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# Bennett, Bob Oral History Interview: General Holland History

Don van Reken

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Oral History Interview

Interviewee: Bob Bennett

Interviewer: Donald van Reken

September 6, 1979

Abstract: Robert "Bob" Bennett, Macatawa Park auditorium, Hartford, Michigan church, Harkema farm, interurban, Froebel School, Rensselaer, Indiana, Van Regenmorter, post office, Swan Miller, Herb Van Duren, Angel's Flight, Harry Skinner, boat livery, Bay Basher bantam weight boxer, Leonard Van Regenmorter, movie theater, ice cream factory, Dad Torren's Bowling Alley (box ball alley, five pin), Wayne Blanchard, Kelly's Drug Store, Reingold's Bakery, "Toddy," Stanton Todd, Western Union Telegram, Cameron's Store, Ottawa Beach General Store, Fred Pantlind, Ottawa Beach Hotel, African-American help (Negro), Jewish patrons, gambling, casino, Ottawa Beach Golf Course, Sam West, Big Top Restaurant. Roy E. Young, Rex Young, Post family, Hanchet family, John C. Post, Jenison Park, roller coaster, Gus Gazelle, Bonnie Van Regenmorter's antique shop, Macatawa Bay Yacht Club, Ben Mulder, fishing, Casey Landman, Thelma Bennett Post, Hulbert family, fires, Jerry Antithle, cutting ice, ice business, dray service, vegetable selling, Mrs. Creaky, Rubyhurst cottage, Mel Trotter Mission, Mr. Earl (preacher), Omer family.

DVR: Today is September 6, 1979. My name is Don Van Reken, and I'm interviewing Mr. Bob Bennett. Mr. Bennett was a long-time resident of Macatawa, and he is about to tell us some of the things about Macatawa in the early days. Bob, when were you born?

BB: I was born in Macatawa Park on June the sixteenth, 1907, which makes me a seventy-two year-old senior citizen.

DVR: How come your parents were at Macatawa?

BB: My father was an evangelistic minister in the Christian church, and Macatawa was, in the early days, was the religious center. The Mulders came there—they were big people in the Christian church, so Dad got a lot right up by the old auditorium, where they had the church services, and this, because my family traveled a great deal as evangelists, was the only home we really knew was our summer home at Macatawa.

DVR: How far did your parents travel as evangelists? Did they go all over the country, or just in the Midwest?

BB: Dad went over most of the country. My mother was an ordained minister, also, however, she never preached very much. The farthest I ever knew Dad to go away on a meeting was Guatemala. He did a great deal of evangelism in the South. He died at a very early age, from overwork. A lot of people think preachers don't work hard; I can guarantee you they do. But he did hold a job as minister in the town of Hartford, Michigan, when I was a little boy. I am sorry to say the church is now the Masonic Lodge Hall in Hartford.

DVR: That's quite a change. Where did you go to school then?

BB: Well, in the fall, we were some of the people that stayed after Labor Day. We used to go to a little country school out near the Harkema farm that we could walk to from Macatawa, and then, later, we would go to Holland on the interurban and get off at Centennial Park and go over to the school that, I think, was Froebel School, I can't remember the name of it. I can remember that it was the first place I ever saw slot machines that vended stamps for a building and loan, and Holland Building and Loan was starting in those days. I still have a little book with some of the stamps from Holland Building and Loan.

DVR: Well, that's an interesting souvenir.

BB: Ottawa County Building and Loan, I'm sorry.

DVR: Oh, okay. Now, you went through how many grades then in the Holland Schools?

BB: Well, I went for maybe a month or so for about...through, I'd say, the sixth or seventh grade.

DVR: Did you every complete high school anywhere?

BB: Oh, yes. I completed high school in Rensselaer, Indiana.

DVR: What about summer jobs out here in Macatawa? There's lots of opportunity for summer jobs, and there's lots of things happening there. Can you tell us some things about it?

BB: Well, the first thing I remember doing was taking my little coaster wagon down and meeting the interurban when it would come in and yell, "Can I carry your bags?" I have been known to take bags as far back as the old Grand Hotel, which is quite a walk. Then, after that, I went to work delivering special delivery letters for the Van Regenmorters, who were the postmaster and postmistress of Macatawa. Then following that, I got a job working at the ice cream parlor; after that, I ran a popcorn stand down in front of the original interurban station in Macatawa. After those jobs, I had the orchestra at the Hotel Macatawa one year.

DVR: What did you play in the orchestra?

BB: Manager (laughs).

DVR: You were manager? Where did you pick up your musical talents?

BB: I didn't have any musical talents, but I was always interested in the theatrical business, and so I was a booking agent. Mr. Miller was a very dear friend of mine that owned Macatawa and, because he knew me and Herb Van Duren from Holland—they had the orchestra there for a few years previously and at Angel's Flight for a year or two—got in bad repute with Mr. Miller, so, I said, well, I had this little orchestra at my high school in Rensselaer, Indiana, and I'd bring them up for the summer. We'd play for dinner at the dining room, which was across the street from the hotel, and in the evening, we'd play and charge ten cents a dance at the hotel, and that's the only pay we got.

DVR: But you made out comfortably?

BB: We did alright.

DVR: Now, you mentioned Angel's Flight. What can you tell me about Angel's Flight, about its beginning, about its ending, about its usefulness?

BB: Well, Angel's Flight is quite a historic place. There was a little pavilion at the bottom of the railroad, there was one car that would go up and the other car would come down, and they were on cables and balance each other. They had a great big, huge electric motor under the platform at the top. You would get up there, and it was a rather large, nice building. It had a big dance floor in it, it had an ice cream fountain in it, and soda fountain in it, and this place that you could go out, and the view was just fantastic down over the lake from Angel's Flight. I can tell you a little story...When I was delivering special delivery letters, I never wanted to take the second one up there because I only got eight cents for delivering the letter, and it cost me ten cents to take it up there!

DVR: Oh, boy.

BB: Angel's Flight became quite a place. Harry Skinner, that used to have the boat livery, and Bay Basher, who was the bantam weight champion of America, and a few of those fellows, used to get in underneath it, there was a sort of a rough room with a sand floor, and play poker at night up there. It's the last thing I remember about Angel's Flight. The year that I took the orchestra to the hotel, Mr. Miller said, "Well, let's have the dancing up at Angel's Flight." We talked to...Leonard Van Regenmorter was sort of managing things for Mr. Miller in those days, so he inspected Angel's Flight, and he said it wouldn't be safe to operate it, and so we didn't do it, we stayed down at the hotel. That was the last of Angel's Flight. Another thing that might interest you, right down about where Angel's Flight started up, was a movie theater. So, Mr. Miller let me take the movie theater and run it one a summer. But, after we inspected the movie theater—it was

built out over the lake, and it was on its last legs—so we were afraid of putting people in there. I remember, I went to Grand Rapids, I always wanted to buy a motorcycle, and I saved up. I had twenty-five dollars, and I bought an old motorcycle with a belt drive on it, and I never got quite to Macatawa with it. My mother had an old Ford automobile, so we went up and put the motorcycle across the back seat of the Ford automobile, and I brought it back and stored it at the ice cream factory, which was right, almost next to the theater. That's the last that I saw of the motorcycle, and I can't remember what year it was, but they fell in the lake that winter, the building and all, you know.

DVR: The building and all fell into the lake? And it's been covered up by this time?

BB: I think so, yes. Now, would you like to know about some other businesses that were along there?

DVR: Tell us everything you know.

BB: Alright. Well, one of the most popular places along there was Dad Torren's Bowling Alley. Now, those were box ball alleys. There were five pins at the end, and if you would hit between two pins, it would take the two pins down and one counted four, and the others counted five. If you could get onto the contour of that bowling alley, you could roll a pretty good score. Of course, it was very popular. And all over the walls, Dad Torren put up people's names if they made a high score. I wish I had those, it was like a history of who lived in Macatawa and their scores at the box ball alleys.

Well, then on down from the box ball alleys was a restaurant. Wayne Blanchard operated that for just a few weeks one summer, after I went to work for him at the ice cream parlor. It just never did anything; it just wasn't very popular. So, that was the end of that. But that was that line of buildings that finally fell in the lake there.

DVR: It was all along the lake? I've seen picture postcards of that. Now, what about the association building? That faced the lake, didn't it?

BB: The association building?

DVR: Yes.

BB: Well now, wait a minute. I think you and I are thinking about two different things. You mean where Kelly's Drug Store and Cameron's store...?

DVR: I think so, yes.

BB: Alright. Well, let me give you a little thumbnail of what was there. The big old Hotel Macatawa set up at the end of this wonderful walk with all the benches and everything. Then directly across from the hotel, toward the sand dunes, where the driveway comes down out of the hills now, was the dining room. It had rooms above it where the help would stay. Then down from that was a grocery store and meat market. Next to that was Reingold's Bakery. Then, the big, long building that had a huge porch—there were twenty-four tables on the porch, I know, because I carried them in and out of the building many a time—but the old ice cream tables, and ice cream wire and wood seats, you know, that was the ice cream parlor, and that's where people would socialize and meet and so forth. I worked there one summer. Then, at the end of the ice cream parlor, was a little bazaar that was run by a couple of Chinese fellows. It never was very successful, and it closed down. Then you come on around, then there's the next long, curving building there, and in the corner of that building was Mrs. Kelly's Drug Store, where the Western Union telegrams came in and "Toddy," Stanton Todd, used to deliver those telegrams because I was delivering special deliveries while Stanton was delivering telegrams. Then, next to that was Cameron's Store, which Mr. Cameron...that was the

center of everything. He had the newspapers, the magazines, the candy, the imported china from England, the hardware. In fact, I remember, we called him Pop Cameron. I can remember Pop saying, “Well, you know, people come in and want something,” he says, “I’ll get it for them,” and he’d always send somebody up to Holland on the interurban to get it and bring it back down. Then he’d charge them a bigger price for it. He also operated the big general store in Ottawa Beach. In fact, they would ferry across from Macatawa every morning to open up the Ottawa Beach store, which was right next to the big Ottawa Beach Hotel.

DVR: Tell me more about Ottawa Beach. Do you have many ideas about Ottawa Beach?

BB: Oh, yes. I got to know Ottawa Beach as a youngster. It was originally owned, now I’m telling things I know from hearsay, that it was originally owned by the Pere Marquette Railroad, that they were the ones that built it, and it was a big summer hotel. In later years, about when I was high school age, Fred Pantlind, whose father built the Pantlind Hotel in Grand Rapids, Fred came down and took over the Ottawa Beach Hotel, and he had very big ideas. He had famous-name orchestras come in there—I remember Call of the North, I remember many orchestras who came in there—and it was terrific. It was a huge, huge hotel. It was a big hotel. And, it was, should I say, pretty well patronized by Jewish clientele. That’s something that most people in the Holland area never knew, but I, of course, as a kid, I found out everything that was going on. There was a huge gambling casino on the second floor of the building, in the back of the place. I went over there one night, because I wanted to see it, and the guard down at the bottom of the steps was somebody I knew, and he says, “You can’t go up there,” and I says, “Yes I can.” So, I got up there. But, most of the people gambling were the Negro help at the Ottawa

Beach Hotel. But, this is something most people don't know. Then, up above that was a golf course. You teed off from the top of the hill there, and the course ran down about where the state now has room for campers and mobile homes, or whatever they put in there.

DVR: How many holes was that golf course?

BB: It was nine holes.

DVR: Who owned that then? The hotel people owned that?

BB: No, there was a fellow that owned it; I don't remember who he was. (Unidentified voice says, "He owned it at the end. Sam West.") Well, I just didn't know him. I knew the pro there, because he got mad at me because I'd swing wrong at the ball when I'd tee off.

In those days, the cottages right around there, there wasn't any Holland State Park, and the cottages were all around where the park is now. But, many of them still stand there up along the edge of the hill. There was this big general store there. Then, in later years when I came up, oh, I'll say, when I was in my early thirties, there was a big building out over the lake that some man started as a restaurant [Big Top Restaurant]. He [Roy E. Young] was a great circus fan, and he had these huge circus posters in there. I said to him, "Gee, I know where there's a bunch Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey posters. I'll send them to you." I remember sending them to him, but the next year when I came up, that place was closed.

DVR: Now, coming back to the interurban, did you ride the interurban very much?

BB: I had a pass because I was an interurban agent for one year. It was my brother-in-law, and his brother. His brother worked for them, and my brother-in-law worked for them, and the families, that was the Post family here in Holland, were good friends of the...

DVR: Hanchets.

BB: Hanchets, who owned the interurban line, and were Grand Rapids people. The big thing for the interurban, of course, was Jenison Park.

DVR: Tell me more.

BB: Okay. My brother-in-law, John C. Post, tells me that he used to go down and collect from the Figure Eight, and the merry-go-round, and the Dutchman's Swing, or whatever it was called—the rides there—and from the concessionaires, and then he'd take it into Holland on the interurban that night. He would overnight it at the Post house on 13th Street, and then go up and put it in the bank the next morning. I wandered over one time when I was a kid. We used to go over there, and in the old days, they used to have these Cracker Jack things, and when there'd be a great big picnic there or something, people would buy lots and lots of Cracker Jack and throw the boxes away. Well, there was a coupon on the side, and you save more than so many coupons, and you'd be surprised what we kids used to get out of those blue things that were on the side of a Cracker Jack box. But, wandering around there, I ran into Mr. Gus Gazelle. This is in the later days of the park. Gus owned all of the concessions and the merry-go-round. The Figure Eight finally rotted out and it was gone, so the only thing there was the merry-go-round when I went over there. So, I went to work for Gus running a game of chance, where you would pull a string, and if the right thing came up, you were lucky, and if it didn't, you got a piece of junk. My family found out I was doing this, so that job didn't last very long when they found out where I was. One thing that Gus Gazelle did that's an interesting thing...he had a poodle dog that he was very fond of, and she used to have puppies. So, he'd raffle the puppies off on a punch board. And Dad Torren had a bowling alley there.

Now, going back to Dad Torren, and we talked about him being out over the lake, after the buildings went in the lake, or they saw they were going in, in the meantime, the interurban had gone bankrupt. So, the station was open, so Dad Torren boxed in the station and put his bowling alleys in the station, which is now Bonnie Van Regenmorter's antique shop is on about the same spot that the interurban station was. And I was agent there for a year.

DVR: Very good. I'm thinking about the interurban going down to Saugatuck. Do you have any stories about that? About freight going down, about passengers going down?

BB: Well, the interurban, you will recall, that the original Macatawa Bay Yacht Club was where the original interurban—they called it interurban pier—where the Chicago boat would come in at night, and the interurbans would back in on the dual tracks there, and the people would get off the boat and get on the interurban, and the interurban would take them to Saugatuck. Of course, a lot of people went down to the big pavilion dancing that way, and so the interurban had a regular schedule into Saugatuck. But, they always met the boat when it came in from Chicago at night, to get the Saugatuck crowd. One interesting thing I can remember is selling newspapers out there the night of the Dempsey-Carpentier fight, and people didn't buy them, of course. But, after I sold the first one, they went real fast. Then, of course, as you know, in later years that burned and that was the end of that. But, the original boat from Chicago, and I remember as a youngster, I had to go to Presbyterian Hospital in Chicago, and we boarded the boat down at this first interurban station. There was a dock that ran almost all the way out in the lake to Ottawa Beach. The boat would come in at the end of that dock, and you'd get on the boat there and go to Chicago. It was a great thing in those days when you had

friends, to take them down and put them on the boat and wave goodbye. Well, my mother, one time, stayed on the boat too long, and she had to yell to friends to tell we kids up at the cottage that she'd be back on the next boat. She'd been carried off toward Chicago! (laughs) Oh my!

DVR: Did you do much swimming there?

BB: I swam a great deal, and the beach was beautiful in those days. It would go out, at least...I was looking at it this morning, I walk my dogs down there, of course, you know it practically went away in the last few years but now its back, a little bit, but it went at least a hundred yards farther out in the lake than it does now. In the old days, out on the beach there, was a bath house, built up on piling.

DVR: Who owned that?

BB: That belonged to Swan Miller, the park company, but it was operated by some fellows. Well, anyways, that fell in the lake one winter, and so then they moved in, and next to Georgia Miller's cottage was what was known as the bath house in those days, but that was up on the shore farther.

Then another thing that I think is very interesting is that, you know, in the early days, they had a boardwalk that ran all the way along the beach there. You could go down and around that walk; it was just wonderful. There was a man by the name of Perry, who became a part owner in the park, and he was a wealthy man from Chicago, and where Perryville was, up at the first hill. He got the idea of putting in a big cement walk, all the way along the lakefront there. Well, the storms would come in and these cement things that they put in with a steel wire in them, they were big, long pilings to build up and put the sand behind, and put the walk on the side of that, people didn't

realize how much the lake had washed in and washed the sand out from under that, and we had quite a tragedy there one night. A man and his wife were standing there, and it collapsed and they were killed, and they left some daughters without a family. That was the end of the cement walk along the front of Macatawa.

DVR: They've always had a problem with the walk there, haven't they? Winter storms.

BB: After they put in the cement ones, but before that, a lot of people liked to think that it's the changing of the current by the way the pier and the breakwater are now that caused that sweeping in there and sweeping that sand out, because Ottawa Beach doesn't have that problem, never had it, and it's on the coast, the other side of the currents there.

DVR: Do you remember a set of playing cards with pictures of Macatawa?

BB: No, I really don't.

DVR: I own such a set that I bought, and it's from that time.

BB: Is that right?

DVR: Yes. What about fishing?

BB: Oh, fishing was wonderful. You probably remember Ben Mulder, who was editor of the Holland Daily News...

DVR: City News.

BB: Holland City News—came out weekly. Well, Ben invited me, as a youngster, to go out white bass fishing—we used to fish with a lantern. Out back of these buildings was a wonderful place to fish there, where I told you the ice cream factory and the restaurant and the bowling alleys and everything were. So, I'll never forget Ben Mulder getting quite upset with me as a kid because I was trying to pull these white bass in too fast—they were pretty good size fish, two or three pound fish—even though we had about a

bushel of them in the boat. He was quite disturbed because I was kid-like; I was trying to get that boat filled up with fish too fast and they'd get off the hook. We used to fish for perch back there in the spring. I can remember setting back there in the spring when we came up—I was probably in high school—and going back to fish for perch, and the entire top of Lake Macatawa, we called it Black Lake in those days, would be covered with minnows, just solid with minnows out there. Then, as a kid, I used to walk out past these buildings to the pier. I'd get up at daylight, because that's when you got fish, and I'd walk down past, well, Harry and Al Skinner's, and later Casey Landwehr—Landman, Landwehr—got it, and as I'd go out there, there was a Zoo Zoo gum machine, and I'd always stop and put a penny in that gum machine and see this clown turn around and give me a piece of gum. I'd chew that, and I'd run out of bait on the pier and I'd use that gum on my hook and catch fish.

DVR: They weren't fussy in those days.

BB: No, they were plentiful. I've caught four hundred perch out there, over four hundred.

DVR: And you came back there year after year, even when you went on to other activities?

BB: Oh, yes. As we went farther into my life, my first job I ever had was a job out of Grand Rapids, and I've traveled out of Grand Rapids. My roots are in Macatawa, that's the only home I ever knew.

DVR: What can you tell me about the rest of your family? You have a sister or some sisters?

BB: I have two sisters, and I have one who has passed away, but my sister who is now living is the wife of John Post, whose father was the Secretary-Treasurer of the First Macatawa Park Company. John is in Washington D.C. now and probably one of the most well-known men in medical economics. He is still active, he's ten years older than I am, but

the sister now, Thelma, my sister that's married to John, is five years older than I am, and we always heard that she was the first white child ever born in Macatawa. I came along five years later. My folks were so taken with Macatawa that they named her Macatawa. But she came into a good deal of ribbing in high school, and so she changed her name to Thelma. I hope this doesn't get in print; she'd kill me! But they are a very, very successful family in Washington D.C.

DVR: Good. Now, you mentioned staying there so often. I've heard that there's been a lot of fires up there. Can you tell me any of the activity, anything that would happen if there were fires there?

BB: Well, the only fire that actually happened during the season was the one that struck at the lakefront. I was working at the ice cream parlor, and people came yelling up that the cottage was on fire. So, we all ran down there, and by the time we got down there, those were huge, old wooden structures, they ran up into the hills all along towards the pier, there used to be walks like Blue Bell Court and so forth that went up in the hills. And we boys, the young fellows, all started to get people's belongings out of those places, but we wouldn't be halfway through getting things out of a cottage until they'd tell us get out of there because the one next to you on down towards the pier—it burned towards the pier. We'd rush up to the first one that we could get into and get away from the heat, and the people were going way down the beach, it was big in those days, I told you it was maybe a hundred yards farther out, and they got out as close to the lake as they could to get away from the heat. We kept carrying things out, but it ran all the way to where it couldn't go any farther, there wasn't anything else to burn towards the pier. I remember one incident about the thing that we all got to laughing, because it was the days of Prohibition, and we

could hear the bootleg whiskey blowing up in the fire once in a while. (laughs) Another thing, there was some woman who had a fortune in diamond jewelry, and they were down there with screens, screening the sand trying to locate and find her jewelry afterwards. It was terrible. Then the whole bunch of the people came up to the ice cream parlor after that, and we just couldn't take care of them. They were all wanting something, and they'd lost their clothes, some of them had a few things left, and it was a very tragic affair. It was front headlines in the Chicago papers. I know about one of the other fires because the Hulberts, that owned the Grand Hotel, were friends of ours. The Grand Hotel used to be, of course, at the far south end—I'd call it the south end of Macatawa along the lake, Grand Avenue runs up there—and it was at the top of Grand Avenue. The Hulberts were here getting it ready for the summer, cleaning it up, and all of a sudden something, a match fell, or a cigarette fell on some papers, and before they knew it, the old Grand caught fire, and the fire swept and took many, many cottages—I can't remember the number, I'm thinking of fifty to sixty cottages.

Then there was another fire that...I'm going to give you some gossip about this one, but that started in the middle hills. The gossip is, and I understand that the man was found, that a man had taken and put some things that would start a fire and put a string out to a limb of a tree, because he wanted to get the insurance out of his cottage, so when this wind came along, it struck this match that he put there or something of that kind, and that was in the middle of the year, was the start of that fire.

Another thing about that Ottawa Beach Hotel fire, there was a fellow by the name of Jerry Antithle, who was taking care of the hotel in the wintertime and, you know, rumors that you can hear, but anyways, they had just turned off the water for the winter at

the Ottawa Beach Hotel, all the water was drained out of the big water tank and everything, and Antithle had gone up in Michigan to go deer hunting, and the fire started in the Ottawa Beach Hotel, there was no way to fight it. It just went like that. But these are rumors; I wasn't there when it happened.

DVR: You mentioned something about the different walks. What happened to all those different walks that were there? Blue Bell Court and...

BB: Oh, they're still on the plat, and they're still there with sand. There's a few cottages, stragglers, along there that have been built up, but you can still see the foundations of cottages that burnt back up in those walks. And, actually, now, the way you have to park, the way you have to get up there, people don't want to put cottages up in there because they're so hard to get to. You have to take all your groceries, and you just got to push a cart a long, long ways. Talk about pushing a cart. Another thing you may be interested in Macatawa, was the old dray that was there. There was a dray, and people would come in with their trunks to stay for the entire summer, the families would. We had, what was the name of that dray, the people that owned the dray there? I'll think of it in a minute. Anyway, they would meet the train and get the trunks, and they carried those trunks up to those hills and those cottages on their backs. Then we had an iceman, and they would go out in the wintertime and cut ice out of Lake Macatawa, and then store it back in an old, what they called the ice house, and they'd take that around the park in the summertime selling it, so many pounds, and here they'd go up all these steps to these cottages carrying this ice. I remember we kids would wait down below when they'd chip a piece of ice off to get a twenty-five pound piece out of a fifty piece, and we'd get the breakings. Then, we had the Harkemas and a couple of other people, had push carts. Here they'd load

these push carts with vegetables, and they would go through the hills, peddling these vegetables.

You know, another thing I remember that's rather interesting, is the number of Holland people that would come down to we Macatawa residents during the Depression and wanting to sell us cakes and breads and things like that to raise a few dollars. Those people could buy and sell all of us today, they're millionaires in Holland. But that was quite an era in there. You could have bought any cottage in Macatawa at one time for two thousand dollars or less.

DVR: One of the avenues that I've heard about is Mishawaka Avenue.

BB: Oh, yes.

DVR: What do you know about that?

BB: Well, Mishawaka Avenue is one of our main streets; it's still there, there's cottages all the way up and down. Yes, some of our big, old cottages that go from Point West, that's the street that goes from Point West through to the lake. The Pasadena cottage, and those big cottages, I believe, are all on Mishawaka.

DVR: Where did it get its name?

BB: I don't know. I just remember Mishawaka.

DVR: That's the one that goes from Point West past the swimming pool, the motel, and right over to the lake?

BB: Yes. (Unidentified voice: "No, not the one that goes behind it.") Well, where the new motel is, it's the one that runs into that.

[End of side one]

DVR: You said there was some vacant land there?

BB: Yes. It took a turn right there, and then some of the finer cottages would start right there, where that turn was. You know where Point West is now, and all of that, those walks all came down in past Point West. They ran all the way down so the people would walk down that walk to the post office or to Kelly's Drug Store, the ice cream parlor, whatever. But, of course, when they build Point West, they blocked off all of those streets through there.

DVR: So things are changing and have changed because of that new construction.

BB: Yes, but I think very much for the best. When you think of the cottage, that a real estate friend of mine, who shall remain named Raven, sold for two thousand dollars, that is now for sale for ninety, I think it's been a lot of progress. Ninety thousand, I'm speaking of.

I can go back to the old auditorium where we all went to Sunday school. Mrs. Creaky from California was my Sunday school teacher, and she always gave us a little New Testament each year for graduation from Sunday school, and her cottage is still on the lakefront.

DVR: Where is the auditorium?

BB: The auditorium, our cottage, the Rubyhurst, was right in front of it, and it was down in a little valley at the top of the middle hill. There were wide cement stairs went down to either side of it. It was a building that I'd say would seat at least a thousand people; there were pews in there. The building was surrounded by a high picket fence, it had a high roof on it—a wood shingled roof—and in the front, as you would face the minister or the podium, as we say, there were stairs that went up into little rooms around there, and those were the Sunday school rooms. Of course, that was all covered with shingles on the outside of it. But, as I say, now you go up the middle hill, and it's a valley which was

supposed to be dedicated on the original plat as to be used for church purposes, but now they are subdividing it up there and selling the lots.

DVR: And now, it's going the way of dollars and cents.

BB: That's right.

DVR: Was your dad connected with that auditorium at all?

BB: He'd preach there once in a while. All the preachers, there were a lot of preachers up there. There was a mission in Grand Rapids, known as the Mel Trotter Mission, they all preached there. And all the ministers from around...Mr....oh goodness, I'm trying to think of Heath's father, Earl. Mr. Earl preached there, my father preached there. All the preachers...anyways, there would be guest ministers every Sunday, and it was really a sort of interdenominational, there was no denomination.

DVR: But your dad was not an evangelist for Macatawa Park, was he?

BB: Oh, no, he just went there because that was a religious settlement, and that was a place to spend the summer with all the church people.

DVR: Did you tell me at all for this tape, where your parents came from and where they went to school?

BB: Yes. Both my dad and mother were born in Illinois. My mother was born down in Adams County, which is close to Quincy, Illinois, in a town called Camp Point. Her father was a rather large farm land owner there. And in those days—my mother would have been over a hundred years old were she living today—but there weren't too many girls that went to college in those days. But they sent my mother to Eureka College, in Eureka, Illinois, which is the alma mater of one Ronald Reagan. But then, my grandparents on my mother's side, I knew very little about my father's family.

DVR: What was their name?

BB: Omer, O-M-E-R. And, by the way, my cousin, Dan Omer, was the head attorney for the National Selective Service System, and would have been the director, but he was too old when the director passed away. But Dan is still living. He was the head editor for the largest small book publishing company in the country, up in Minneapolis-St. Paul, but he was brought into Washington to set up the Social Security laws, to codify the Social Security Laws, and the selective service took him...I mean, as their head attorney.

DVR: Your father and mother then, they met where?

BB: They met at college in Eureka. I had an uncle who was a Christian minister, and he went to school there. But Father and Mother finally transferred to Drake University, where they graduated.

DVR: And then he was a preacher right from that time on?

BB: Yes, from that time on, he was a preacher. And, we kids, they used to laugh at how many states we went to school in, because we went with the family, and when the meeting was over, then we'd transfer to another school.

DVR: Do you think you suffered because of that?

BB: I think I wouldn't take anything for the experience. I think I learned a lot more than if I'd been in a classroom. Well, I was in classrooms in the conventional. Well anyways, I did not finish college; I went to Illinois University, but just for two years. My sister got her master's degree at Illinois, and my other sister got her degree at William Woods College in Missouri.

DVR: Well, that's a very nice resume, Mr. Bennett, of all the different things about Macatawa. I'm sure you have many more things in back of your mind...

BB: Yes.

DVR: I think we better make a rerun about a year from now, and if you've made some notes in that time, we could probably have a lot more adventures and a lot more activities.

BB: Well, if we can tear ourselves away from Florida next year, we'll probably come up and spend a few weeks, and I'll make it a point of getting together with you.

DVR: I would be very pleased about that.

BB: At least buy you a lunch.

DVR: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Bennett.

[End of interview]