

OK Alan Roberts Jul 19 2006

I'm 86 years old but I have not lived in Barrington all my life. I moved here in 1959 which I make it 46 years is it? I lived at that time on South Street at the foot of Highland Avenue within the village on the south edge in view of Baker's Lake. My neighbors east of me their name was Detert, and the other side of me between me and the lake the family's name was Mandapach. At the foot of Glass House on the east side of Highland was owned by a very old family, a very old Barrington family, they were elderly at that time. Their name was Etters and you'll have some of those Etters around here. The Etters, these were elderly people at that time. They had, there on Highland Avenue, I believe the last chicken house in the village of Barrington. Now, they were grandfathered in, I think there was at that time an ordinance against keeping chickens, but they had been doing it for so many years they were allowed to do that.

There were several memorable things about my life there on South Street. One of them was that the old campground was still there. This was before the village took it over as a park. And the buildings were still on the campground; there weren't any camp activities but the buildings were there, and they seemed to be deserted and it was a little bit spooky actually. I think there were some people who didn't really like to be around them because they didn't know who had broken in or who was living in those old buildings. There were nice oak trees there and I always used to walk my dog there, and it was really a very pleasant area. And the other memorable thing about that location was that Baker's Lake at that time was I believe a much better landing spot for migratory birds than it is today. This was when the old dead trees were still in the middle of the lake, before they were replaced by a man-made structure to encourage bird nesting. I can remember walking around and looking at the birds from some high ground around the lake, and the variety of waterfowl was amazing. I can remember having a couple of canvas backed ducks flying close over my head and landing on the water. There was American Mergansers, Florida Gallinots, Blue-Winged Teal, Scaup, and a variety of long-legged birds, blue and green heron and so on. They were very common. I'm not a bird watcher and I don't live there anymore, so I don't see as much as I used to of the lake, but I have this strong impression that it is not nearly as famous in bird watching circles as Baker's Lake used to be. I can remember talking to some, this is, now I'm talking 1959-60, to some old timers, who had grown up in Barrington and lived there for a long time, and they had memories of when the lake was formed. It's unusual as you know, probably, it's not a man-made lake, it's a lake that was formed by peat bog burning for years and the land collapsing and then gradually, spring fed and some run off filled up the lake and made a permanent lake out of it. But when it was burning I'm told it was smokey. Well peat burns kind of dirty and makes a lot of smoke. One man told me that when he was young and the land was still burning, the smoke was so heavy that sometimes the traffic on Route 14 was stopped, rarely. So those are some of my recollections of that area.

Then I moved away, and wound up living in North Barrington. Currently I live on Lill Street. You know where Lill Street is, I won't describe it, but it is very much a neighborhood of ranch style homes mostly built around 1960. Mostly by one builder I'm told. It's a neighborhood and it's good to get this recording because I think that the neighborhood running from, oh, Coolidge up to Sturtz on the side streets off Lill, between Lill and Hough, and between, excuse me, between Dundee and Hough, is still pretty much a neighborhood of ranch style houses. Single story. That's why my wife and I moved here about six years ago, because she could no longer do the stairs where we lived in North Barrington. They don't build any more ranch style houses. What's happening to this neighborhood, and I can see it happening, even now, is that the houses are being converted to two stories. I guess you call them tear downs, but they don't go all the way to the foundation, usually they leave the framework, and then rebuild it with a two story structure. Gradually, land-values being what they are, I think that all the ranch style houses in Barrington will be replaced, especially if they're within walking distance of the railroad station as these are. And that's regrettable because it's a nice, I live at the corner of Monument and Lill and it's a very nice

neighborhood there, friendly people, and people who walk in the streets, they don't walk as much as they used to. Traffic has increased, but I can see that happening in Barrington, and it's regrettable. Well, those are pretty much my memories of Barrington. I brought up kids, I lived after the house on South Street, I moved to the East Countryside. My kids went to the Barrington schools, and that's pretty much all I have to say personally.

I guess in a very general way, when we moved here in 1959, one of the things that attracted us, I moved here from Park Forest, from the south side of Chicago, was the fact that this was a kind of a natural town, going along the railroad tracks to Chicago, to places like Park Ridge, and Des Plaines, and Mount Prospect. And those places were already commuter towns. Barrington was a little bit of mixture. It still had some of the old small town, northern Illinois character with mayor Blanke, and the Rieke family and others running the town pretty much. And it was beginning to be a commuter town. Now it's very much a commuter town, and we're struggling to keep it not to become like Arlington Heights or Palatine, but it's a tough fight because on the edge of the Barrington area, we're threatened with de-annexation. This is not hitting the village, but it is hitting some of our surrounding villages, our BACOG communities. They can de-annex, from, for example, Barrington Hills, and then develop in more density than would be allowed in the village, and those kids all go to the Barrington schools. So this is what's happening, and I don't see any end to it. I don't think that the zoning, the low-density zoning and the surrounding communities can be protected forever because of that. It's happening on the south side in South Barrington, and in Barrington Hills. North Barrington is not quite in that position because under the leadership of a previous village government, they signed boundary agreements with surrounding communities, which has not happened in Cook County.

So my main interest now in community life and I've been involved in other things, is with the Friends of the Barrington Area Library. I helped them get on to the internet selling books on eBay. That's an interesting project. The other thing we're doing of some interest are book carts and our in-library sales 3 times a year. But this is ongoing work and I enjoy very much doing it. But that's about all I have energy for at this point, I used to be more active.

But let me look through the discussion guides here. What do you remember that's no longer in the Barrington area? Ha-ha, a small town feel really. I'll tell just one story that comes to mind about Bakers Lake. It was in the winter and I had a Labrador dog, and the lake was frozen over, and I took the dog for a walk on the lake. We came to a place where the spring fed water had bubbled up and there was a pool of open water. And there were two Mergansers, American Mergansers swimming in that little pool, and these are diving ducks. And my dog saw these birds and took off running and ran and jumped right in the water after them. She was a Labrador and that was her... Of course as soon as they saw her coming they ducked, they just dove under. And they can stay under a long time. So then the dog tried to get out to come to me and her weight on the ice depressed the ice and the water came up over and I saw that she was slipping and couldn't get out. So I was afraid to walk to the edge for fear the ice would break, so I got down on my stomach and kind of crawled out to her, and when she got her front paws up on the lake, up on the ice I was able to pull her up. In the process the water came all up. My friend had soaked me with cold icy water, so we walked home from there. But anyway, that was a memorable experience on the lake.

That's, I guess, Kathy, that's about all I, let me look over the discussion.

Oh, describe your house. The house we built on South Street was a modular home and it was built by a builder named Bill Stevens. It was built on the side of a hill and we had a balcony in back that looked right out over the lake. I guess that's about...oh the back side of this...oh here we go, here we go. I never worked in Barrington I commuted all the time to downtown Chicago on the train. I was a train

commuter. And I can remember the joys of the parking lot in the winter, and having to jump start the car, scrape off the snow, and all the happy things. That's all. That's it I guess Kathy.