't know what we did. We used, back in those days, you used to think it was real good to get a big tan and all that sort of business, which is not such a good idea anymore, but . . .

Lois- The later years when I was in high school about the late thirties, we used to rent houses down there for graduation parties, or just end of the year parties, for the whole week and we'd have big parties down at the beach. But younger years I don't think I went down there very much when it was really a resort "resort". So by the early forties, it had already, people already were renting out there cottages, which means they were looking for money.

Joe- So a lot of people spent a lot of time down at the beach?

Bill- They did. Chicago people, St. Louis people, Grand Rapids people.

Joe- I understand the swimwear was quite a bit different back then.

Bill-(laughing) Oh, yeah, very true, very true. Much different.

Joe- Speaking of the beach, I understand there were quite a few cottages along the lakefront. What do you recall about those?

Bill- Well there was, there was one segment that went from the channel south probably three-quarters of a mile right along there and of course there was the so called hill people, all

the cottages that were built up in the hills, and there were a lot of them, and there was a lot of them along behind the hotel itself, like kind of an alley-way along there. But the cottages were just you know cottages. They I guess were well furnished that sort of thing, and but they used them not as a real residence but as a place you could come in with you know sort of sand on your feet and you had to be careful but you know you wore damp bathing suits and things like that.

Joe- Do you remember the boardwalk?

Bill- I don't think I do.

Lois- I don't know, that was before my time. I know I don't remember that at all. I remember some pilings out in the water where I knew that's where it was, but I don't really remember the boardwalk at all.

Bill- I remember that Angel's Flight thing, I remember that and I rode up in that thing, and it was kind of an ice cream shop at the top of the hill, and I remember going up in that.

Joe- What was that like?

Lois- (To Bill)- Why did people go up there? I mean somebody's staying at the hotel would they just take and go up there just to have something to do?

Bill- Well I think so, and like I say, they had a view you know up on top of that hill, and it was it was just, they had these things, you know it was a typical thing that goes up an incline, and it was pulled up with cables and got to the

top and I don't know how we got out of the thing but, then there was this ice cream thing up there, this ice cream shop whatever you want to call it. And it wasn't a long grade, I don't think it even went the length of a city block. . .

Lois- (To Bill)- Going up?

Bill- Yeah, well coming down too (laughs). It had a big cable system, and a big drum, and a big mechanism to pull it up and then let it back down again. I don't think it lasted very long. It just wasn't that much. . .

Lois- It was gone a long time before the hotel was gone. That might have gone about the time the Jenison Park left.

Because I remember all the stores and everything along by the hotel, but I don't remember Angel's Flight at all.

Bill- (To Lois)- Don't you remember the kind of the old wreckage sitting there?

Lois- The wreckage I remember but I mean it wasn't active, and I can remember walking down to the Coast Guard station walking over old planks, they didn't have a real good sidewalk for people. The Coast Guard people couldn't drive down there, they had to park and then walk at least three blocks in order to get out to the station. Just over an old wooden dock and the waves would wash over it.

Bill- (To Lois)- Where was this boardwalk?

Lois- That was down in front of the cottages along Lake Michigan.

Bill- (To Lois)- On the beach itself?

Lois- On the beach.

Bill- Which later probably was probably became just the cement walks that are there today.

Joe- So you mentioned that there were pilings out in the water and you knew that the boardwalk used to be there. Was there a problem with beach erosion?

Bill- Not that I remember, back in those days. And I don't know why . . .

Lois- For some reason I think there were some bad storms though Bill that knocked a lot of it out.

Bill- That could be, that could be, and the boardwalk. . .

Lois- The boardwalk, and the you know and the old beach house down there too.

Bill- Yeah that's probably true. That must be what took it out would be just plain erosion. So it was not as much of a topic as it is today, the level of the lakes and that sort of stuff. It may have been amongst older people, but to my knowledge that didn't really ring bell. I didn't notice a change of the levels of the lakes.

Lois- In fact at that time they'd say every seven years it would go up a little or go down a little, now it seems like it's about every two years there's a dramatic change in it.

Bill- Well, there's been no great, it's random, I mean nobody has any idea, there's no seven year cycle.

Lois- But too, see at that time the boats weren't kept in slips at the dock that much like they are now. We had some inside, but most of them were out at buoys. So you wouldn't

notice the water going up and down that much.

Bill- Those that were, those that could be put in slips, like covered slips, like say twenty foot boats, were in slips like that, but if it was a sailboat or a power boat that was thirty or forty feet long, then they would be at anchors all the time.

Lois- I can still remember Russ would put lanterns on all those boats every night. He'd row around putting them on, and in the morning he had to take them off. Every night I swam behind this guy, boat to boat to boat to boat (laughs). Well that was his chore that had to be done every night, it must have been in the channel right of way or something. . .

Bill- Well it was close to it and so in case there was any boats, we later had that designated as an anchorage and then didn't have to put those lanterns out there.

Joe- Do you recall any big events, annual balls, celebrations, Fourth of July celebrations, etc.?

Lois- Regattas.

Bill- They used to have like on the Fourth of July . . .

Lois- Venetian Night. . .

Bill- Yeah, and then they would race in from Chicago. And they, that's right they would have Venetian Nights.

Joe- What was that like?

Bill- They'd dress up all the boats, a lot of lights, and. . .

Lois- Parade up and down the lake. . .

Bill- Yeah they would kind of get in line you know and parade

around and that sort of thing. And there was always activities. When I was growing up we used to have a lot of sailboat racing, small sailboats, and there was always a Fourth of July Regatta, and Labor Day Regatta. Memorial day was kind of more of a warming up period. But I would think again that there would be big activities like at Jenison Park with large picnics and large families coming out and on the Interurban. . .

Lois- But see like you said Jenison Park was more back in the days of the row boats and fishing business, that was before the sailboat races and all that.

Bill- Yeah, that's true, very true.

Lois- Because every weekend, Saturdays and Sundays there were races at the Yatch Club.

Bill- There was a lot of water skiing activity too.

Lois- That started later too. In the late thirties probably it got started, maybe about 1935.

Bill- Yeah, no sooner, it really started to become very active after the war, very active.

Joe- Do you remember the water skiing championships that were held there?

Bill- They held at least one, in what I would call the west basin down where you know where our activities were in Macatawa Park. Yeah they had those slalom courses, and I think Charlie Sligh, Jr. was kind of the originator of a lot of those things. In fact he's in the water ski hall of Fame,

and things like that, and was responsible for making that quite an activity, and all of his kids, Bob and his daughter, I can't think of her name right now, were all very active in water skiing, very active.

Joe- We've all heard great stories about the "Roaring Twenties," and all the wonderful things and new atmosphere that emerged after World War I. How do you recall Macatawa Park as being during that time period.

Bill- Well of course we could just view it as kids. And so I really don't know, the "Roaring Twenties" really didn't mean a heck of a lot to me, we were just very young and growing up and I'm sure there were a lot of active parties and that sort of thing, but that was during the prohibition years I guess, so I don't know what they did for parties (laughs). But, I don't really recall a lot of that activity, that would, I really couldn't comment on it just because of our age more than anything.

Joe- Do you remember if there seemed to be a change when the depression came, as far as the whole atmosphere of the Park was concerned?

Bill- Well, there was. You could tell it all more through the community like, you know that this was a down turn, and I vaguely remember some of that twenty-nine crash and all like that. And yet some how or other, dad kept struggling that business along. And like I say in about 1930, must have been in the thirties or early thirties something like that, he

built that first small railway, when what 1934, 1934 he built a big, one that had the ability to haul two-hundred tons, and that kind of made the thing started to take off at that point. Of course then the war came along soon after that, and then they used the facilities to build submarine chasers. They built six of them, and then they built Army tugs, I don't know four or five, about four Army tugs, and that kind of took up the war. . .

Lois- That wasn't depression though, now you're talking way up into the war, the depression was what 1930?

Bill- Twenty-nine. Like I say he struggled that thing along because there was very little interest. I don't know if he was still, he must have been fooling with the bait and tackle shop type thing in the early thirties still. . .

Lois- Although I know boats were already, I can remember them being lined up across the road from the house there, on all these things, so people must have had money for their boats.

Bill- In storage you mean. Well that's where it kind of started with that little railway and then the other one, it kind of took off.

Joe- Did it seem that tourism, the number of people arriving at the park, and things of that nature, seem to be effected at all by the depression?

Lois- I think there was as much activity going on because I don't remember any talk of you know the hotel was going to have to close or anything like that. They kept it going somehow.

Bill- I think so too.

Lois- I think more the effect on the whole park and the whole area was when the cars came in and the interurban went out. I think that really changed things.

Bill- But more specifically, I guess again I can just remember people talking about the depression and all like that. Fortunately we were still able to enjoy life pretty well, although it was noticeable as far as finances of our house was concerned and things like that.

Lois- Although now thinking about it Bill, I can remember bums coming to our back door, and mother always had soup and something for them to eat, and I think they lived up in the woods, around the water tower, something like that. But as far as the social life in the Park, I can remember this other local people or whatever they were, they were very, very poor. I can remember our playmates were very, very poor. But the actual resorters down there, I'm not convinced it effected them very much.

Bill- I think you're right. I think you're right.

Joe- About what year would you say the automobile really started to effect things down at the Park?

Lois- The Interurban was gone when I arrived and I was born in twenty-five, so it's up to you (Bill). It had to either be falling apart about that time or maybe before it because I have no recollection of the interurban.

Bill- Well they must have demolished that thing twenty-six or

twenty-seven, something like that.

Lois- So I would say the cars came in probably about the early twenties.

Bill- I'm trying to think of the first car that dad had. The only thing I can remember is that mother and Harold were backing out of the garage that was on the lake side of the tracks and they got hit by an interurban street car, bad accident. So the automobiles were there and the Interurban was there simultaneously, at least for a while anyway. But it must have been, seems to me now that dad had a Model T Ford. So that was about twenty-eight, something like that. But then as they slowly started to come in of course the roads had to improve and all that sort of thing and the trip from Chicago was a long trip, you know, a day. Well a trip to Grand Rapids back in those days, was, I can remember those old roads you know, and all that.

Joe- So people began to arrive a lot more by automobile?

Bill- Yes. And this would be, they would really have been effective in the early thirties, when they change came about.

Joe- Did it seem then that there were more tourists, or less tourists, or that they were just arriving by a different means?

Bill- Well the automobile was such a novelty, that people kind of tended to use them to you know move around and go to the parks, you know, like Ottawa Beach and things like that.

And so I think you could notice a movement you know fairly soon and we had many customers for small boats from Macatawa Park, but then the other people were coming in from, you know, they would have boats and would leave them there and then they would use them during the day and or they had a boat at a mooring they would come and stay on it. And this was in the early thirties.

Joe- Was the coming of the automobile the impetus for the improvement of the road that today leads into Point West?

Bill- Well of course this was in more recent years, like probably back about in the sixties, something like that, when that real high water, when we had that all-time high water, and they increased the height of the road all the way along there, and all the way to, your right, in front of Point West along to Point West in that area. But that was a record high in the sixties, so they never would have had to concern themselves about that before, but that, when there were structures there that had to be protected then they increased the height of it.

Joe- The Macatawa Park Hotel was torn down in 1956, what were your feelings about that?

Bill- I remember when Dick (Den Uyl) Tore it down and they had the plans for building Point West and a motel and all that, which was a real good, good move.

Joe- Did you feel any certain emotions when the hotel was torn down?

Bill- No. I didn't, in particular.

Lois- I didn't see it torn down but I'm very sad that it's down.

I think if they had waited a couple years when the bed and breakfast hotels or houses came into being so much, I think they could have used that as a beautiful bed and breakfast, I would think. And it could have still been, I think the architecture and everything just fits in with the Park more than the modern Point West.

Joe- Have you ever heard any stories, rumors, or anything that would indicate why the hotel was torn down?

Bill- Well I think it was just a business proposition.

Lois- Well that and I understand too it was, it would have been so much to have brought it up to the electrical codes, and the plumbing codes, and all that sort of thing. It was old.

Bill- Well to really renovate it and to . . .

Lois- (To Bill)- Now when did the whole row of stores go down Bill, was that before the hotel? The whole row of stores, the old drug store, and that post office and all that, was that torn down before the hotel went down?

Bill- I think they all went at about the same time. Because, Point West took up all that area. I think that little strip mall thing started to go, yes, before the hotel was torn down, but basically it was just the ideal location for a real good restaurant and a real good motel. And they got a liquor license and it really was a very successful operation. They seem to be having some problems recently,

but when it started it was huge big parties, and wonderful, wonderful activities.

Joe- Had the amount of people who were coming to the Macatawa Hotel decreased, leading to (the hotel being demolished)?

Bill- I think so. I think they were going more to cottages and things like that, it wasn't a, it wasn't really a transient hotel. . .

Lois- I think the way of life had changed again, and people just didn't come to places like that to spend a week, they were thinking more of a motel with a big swimming pool and all that sort of thing. And then too, it was old, if they had fixed it up and kept it up, I think they might have kept it going. Look at French Lick, good heavens that's as old as the Macatawa Hotel and they've kept that going. . .

Bill- Is that right?

Lois- Oh yeah.

Bill- Well there's a lot of nostalgia for those things, but again, that was just a primary structure type thing, the Macatawa Hotel. And to insulate it and put heat in it, I'm sure it didn't have any heat of any kind.

Lois- That's right they were strictly summer time.

Bill- Yeah, so you know in September or May, if you had guests and it got cold you know.

Lois- That's true, Labor Day, like I said, all the people, the resorters and everybody just left. That was the end of it.

Bill- That's right, yeah, that's right.

Joe- What was the hotel like inside?

Bill- It was typical, what I mean is it reminds me of, not the Grand Hotel on Mackinaw Island it wasn't that great, but it was just, I can remember the varnished floors and the staircase going up and the. . .

Lois- Big porches with people sitting in rocking chairs.

Bill- Yeah, that's right. And the desk, you know the receptionist's desk. It was a nice big airy building. It was a real summer-like building.

Lois- People I think too back then were happy to just be in a resort, walk around, mingle around, sit on a bench. And that's what you saw down there.

Joe- If you lived in the cottages were you allowed to spend much time around the hotel?

Bill- I don't think it was a center of activity of any kind. I mean . . .

Lois- For the hotel people, but I don't think particularly for the cottagers.

Joe- Do you ever recall there being any conflict between the hotel, it's proprietors, and the cottagers, of any sort.

Bill- I don't. And I don't think there was. Again it was not a center of activity, but people used to, well there was that other little building that, there again was an ice cream shop, and people used to come down along that little mall like, and spend time there, and gather there, that sort of thing. And then the little shopping activities that were

along there, but to my knowledge, they didn't have dances there in the hotel or anything like that, or brunches, that I remember, anyway, or anything like.

Lois- Seemed like an awfully lot of the resorters had boats too and they would you know be out using the boats down at the shipyard. That's the way we became acquainted with them.

Joe- Did people from Holland spend much time down at Macatawa?

Bill- No, most of our customers were not from the Holland area. Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo and Northern Indiana, places like that.

Lois- The Park itself was mostly St. Louis people, which I've never figured out why.

Bill- Well, it's just typical, one family goes and then friends come up, friends come up , friends come up. It grows that way.

Lois- But the center of activity a lot of times was I think the boats and the yacht club and the that sort of thing. Sitting on the pier watching big boats come in. Especially after Angel's Flight fell apart and Jenison Park fell apart there wasn't that much down there, except for the marina really.

Joe- So many people spent a good deal of time out in boats?

Bill- Yeah. Many of the Park people of course, a lot of them owned sailboats and then the racing activity was active, there were many phases of that. That drew them there. Sometimes the parents didn't race, sometimes they did, but

the kids enjoyed it so much, the sailboat activity. That was a big attraction, I'm sure for the park. The park has always been kind of a tennis activity too, always a lot of tennis mentioned.

Joe- What other kind of activities do you remember people participating in?

Lois- Swimming. I don't know, I don't remember that part of it, I think they were just happy to come down and sit on the beach and walk around the park and as far as the actual resorters, the people that stayed there all summer now I don't know what they did, I think they just went out on the beach and enjoyed that, more than anything. I don't think there was anything going on as far as. . .

Bill- They must have had bridge parties and things like that, but we just were young and don't recall much of that, what they actually did. There's a book, called Song of Macatawa. (To Lois)- Have you ever seen that? Does that describe somewhat what they did, or. . . ?

Lois- Not really, it shows some of the pictures of cottages and that sort of thing, not the way of life particularly.

Bill- I didn't think so either, I don't know if I read it all the way through or not, but it tells more about the families that . . .

Lois- Families that were there and that came down every summer and . . .

Bill- I don't know if it even describes too much what they did.

Lois- No in fact it didn't even I don't think described what the families did or how they got all their money or anything. I didn't know any of the people that well, except for the ones I raced against or that type of thing, and those were just the kids I really knew.

Joe- Boat racing?

Lois- Sailboat racing.

Joe- Where would they hold the races?

Lois- Macatawa Park, and then we would have regattas going to other lakes.

Bill- It was all sponsored by the Macatawa Bay Yacht Club. And that's where, where it kind of originated, that's where it did originate, and then they always had the race committees and all that sort of thing. And back in those days most of them were raced right in front of the club and then on down the lake and back. That always been a big activity.

Lois- And we'd have big regattas inviting other clubs to come down and compete.

Bill- Western Michigan Yachting Association, composed of five clubs, Muskegon, Spring Lake, Grand Rapids, and ourselves, and White Lake. Then they used to compete amongst each other. The other clubs would bring their boats in and race on our lake and then we would take our boats and go and race on their lakes and that sort of thing. So that was very active, very active activity.

Lois- It just always seemed so busy in the summertime around the

marina, but I can't, I don't know what we were doing
(laughs)! There were always so many people there you know
and so much activities, so many boats going in and going
out.

Joe- Do you now go down to the Macatawa Park area very often?

Bill- Well yes we have some very good friends at Macatawa park,
still go over and have dinner with them and things like
that.

Joe- Do you have a feeling of nostalgia when you are down there?

Bill- Oh I guess Lois and I just have a kind of a warm spot in
our heart for Macatawa Park and . . .

Lois- I just absolutely love it, I can remember walking the woods
and skiing and being lonely but I think that's a wonderful
part of life. I really do, I mean in the fall as I say it
was just a different world, you walked the beaches, you
walked the woods, you did everything there was nobody there.
Kind of like looking in the window on how other people lived
or something.

Bill- But that's, that's very true. We, for instance that's why
I never became involved in any athletics in high school
because if we missed the bus at three-thirty you know we
walked home. Because football practice and all that stuff
went on afterwards, so I never went out for football or
basketball or any of those things, but we did other things,
we entertained ourselves. Like we went skiing and in the
spring we had these big maple syrup runs you know we'd tap

all the maple trees and (To Lois)- Do you remember that activity at all?

Lois- Not that much, a little bit, but not that much.

Bill- Very involved. Had big pans, and then we'd make fires under them and then the sap would get so thick and then it'd run to another one, another one, and (laughs) all that work for a couple of gallons of syrup. But this is true, we found other things to do you know. So it was really a very pleasant place to live and grow up.

Lois- Beautiful place to live, I mean, Lake Michigan, and the piers and the woods, and it's just there's no place like it in the world.