



## **Bill Feldman**

**Date of Interview:** January 11, 2017

**Place of Interview:** Morton Grove Public Library

**Interviewer:** Chad Comello

**Duration:** 70 minutes

**Transcriber:** Elizabeth Ceisel

### **INTRODUCTION**

Bill Feldman is a longtime resident of Morton Grove. Born in 1946, Bill was part of the early wave of the Baby Boom generation. He lived in the Ravenswood area of Chicago before moving to Morton Grove in the early 1950s. Bill's early memories include witnessing the St. Alphonsus Church fire in October 1950 and Morton Grove's "sparkling white" sidewalks at the time.

He also speaks about starting a neighborhood newspaper as a kid, putting on a backyard carnival for charity, pursuing his interest in math, and visiting the Soviet Union in the 1960s while playing in a jazz band.

**BF: Bill Feldman**

**Q: Question asked by interviewer, Chad Comello**

BF: Well, I was born in 1946, in Chicago. Lived in this area just about my whole life. The first four and a half years were in Ravenswood. That was postwar; I was one of the first members of the Baby Boom generation. My folks had trouble finding housing; there was a housing shortage right after the war. They eventually found an apartment in Ravenswood and then I was born at that time. After more housing was being built up in the suburbs and available, my dad's brother, Ray, they had already moved to Morton Grove, up on Mason and Davis, so my folks were familiar with Morton Grove, having visited them. This tract of housing on Capulina, Aldrich's houses, if you're familiar with that. These are these tri-level houses. One of our real estate agents we knew said they were called Morton Grove specials. I've only seen them in Morton Grove. They're a tri-level. They all feel pretty much cookie cutter on the outside. You'll find them on Crain, Capulina, South Park, and north of Dempster as well; there's quite a few of them. They're unique. They're split-level. Anyway, so they saw that and said, "Let's move." I was almost five at that time. The thing that impressed me right away was how clean and neat the sidewalks were. Coming from Chicago, the streets were a little older, they were brown and worn. When we moved in that was a brand new subdivision and the sidewalks—this was on Capulina—the sidewalks were white. Just sparkling white against the street. Not the parkway, like in many places;

these were right on the side of the street. They were just so white and so that's a thing that really impressed me to start.

Q: So what do you know about your parents and their family history? Was your extended family from Chicago as well?

BF: My father's side—I've been studying genealogy—I've traced it back and my great-great-grandparents on my paternal grandfather's side came over from Germany around 1860, and I was able to find where they lived on Fremont Street. One of the apartments that they lived in is still there. And my great-grandparents lived next door to that. And my grandparents also were born here. So, my great-grandparents and grandparents were born here. Great-grandparents on my paternal grandmother's side were born in Germany. They moved here around 1880. All the apartments are in Old Town; they're all still there, and they're multi-million dollar places now. [laughter] And there in the Depression, they could hardly afford it! So on that side they're pretty entrenched in Chicago. So I've seen a lot there. And then on my mother's side, my grandparents emigrated from Denmark. They've got a pretty interesting story. They moved to South Dakota and then eventually North Dakota. They had homesteaded in South Dakota. And then you know it was harsh winters and everything. [laughter] And it was during the Depression and my mom decided to move to the big city because there wasn't much opportunity in North Dakota

during the Depression. So she came to Chicago. She had an aunt that lived here, moved in with her a little bit and then eventually worked as a nanny, or a domestic as she called it. One of her first jobs was with a family in the Gold Coast neighborhood; she was caring for their really young son, just a couple months old. The father's name was Paul Rhymer and he was a writer for a radio program. It was called *The Humor of Vic and Sade*. People that were in that era, if there's still any of them around, they'll remember it because it was a very famous radio program. So he was the writer for it.

Q: Was that local to Chicago?

BF: No, no, that was a national show. It had a big following. James Thurber compared Paul Rhymer to someone like Mark Twain as a matter of fact. It was a slice-of-life-type show, but with some absurd humor. It was a daily show. So anyways she was the nanny for that family, and then she wanted to experiment around. After she started going back to school, she became a dental assistant. She took courses and then became a dental assistant. Then eventually during World War II she joined the WACs and then she met my dad at a USO dance or whatever the event was. It was one of these dances where there was a circle of the men going one way and the women going the other way on the inside. And then when the music stops you're supposed to dance together. So maybe if the music had played an extra measure I wouldn't be here. [laughter] But, they met

there. It turned out they knew some people in common; they might have met anyway for all I know. They married in 1944.

Q: So your dad was in the service?

BF: They both were, you know my mom joined the WACs. When they retired they moved to Albuquerque, and we bought their house here in Morton Grove. So I'm still in the house I grew up in. They're buried in the veteran's cemetery in Santa Fe, side by side, not on top each other because they were both in the army, both branches. And she outranked him since she was a sergeant. [laughter] So that's the background of my folks.

Q: So your mom came to Chicago by way of the Dakotas, and your dad was in Chicago...

BF: Yeah, he always lived there.

Q: What was his story? What did he do before the war?

BF: He started out as an office boy at a printing place. At a rotogravure company, if you're familiar with that. Rotogravure is a type of printing process that lends itself to photography, such as catalogues. They printed Sears catalogs, or part of

Sears catalogs and that. You've heard the song "in your Easter bonnet with all the frills upon it"... One of the verses in there goes "the photographers will snap you and you'll find that you're in the rotogravure." So anyway, they also made Sunday supplements, which had photos, so it was that type of process. That was in the Manz building on Irving Park and Ravenswood. It was smelly and loud in the pressroom. He would take me there on Saturdays sometimes, because back then the typical workweek was five and a half days. So he went there on Saturdays, so I'd go along and I'd play with the inkpads and stuff like that. He eventually became the treasurer of the company.

Q: So he was working there before and after the war?

BF: Yes. Yeah, he was given an offer after the war. I don't know what it was; it was something like \$40 a week and he said no, that's not enough, and then the president liked him and he said, OK, \$45, so he got a better deal. So he was still working there when we moved out to Morton Grove. It was a longer commute, slightly. It was real close to where they lived in Ravenswood; he could walk there. That building still stands.

Q: Where did he serve during the war?

BF: It was in Alaska, on Kodiak Island. And then after D-Day... he never saw combat. In Alaska they did a lot of fishing and things like that; you eat salmon a lot there, it was good. After D-Day, they'd go through Germany and France, but all the fighting was really over. The war hadn't finished, but the Germans were in retreat at the time. Then, later, just as they were getting ready to ship off to the Philippines, word came that the Japanese surrendered. The boat turned around and they all went back. [laughter]

Q: He was already in route?

BF: Yeah, I believe so.

Q: Did he talk about what it felt like at that moment?

BF: Oh, yeah, he said there was something going around and then they found out and everyone's real happy. But he wasn't discharged until September or early October. My mom was discharged from the WACs, but then I believe he was discharged and then he moved to where she was. They were discharged about the same time in Fort Bragg. And then, I figured, when I did the math, that's when I was conceived. [laughter] It was during the previous time when the Cubs were in the World Series. He remembers that, he remembers the Cubs were playing.

Q: It was a very joyous time. [laughter]

BF: Right!

Q: So what type of work did your mother do during the war, and as part of WAC?

BF: She did dental work. She worked with the army dentist a lot, so that was pretty much the big issue. She was pretty much stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and she won an award for being the most beautiful WAC at Fort Bragg. She was nice looking, but she was very photogenic so that's what did it.

Q: So the war is over, they're released, they come back to Chicago, they have a child. What are your earliest memories?

BF: Well, I remember the apartment we were in. It was a three-flat apartment and it was on Wilson and Seeley. The apartment is still there. I remember just the back porch, walking up the steps and the like and some of my playmates. There was a guy who was a friend and a couple of girls there. My second brother was born—I have two brothers—the second one was born about eighteen months after me, so she had a lot of work to do, and so she put me in nursery school there. I didn't really like it that much. I remember fighting and not wanting to go and then she bribed me with a candy cigarette. [laughter] Back when they sold candy



cigarettes. One day, it was supposed to be a half day and by mistake they kept me there the whole day and I had to sleep in the cot for our nap. So that's one of my first memories. One of my big event memories was Dad coming home and saying, "Hey, let's get in the car." They had bought a car, a 1948 Chevy. He said, "Let's get in the car, there's a big fire." It was St. Alphonsus Church. So that was one of my memories. As I recall it was in October of 1950. But I remember going there and seeing the big flames and everything. Also an early memory was, [my parents] were Catholic, and they went to church, but they didn't want to take the kids with them. You know, 'cause they're disruptive. So they took turns going to St. Matthias Church. So when my mom went there, my dad would take us in the car and we'd sit and watch the "L" trains at Rockwell Avenue, where the Ravenswood train goes on the ground there. So we'd watch the "L" trains go by. That was a pastime. Or else go to the Chicago Northwestern station at Ravenswood and see the steam engines go by as well. So that is probably where I got my fascination with railroad trains.

Q: It stayed with you after that?

BF: Yeah, yeah, electric rails. Electric rails like subways and all the streetcars and that.

Q: What other things do you remember about being a kid in that time? You said you moved to Morton Grove when you were about five?

BF: Yeah, then we moved to Morton Grove and then that's where we got... We had a lot of leeway on things. We could wander around. It was out in the country almost at that time. I remember Dempster Street was a through street, not even a stop sign at Austin. It was a highway. On the north side of it there was Gunther's Farm Stand. I think it was around Marmora. I think it was between Mason and Marmora on the north side. And there was nothing really north of Dempster Street other than a couple of houses and a couple businesses like that. They grew their own tomatoes, because that was a big vacant lot and then a farm stand. On Austin and Dempster on the northeast side there was Murphy's Steakhouse. On the west side there was the remnants of the Dells. That was all wooded then, and we just didn't go around there. My mother told me about The Dells. She knew about it.

On the south side of Dempster—I think it was at Mango—there was Kramer's poultry. It was a live poultry place; they had deer there too, outside. Chuck Kramer, he went to school with me, the kid. And where the CVS is now, those were all houses. I was a newsboy, and delivered papers to them. So there weren't many houses north of Dempster or south of Lincoln, when we moved there. We were in one of the very first new subdivisions there. There was just nothing. South of Lincoln was some sort of a swamp in a way, and north of

Dempster just wasn't developed. However, all the sidewalks were put in and if you go there you'll see they're all built in 1928, 1929; they have their stamp there. That was from the Insull era back then. [*Note: Samuel Insull owned utilities, including Commonwealth Edison, and developed real estate in the 1920s.*]

I remember Lincoln Avenue along here, that was the downtown area of Morton Grove. It had Dilg's Tavern on Ferris and Lincoln, on Callie was the First National Bank of Morton Grove. I had an account there. I got my allowance and things like that and my folks thought it was a good idea to open an account. And I remember I got the concept of interest back then because they were giving 2 percent a year, which is high these days. For a while that was nothing, but now that's the norm I guess. Then beyond as we're coming towards the east there was Dilg's drugstore, where the firehouse is now, and Jack's Hardware. Jack Koller was the mayor, or village president, of Morton Grove eventually. And right next to it—the building still stands there—it was a National Tea store, food store. They had two cash registers, but only one was used. And you know these days they have a belt that moves the groceries. They didn't have a belt; it was a circular thing that you'd place in on the circle and it would go towards the cashier. But it wasn't a big store. There was a couple other food stores.

Well, then there's the Bringer Inn. Then right across the street—the building is still there—it was the C and T market, which was right on the corner of Fernald and Lincoln. It was a decent size store. They had a big container of bubblegum. You could pick out your color; it was a penny bubblegum, the

jawbreaker size. So you could get penny bubblegum there. They also had Snaps, the licorice candy. Those were two cents a box. And you've seen these long strips of paper with dots on them—dot candy, long strip— those were two cents. What else was there... you could buy a loaf of bread, meat counter, things like that. Let's see... on Fernald there was also a bakery, a little bit north of Lincoln, that was the Morton Grove Bakery. My mom used to send me on an errand to buy a loaf of bread there. It was like twenty-five cents, or whatever, twenty-six cents when they raised the price. [laughter] You'd go there and it's, "I want a large white sliced"—I was trained to say that, "large white sliced" because you know they sliced the bread right there. I didn't care for it. I liked Silvercup or Wonder Bread, because it toasted better. But my mom liked it. It was homemade bread. It was good looking back, but it just didn't toast very well. That building isn't there anymore, where the bakery was.

Between Fernald and Georgiana there was a meat market too, Loutsch's Meat Market, and then the Library. I visited them a lot after I discovered the Thornton W. Burgess books. I even remember my card: J1760 was my card number. The librarian, she was a sweet, thin, red-haired, middle-age lady, or middle to old, she looked old to me. She was probably just middle aged.

Q: Do you remember her name?

BF: No, no I never learned her name. She knew mine, and she helped me find the good books to read. Very sweet.

Q: So you were a big reader?

BF: Yeah, she showed me the right books. I don't know if you're familiar with Thornton W. Burgess—he wrote a lot of books and it was geared just for someone my age, like age 7, 8. So that's where I first learned the concept of a year, like 1952, because the due date was stamped and the year was almost worn out, it was a little blue smudge. I go, "What's that?" My mother told me that's 1952—that's the year we're in. And I looked back and some of the prior due dates were 1951. So I learned about years then. So then beyond the library there was a little office on the corner at School Street, and that was Art Loutsch's real estate company, just a little office. (Art Loutsch would always ride his old high wheel bicycle in the Fourth of July Parade.) Beyond that was Tad's TV repair. That building is still there. It's that orange-yellow building; that was Tad's TV. (That was a much-needed service, because those vacuum tubes in the TV would often blow.) He was just about the only minority person in Morton Grove. Tad Kimura, he was a Japanese World War II veteran on our side. He was the guy... in the pre-internet days, if there was a village announcement to make, his van had speakers on top of it. The van would go through the village and make announcements on that.

Q: What sort of announcements would they make?

BF: Such as water restrictions and events happening, like the carnival or things like that. (There was only a small water tower on Callie, and with the population explosion, rationing was needed until they built a bigger tower. I remember we often had low water pressure.) He was on the volunteer fire department as well. That reminds me: on the volunteer fire department, I think it was near the firehouse, at twelve o'clock there was a whistle, noon siren. I think they did that mainly to test it. Then when there was a fire or an emergency it would go three times. [siren noises] They could hear it throughout the village and that was a call for the volunteer fire department.

Q: So people would come running?

BF: Yeah, yeah, all the volunteers were local, had local business, and they'd get on the fire truck and take off there. So that was in the same area. Let's see.... Oh yeah, there were a lot of food stores, those little... On Dempster there was a Kroger, I think where the bank... no it was on Georgiana. There was also on Fernald, I believe, between Fernald and Callie it was Redding's Delicatessen; that was sort of like a convenience store. That would be the only store that would be open on Sundays, because all the businesses closed on Sundays. The meat

counters at the big stores closed at 6 PM. You couldn't buy meat after 6, even if the store was open. Union rules. I don't know how that was. (Also, Schaul's Bowling alley was where the McDonald's is now. It had 8 bowling lanes.)

On the north side of Dempster at Meade there was Yadron's—that's where my dad would buy beer. They didn't sell beer and wine and liquor at the grocery stores like they do now. It was just there. So that was Yadron's store, it was the only really liquor store around there. He'd take us along. He'd go on shopping trips, we'd go there. And then Mr. Yadron, my brother and me, he'd kid us, he'd say, "Oh what nice little girls you have" and we'd go, "No! We're boys, we're boys!" Just to get a rise out of us. After that he'd always give us a piece of bubblegum or candy. That was the price for harassment. [laughter] That building is still there, Dempster and Meade. Meade Street was a cinder road. It wasn't paved, just cinders, north of there. There was maybe one or two houses and then it was empty. Went all the way back to the forest preserve. Moody next to it was just two ruts on the road. Just for adventure, we'd ask my dad to take a drive on it. It was a bumpy ride, just really bad. But, there were sidewalks there, both sides they had them there. We nicknamed it Muddy Street. Also they had Theobald Road, it went from Dempster (before they built the Edens) to the corner of Lincoln and Marmora. Now it juts off to Marmora, but there wasn't much traffic so they could have a three-way intersection at that point. It was sort of a through street. It was a rounded street with no curbs. Menard was just a dirt road, or I

don't know what you called it, an oiled road or something. It was just full of potholes and everything.

And then where the Muslim school is, which used to be Borg School, and the Molloy school, that was a prairie. We called that the prairie because it was tall grasses and everything. And Baxter Laboratories, their headquarters were here, where the condos are now on Lincoln Avenue. That was their world headquarters! Now they're in Deerfield. Certain days they'd be working their formulas and they would give off the smell of sulfur dioxide, rotten eggs. Ugh, made me sick sometimes.

Q: So what sort of things did you do for fun growing up?

BF: Well, when we first moved in we didn't have a TV even. We had a console radio and record player and all the records were big—the long players were 78s; they were all 78s really, or the LPs for 33. So we could watch the turntable go around. My folks bought classical music. We'd get into the "Grand Canyon Suite," Tchaikovsky, *The Nutcracker*, things like that. (I also listened to the radio. My favorite show was *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon*. Because he recommended it, for breakfast I faithfully ate Quaker Puffed Wheat and Quaker Puffed Rice ("both fine cereals are very, very nice!").

But, activities outside, we'd have clamp-on roller skates—none of this inline stuff, and they were loud since they were metal wheels on the sidewalk. So



we could skate all over there. I remember the skate key. They'd come off. We wore out a couple of pairs. It was good exercise.

One of the things we'd do is, when we were a little older like third grade or something like that, we'd play sixteen-inch softball in the street, and use the sewers as bases. It wasn't a perfect diamond, but the sewers were handy for that. Every time a car would come: "Car!" There just wasn't much traffic there; there was no one parked on the street, so we had it. We'd have summertime in the park district, at Harrer Park. They had some programs there, and then Austin Park. It wasn't called Austin Park back then, it was South Central. But they had a baseball diamond. First thing in the morning we would play softball. There was a college guy that led it. Then after that there'd be more sit-down board games.

One of the things at school... I went to St. Martha's, and then we'd go home for lunch. They didn't have a cafeteria there. They had a lunchroom my first year in kindergarten, but you had to bring your own lunch. And then with the Baby Boomers they subdivided that into classrooms, so we went home for lunch all the time. Except on real cold days, then I'd bring my Hopalong Cassidy lunch box. [laughter] So we go home and watch Uncle Johnny Coons on the TV (channel 5-WNBQ back then). He was a guy in a derby hat—it'd always end up with a glass of milk and "Well, here's how" a toast. He'd show these old movies, Charlie Chaplin, things like that. After that, after we grew tired of that, eventually they had *The Happy Pirates*. That was Two Ton Baker (on channel 7—WENR and later WBKB), and he was a piano player. He also was a spokesman for

Riverview, the amusement park. He was a big heavy guy, a “two-ton” baker. He was really good. They’d show cartoons, Koko the Clown, Felix the Cat. And then later they’d have, after that ran its course, they had *Lunchtime Little Theater*, which was on WGN. That was the forerunner to *Bozo’s Circus*. In fact, Uncle Ned was on that and he became Ringmaster Ned on Bozo’s. Anyways, what was cool about that, they had three: Uncle Bucky, Uncle Ned—well, it was Uncle Dan, but then Uncle Ned later—and then Aunt Jeannie played the piano. Then I guess she died and she was replaced by Aunt Dody (Dardanelle Hadley). And it turned out Aunt Dody lived in Morton Grove on Crain Street. So she was a famous person! She appeared on *Lunchtime Little Theater*. She was on my morning paper route and I thought it was neat. She was very friendly. You know, I saw her in curlers!  
[laughter]

Some of the stuff we did: we had a carnival in our backyard. We’d decided, “Hey, it’s a way to make money.” We’d have a carnival and charge, and have wagon rides, games of skill, and do just a bunch of things with a drawing for prizes and that. My mom said OK. She encouraged stuff like that, since it was creative. But she said, “You know, you could get a lot more people coming if you promoted it as a charity.” So we wanted to make money, but she thought it would be good just to donate your earnings to this Orchard School that was being built. Because they had a brick-buying program; for five dollars you could buy a brick, that was the thing. So we went, “OK yeah.” And we had a lot of fun and then we made a presentation to the school, it was five dollars...

Q: Did you have a lot of people at the carnival?

BF: Oh yeah, kids from the neighborhood. Where we grew up, everyone was returning, you know veterans, we were all the same age. So all the kids, I was probably one of the oldest on the block, but we were all within that Baby Boom generation.

Q: So lots of playmates.

BF: Yeah. The neighborhood was very diverse with respect to professions, I'd say. Going down the street, my dad was a printer; next door there was a carpenter. Neighbors helped each other out too on projects and that. All the houses were unfinished on the split-level. They had four floors; it was really two floors, but split to four. The third and fourth floor and then the half-basement were all unfinished. So it was do-it-yourself, and no one really hired contractors. You did it yourself back then. But the neighbor next door was a carpenter, so he helped out my dad. The other neighbor beyond that, he was a photographer for Sears catalogues and displays and things like that. That was Mike Boor. He also freelanced for the local newspaper. It was called the *News*. That was before the *Champion*, it was the *News*. It was based in Skokie, but they had a Morton Grove edition, so he'd photograph for that. I have some pictures of the neighborhood gatherings; it's

real professional quality. He took those pictures 'cause he was a good photographer. And then, let's see, I forget one guy. Next guy was Bob Eick. He was a real estate salesman. Long time. Across the street coming down there was a lawyer (and later a federal judge, John Nordberg), a foot doctor, a podiatrist. Then there was an electrician, and then a mechanic, and a university professor from Northwestern. So it was just all different professions.

One of the things I did—I had a lot of jobs, you know, “Make money!” One of the things I did, I got the publishing bug. At home I would make the family newspaper. Oh, what happened today and then I'd make a cartoon, I'd draw a cartoon. But then got the idea: let's do it for the neighborhood. So I go around collecting news from every family and then write articles. The trouble was we didn't have mimeograph or anything, so it was all on carbon paper. So I could only make three editions, three copies at a time, the main and then two. But my mom was a good typist so she helped out with that. Eventually we bought a hectograph. I don't know if you're familiar with that. The hectograph is 8.5 by 11, and it's this gelatin. You type the main copy and it's a special carbon paper. It's reverse on the side, and then you wet the gel and lay the paper on it, let it set, and then pull the paper off and then you have an imprint. Then you can run off about fifteen copies that way. It's a long process but it worked, it worked pretty well. So we'd go around the neighborhood and sell it for a couple cents. [*Note: A video demonstration of a hectograph can be found here: <https://goo.gl/b7ovN7>*]

Q: [laughter] Intrepid journalist there.

BF: [laughter] It was a good activity. I had a paper route. Well, I shared a paper route with Ken Wentink: they lived on Fernald and Capulina. I was in fourth grade, and we had an afternoon paper route. We split the paper route: he delivered the *Daily News* and I delivered the *Chicago American*. The route was on south of Lincoln on Major, Mango, and Parkside, between Lincoln and Oakton. The route had about 90 papers I think, 45 each roughly. Because it was pretty much split between the *Daily News* and the *American*, so we got about a penny a paper doing that. We'd get there, roll the papers, even though I didn't toss it. That was in fourth grade. Fifth grade I got my own paper route. It was a morning route delivering the *Tribune*, *Sun Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

Q: That was before school you'd do that?

BF: Yeah, yeah, I really wanted afternoon but then all they had available was the morning route. So now I have to get up at 6 AM and go out and deliver the papers and I'd be done a little after 7. I had a wagon behind my bicycle attached to that and loaded up with papers. The hardest day was Thanksgiving because that's when they had all the ads for Christmas. It was big papers. But the rest of the time all the papers could fit in the wagon. And then in the winter, if it was snowing I'd have a sled. I'd take the papers along, it was about fifty papers. They

paid me by the month regardless of the number of papers. It was like \$15 a month, so it was decent money for a fifth grader (and then I'd get about \$50 in tips around Christmas). I'd do that, the paper route, then some other jobs I took, you know, mow the lawns and that. On the paper route, sometimes in the morning I would go to the bakery. There was another bakery (Jean's Bakery) by that time north of Dempster where they have that restaurant... that little area on the northwest side of Dempster and Austin. They had Adco drugstore, the bakery, Dahm's Department Store, and then a food store. I believe that was where the new National was for a while. (They called the shopping center "Shop 'n' Park" but I always thought "Park 'n' Shop" made more sense.) I'd go there in the morning right at the end of my paper route and buy some sweet rolls at the bakery to bring home for the family. My mother would give me some money to do that. Those were good sweet rolls, let me tell you. For a while on the south side of Dempster there was a Jewel and then there was a Hi-Lo right between Dempster and Marmora.

Getting back, other jobs I had, I delivered circulars for the K & K meat market. They were on Dempster near Austin on the south side, southwest side. Kristoff owned it and Mrs. Kristoff would assign a route to each of us and it would have the weekly specials and that. And we'd get a half-cent per circular. So we'd go up and down and if we had any left over we'd put 'em on windshields and cars just get rid of them. We were pretty honest; we didn't throw them away.

And then another job I took after seventh grade was caddying up at the Glen View Club. Some started after sixth grade, I started after seventh grade. So I did that for six years. That was a good job. As I found out later, there were a lot of movers and shakers that were members there. I didn't realize at the time how well known they were. Like Bill Bartholomay, he was the owner of the Milwaukee Braves and then the Atlanta Braves. You've heard of Meigs Field the old airport. Well, Merrill Meigs, I caddied for him. (I also got to caddy for two former Western Open winners: Jock Hutchinson and Chick Evans.)

Q: Were you an athlete as a student? Did you enjoy sports or was it just a job for you?

BF: They gave us the opportunity to golf every Monday, because that was the low day. The caddies could golf. I tried it and I was a hacker. I just could not play golf, so I finally gave it up. I said I'm never playing this sport again. Not in those nice words but.... No, my thing was music.

Q: What were you like as a student in school? You say you were a musician. Did you start that early?

BF: Oh yeah, we started that in fourth grade. After fourth grade in the summer. Roger Palm was the music director at Park View School. We heard about him and he

was able to come to our house and give lessons. My younger brother took accordion like a lot of people did and I took clarinet. So he'd give us a half-hour lesson every week throughout the year because he was teaching during the year. He'd just come there after school and teach us. But the following summer we had to go to Evanston where his studios were. My mother didn't drive, so we took the bus there down Dempster Street. And then after one bus—I was in fifth grade—she let us take the bus into Evanston. We were all comfortable with public transit. I don't know if you could do that today, but different time. I was in fifth grade, my brother out of third grade, and we rode to Evanston, paid our fifteen-cent fare. It was an old bus too. The bus came from Elgin. It was one of these old touring buses where the door swung open, you had to open it manually, and you get on. Then after the lesson we'd wait at Davis Street, come back.

Q: Did you have any favorite subjects in school?

BF: Oh yeah, math. I eventually became an actuary. I excelled in math. And my dad encouraged it. He made some drill cards for stuff, adding, subtracting, and multiplying, flash cards. Then he'd also teach me algebra in grade school, like third grade. I'd get the concept, but it took a while. I always liked that, in fact I still do. I dabble in it and just mess around with that.

We had Cub Scouts; that was the other thing. My mother was a den mother. So we had about eight or ten kids in our basement every week. Once a



month all the dens would get together at the pack; that was at the grade school, which is now the police station and village hall. So that's where they held that in the gymnasium. Ed Bryce, the scoutmaster, Pack 228. That's as far as I went in cub scouts. I went to Webelos, but I didn't join Boy Scouts. I did that and had the caddying throughout the summers and that. And a lot of music after that.

Q: So then through high school, did you have any sense of what you wanted to do beyond that?

BF: Oh yeah, I was thinking, in the eighth grade graduation it said, "What do you want to be?" I said, "business man, part-time musician" and that's what I ended up being. [laughter]

Q: Interesting. That's the path that you knew pretty early on and that's what you ended up with.

BF: Yeah. I wanted to be a math teacher at one time but then, I didn't take education, you know math ed. I was a teaching assistant for a while at the University of Illinois in calculus and finite mathematics. The jobs for teaching without a math education degree weren't very good. So I always had actuary in the background. My dad worked at Allstate after that printing company went under. Well, he was fired because he had a disagreement with the boss. The boss always wins with

that, you know how to run the company. Eventually the company of course folded 'cause it wasn't run right. He worked at Allstate. (He was one of their early computer programmers.) Their headquarters were in Skokie for a long time.

Q: What did you go to school for after high school? Did you go to college after that?

BF: Yeah, I went to University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and majored in math. Math ed, and then math. My grades weren't good enough for math ed. It took me a couple years to get straight on that, but then I excelled in math all the way. Eventually got a master's degree in that. I hung around because of the jazz band there. We did a lot of performing; we toured Europe and the Soviet Union sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. That was a good group. It was essentially a professional band.

Q: What did you play?

BF: In there I played the bari sax. It was a good group. I still keep in touch with a lot of the guys there. I don't really play anymore.

Q: So this was in your college years?

BF: Yeah, my two younger brothers though: the youngest brother is five years younger than me. They both became full-time musicians for a while, for a couple years. (We each had our moments of glory: I got to perform with Tony Bennett, my middle brother with Buddy Rich, and the youngest brother with Sonny and Cher [and we all got paid for those gigs]. But those are stories in themselves.)

Q: What was the Soviet Union like when you were there? What time was it?

BF: It was in '69, so it was the height of the Cold War. It was like, "OK, we're going there, all right." Once we were there it was great. I roamed freely. Maybe I was tailed, I don't know. I went all around. Being a rail fan, I rode the tramways, streetcars as much as I could everywhere. That's what I did in Europe too the year before, just go around wherever I could.

Q: Was it a big culture shock for you being there?

BF: Well, the language, just the alphabet itself. I learned the alphabet because a lot of it was similar to Greek letters and in math you know the Greek letters. So I could pronounce things easier. It was sponsored by the U.S. State Department so we had an official escort and were treated with high respect. We were ambassadors. The people were friendly. We had people congratulate us on the reaching the moon. They were real interested then. This was right after the moon

shot. They were real happy. I went off with some of the musicians. There were local musicians and we'd meet up with them. And we'd go out drinking vodka. [laughter] Ever since then I really stopped drinking vodka.

Q: So you lived through and witnessed a lot of significant events through your youth into adulthood. Are there a few that stand out as especially significant through all the '50s and '60s?

BF: Well, of course, Kennedy assassination. We were in class in school and the loudspeaker just started broadcasting a radio show. What's going on? Is there a malfunction? Then it said, "It's not known whether the president is dead." And we all went, "Oh..." Then we found out a half hour later, they said he was dead. Everyone in that era knows exactly where they were when they said that happened.

Q: This was in high school?

BF: This was in high school. It was in our religion class at Notre Dame High School. I just remember our teacher gasped. It was just really something there. That evening, I had a gig at McCormick Place. I was in a group, it was called the Ill Winds. It was a society band with high schoolers. We played at debutante balls, weddings, bar mitzvahs. The mothers there lined up the jobs; we had a lot of

good jobs. We got on WTTW. We also had a job at McCormick Place that night. We were all shocked and talking about it, but we're going down. Then when we got there they said event's cancelled, so we sorta knew that would happen. (Also, our high school marching band played "Hail to the Chief" for President Kennedy as he stepped off the plane at O'Hare. We also played for LBJ the following year at O'Hare.)

Q: So this is Kennedy and you mentioned the moon landing was another thing that you remember...

BF: Yeah, I was at school. Like I said we were in the jazz band and we were rehearsing throughout that summer, getting ready for our Soviet trip and one of the guys invited me over to his apartment to watch it on TV.

Q: So what did you think?

BF: Oh, he was more thrilled than I was. He just said, "Wow! We're on the moon!" I thought it was pretty cool. Looking back I think it's amazing that they could do it with the crude computers they had back then.

Q: By that time, I guess it would have been beyond that that you started a family at that point? Was that after college?

BF: Yeah, we got married right out of college. I went to U of I for seven years with the masters and just hanging around. It was during the Vietnam time and I was applying for the CO status, conscientious objector, so I just figured I'll stay here 'til I get it. It took a while. It took several times. I had to appeal several times. I finally got it approved and then got married and moved to Rockford. That's where I was assigned for hospital work, so I did that for two years, and then moved back to here where the jobs were. I got a job at Combined Insurance in Uptown. W. Clement Stone, that was his company, if you've heard of him. He was a character (with his bow tie, pencil-thin mustache, and ever-present Cuban cigar). One of these philanthropists. He was well known in Chicago. Then we had a daughter, lived in an apartment in Skokie for a couple years, then when my parents retired we moved to Morton Grove. It was available so we said, "OK, let's do that." We stayed there. Stayed there ever since; that's where I am. When you retire, all right, do you move to Florida? Nah, I don't like Florida, not year round. It's nice to visit. We like Chicago—it's a nice location. Like the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, we go to a lot of concerts there. That's worth staying for. I'm in this rail fan group, Central Electric Railfans' Association that meets once a month downtown. So I do that. And then I also am a Chicago Greeter, which I

give tours for free, for visitors. It's run through the city. I do that a lot. Not lately, 'cause it's cold right now. But in the summer, at least once a week I'd say.

Q: What do you give tours of?

BF: Whatever they want. They sign up and I look at what people are interested in and how many there are. It's a maximum of six people. I usually concentrate on the north side of Chicago, like Old Town, Gold Coast, Uptown, things I'm familiar with. So it's always a good tour 'cause I really know what I'm showing. And the Loop, of course, because I worked there for many years as well with PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Q: You've seen a lot of changes over the years growing up here. What are some things that really stick out to you either in Morton Grove or Chicago at large?

BF: Well, Chicago itself has gotten a lot nicer. It was sort of a gritty downtown area I'd say. It was always nice to go down there though. My mom would take us downtown a lot for shopping and movies. Our dentist, the dentist she worked for before she was married, we still went to him because he gave a good deal. That was an adventure just going downtown: take the bus on Lincoln Avenue, get off at the Western Avenue Ravenswood "L" and ride that and then take the subway to Clark and Division, where the dentist was. And we'd go downtown afterwards,

or go up north, or go to Wrigley Field. But it was gritty. Wrigley Field, for example, that was a gritty area. Sometimes we'd take the bus on Lincoln Avenue, we'd stop at Irving Park and Clark and then we'd walk down there. That was all just two-flats like you see, but right next to the field there was a railroad. I don't know if you've seen old pictures of that, but a railroad with a coal yard right next to it. So I mean that's how it was. Now it's all... Well, in another year or so it's really gonna be upscale. (Back then all the games were in the afternoon and they were lucky to have a crowd of 10,000.) Downtown is also, it's just gotten cleaner and nicer... just different in ways.

Q: What about Morton Grove? How has that changed over the years?

BF: Well, it was more rural like I said early on. It's gotten to be a lot more traffic for sure on Dempster. The street I'm on, it had changed because there were a lot of kids when I was growing up, then we all grew up. Then we moved back in and there became a lot of kids then with my daughter's age and now they've grown up. There isn't much there now—it's a lot quieter. There may be a couple families moving in, at least I'm hoping for that. You see different generations coming in. Let's see, I'm trying to think... it's gotten more commercial along Dempster Street. Like I said, on my paper route I had four houses on Dempster Street that I just delivered paper for. (The ethnic composition has definitely changed over the



years. When I was little the neighborhood was almost exclusively white Catholics and Protestants. Now it's much more diverse.)

Q: Is there anything else that comes to mind, anything you'd like to share?

BF: Let's see, just trying to think here.... It was a little less protective- you know, we could go around. Now, it's just a sign of the times... parents and that, they're driving some kids to school, dropping them off, or the school bus. We walked to school. We had older kids we'd walk with and that. You could do a lot, have a longer leash I guess. It was just easier to get around. We'd take an "L" ride on the south side and think nothing of it. Or to the west side as well, just to ride around.

(One thing I neglected to mention was family vacations. Typical of the 50s and early 60s, it was all road trips! We usually would visit with relatives or old Army friends of my parents in North Dakota, Florida, and California, and out East and initially would stay in motels on the way. Eventually to economize even more we invested in a tent and went to campgrounds. Back in those days you didn't have to worry about reservations at state or national parks, as camping wasn't as popular as it is now—you just showed up, and there was usually room. There weren't any seatbelts for safety and of course no video games or DVDs for us kids. However, we were able to keep amused for example, by looking for things that began with A, B, C, etc. or keeping track of other license plates. At night in the tent we hung a Coleman lantern on a loop at the top of the tent and played

card games, with one of the parents reading or resting. We rarely went to restaurants since we (usually Mom) prepared all the meals or sandwiches. As a result of all this economizing we were able to see most of the country. By the time I finished high school, I had been in 40 to 45 states and a couple of provinces in Canada.)