

2-14-2000

## Interview with Betty Mills

Anne Crosby

Betty Mills

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### Recommended Citation

Crosby, Anne and Mills, Betty, "Interview with Betty Mills" (2000). *Interviews*. 3.  
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**Accession Number: LAK-AC-021400**

**Researcher's Name: Anne Crosby**

**Event: Interview with Betty Mills**

**Place: Betty's home in Millwood.**

**Co-workers present: N/A**

AC: This is an interview with Betty Mills, that's your last name right? On February 14, at 10 in the morning. Betty, how long have you lived in Millwood?

BM: I have been here 46 and a half years, can you hear it? [I think so, yes we can] In the same house. I have been here 46 and a half years and I lived 3 years and 9 months down in another place. [oh okay, in Millwood then?] In Millwood.

AC: What brought you to Millwood?

BM: Well, I was born and raised in Howard and that's 3 miles away so when my husband and I got married, there was a little cabin down here on Howard, Millwood Road. That was for rent, and we got married in October of 48, and we moved in that little cabin in the first of December in 48.

AC: Okay, um, and what has kept you in Millwood all these years?

BM: This is just home. I just like it. And I haven't got a lot of room here, but I raised 7 children in this house, it's a double house, I mean an apartment on the other side. And I always felt at home her, always had good neighbors and just liked it.

AC: Um, do you have any favorite memories, um about Millwood?

BM: There's a lot of really great friends here, Helen and Forest Davidson, and we just lost Forest last week, [oh I'm sorry] he was 90 years old. I forget the year the church was up along 36 and they built a new one here right down here at the end and my children always went down there. One of them went when she couldn't walk. My oldest daughter would carry her down. And Helen and Forest were pillars to the church. And there's a Helen Thomas, she's one too, and Margie Dolittle from Mt. Vernon. That lived right up there, she still comes be and she's up in her late 80s.

AC: So is the church important to you in Millwood?

BM: Yes, I haven't been going here recently, but I went, and my children was all raised up in church. And I enjoyed it here very much.

AC: Living in Howard and Millwood, you've always had the river next to you, do you ever use the river?

BM: I don't but my boys has always used it. Especially Neil, you know Neil. Well, he's a fisherman and canoes and they always swam down here underneath the bridge and the girls would clean up and fix their hair and then go down to the river and swim. Hahahah. I think they

was looking for, [pause, loud noise of kettle] There was a Mrs. Robinson that lived over here, one thing I can remember about her, she was always an older lady, but very nice. And the day that Kennedy was shot it was kinda warm, and her and I both lived out she was on her side, and I was on my side raking leaves that we hadn't gotten up, and I came in the house to get a drink of water and I heard on the radio that Kennedy had been shot and I ran out there and told her and we both cried. Hahaha. That's what I remember about her. She had 2 children and I was always good friends with her daughter and her husband. And do you want me to tell you about, now when I moved here I was told this was a hotel and a bar, and there was more build up on it on the other side, but I wanted to get a book to look and see if that's so, and also on the corner was a post office and [oh okay] and a let's see, this little building right up here, they just tore it down on Saturday and burn it. IT was a harness shop. [oh wow] And I just kept hearing this pounding and pounding and finally I found it and I was like, 'oh you're not tearing that building down' and behind it was the horse hitch, it was on a pole with a hitch and now it's gone. [oh that's too bad] It is. That ought to been gived to a museum, maybe they did, I don't know.

AC: Have you seen much change in Millwood?

BM: Lots of people moving in and out . And a one time we had three stores and a barber shop. All at the same time, and they made a pretty good living at it. And the one that was up here in this cement block building and it was called Ensley's Grocery and then across the street where Mike Ensley has a tire shop now, that was Kirk's Grocery and then on down straight down was Moyer's store and hardware, but before that Mitchell's owned that. And you could get anything in that, it was a dry good store, hardware store, but that was more like when I was really young. And I remember coming down there and getting a pair of shoes and they gave you a vase, about that big and it had a parrot on it, I still have that, oh really, yeah I have it put away up stairs, up in the attic. And they had anything you'd a wanted, washtubs, groceries, what you would have bought back them years. And shoes and clothing and material and mmmhmm and all that. And then Mitchell's sold it to Moyers and Moyers lived along the side of it, there was an apartment there, and they run in for a long time till they got in bad health. They had a sale down there, but I didn't go, you know they sold out all those, whatever was left over and a lot of people got antiques. And the barber shop up here was on the other side of Ensley's store, there was a little room in shop. there and Walter Darling run that, and he'd cut your hair and then get the fiddle out and play the fiddle (giggle) [oh hahahah] And it was kind of a a place for the men to go in and sat on this church bench if I remember right. And about everybody around went to Walter Darling to get their hair cut. You know, I suppose it was only a dollar or so.

AC: did men and women go, or just men?

BM: I think just men. I wasn't up there all that much you know, but I just think just men. I never heard anything about him cutting women's hair, but he could have. They lived here for many years, he's a funny old man. Hahahah. What other business did we have here? I can't think of any more, that was quite a bit, well down on the back road, Ensly's had a store down there too. At one time. And they had a permit to sell beer and stuff down there, but I lived down where the bridge is now, across the bridge in a little house on the corner there. I lived there when the bridge fell.

AC: Oh really, do you remember that day?

BM: I remember hearing them and I remember what it looked like, it was scary too because I was young, and the whole end of the bridge, the south end of the bridge, fell right down and the truck down, and it killed him, but I don't know when, it had to have been, 40, 49, it'd had to been between 50 and 52 or 53, but I don't know the date and I tried to find the pictures to show you of the flood that we had and if I can find them, I'll let you know. And we lived down there then. The man that lived down here was an excellent, excellent swimmer and they got in a speed boat somewhere up the river and they had on boots and overcoats because it was sometime in January and they got down there and boat got away from them and hit the bridge, and the weight of the clothing filled up with water, and he drowned, and that was so scary because there were people down there hunting for him and the water was so high.

AC: Why had he gotten in his speed boat, was he going to do something for the flood?

BM: Just for the fun of it, and another man was in there, but he was saved, all I know is that it's a McKinley, and his wife was pregnant at the time and she had a little boy named Mike and Patty was born after that. I can't think of his name, all I know it's McKinley. So she raised those children herself. It was a sad time in Millwood. And my father in law worked at the sand plant, you know where it's at, he worked there and they didn't let him come home and they didn't let him come and his wife kept calling down there and said, he isn't going to get across the bridge, he won't get home. And finally they let him come home and he was the last one to get across the bridge before the water came over it, that's how high the water was. Wouldn't that be scary?

AC: yes,

BM: And I can't tell you, do you know what year that was? Did you look it up?

AC: Another person in my class is doing all three floods, the 1898, I think was the first one, and there's the one you're speaking of, and the recent one, oh no, there's four floods I think, since then. I'm not sure the dates of all of the, but someone is focusing on the floods.

BM: Yes, that was scary too.

AC: Did the flood effect your house?

BM: Well the little cabin that I told you that we moved in and it was so cute and we fixed up so cute, that flood got it and it went right down the river, and I was glad I didn't live there. Yeah, that was, just went right up there. Now when the river gets up now it still gets up around where that was. It was a little furnished cottage, it was nice.

AC: would you mind if I turned the TV down?

BM: Oh yeah, just turn it off, I'm sorry, I just have that on for noise. [pause, sounds of kitchen]

AC: how many kids do you still have living in Millwood?

BM: Let's see, Sander, Neil, Julian,

AC: 3?

BM: 3.

AC: how many grandkids do you have here?

BM: I have 2, but I have 8 all together, but just the two, oh I've got three, Rusty, hahahah. Joann (or Julian, can not understand) lives in the apartment beside me and then Sander has the new little house next door, and that's the oldest daughter, and you know where Neil lives. And I have a son in Florida and two grand children and a great granddaughter and Janet lives in Mt. Vernon and Doris has two and she lives in Howard, so they're all pretty close.

AC: That's good.

AC: Are there any traditions of Millwood that, like do you get together for the fourth of July like the whole community or, are there any things like that?

BM: Well several years ago we started to have a hog roast and we had it the first year it was for all community we had are really good time, people brought covered dishes, we had a band, we had it out here where sander's house is, he had a garden and had a hog in the ground and then the next year, we had it three years in a row, but other than that one year we had a Halloween party on the other end, but no there's no

AC: no that's interesting, the hog roast

BM: There's more about Howard that I can remember if you want to know that. Who's doing Howard, anybody?

AC: mmhmm, you can tell me about Howard if you want. She would appreciate it, the girl doing Howard.

BM: That was a community that really had lots of things going but then when the big stores came in that just took everything down, but I was born and raised in Howard. and I lived there till I got married, there's two churches, a school, a small, I mean it was a small school at the time, but it kept getting built on and built on all the time, and what I remember about school a lot was the picnic at the last day of school, everybody at the community come and there was so many good things to have and one thing I remember, was bananas cut in half, [oh really] and they'd have a big tray and they'd be old mounds of them, but I only took one and I wanted another one another so bad, but I was too bashful to go get another, and I was telling that to a friend and she said, I thought the same way, I can just remember those bananas.

AC: Did you, were they bananas for ice cream or was it just bananas?

BM: Just bananas, see back then everybody itn't like now, you didn't go buy bananas. [oh okay] you know people didn't have lots of money, you'd have them for a treat, you know I thought, I wonder what they did with those bananas. There was a community hall there and that was used as a gym for the school and they'd have Halloween parties in there and they'd had a i forget the word that they had, where you made posters, what's that event called?

AC: um, I don't know.

BM: I'll think of it. [ok] They had that in there and then they'd have dinner and it's still standing cause it was it's the township house now, well I helped with a friend to it was during the war, and the son was in the service and his wife wanted to go to be with him and they left the daughter with the grandma and grandpa and i helped take care of her one whole summer. But they did so many things, to for their business, they took care of the school the church, the mail, he had a ??? beat garden, he had chickens and I got involved in all that, and I'd take this little ???, I'll tell you where she is now, she's over at the bank in Gambier and there's name is Judy ??? and she wasn't walking, she was just about 6months old and I helped with her all that time. and it was Harley Sims and he had a gold watch, see he had to be on time for the train, and down over the back down where you go to the bike path now, you went down over there, and he went to the post office to get this big leather bag, it had hooks over the top and the bottom and we'd go with him, his daughter and his granddaughter baby, and we'd go down there and he'd get it out of the car and go over there and climb up these 3 or 4 steps and there's a platform and this arm'd come out and he hung that bag of mail on there. [oh ok] And the train would come along and he was always on time, he would look at that watch dozens and dozens a times a day. And I think he went twice a day, I'm not sure, but I think he did. And as the train went by he would grab that mail bag and they'd threw back a big leather pouch saying with farm mail in, you know. And he'd get it right up and take it right up there and then we'd go back up to school and keep on cleaning. And if it was on Saturday we went to the church and cleaned the church and another thing that I remember was washing the communion plates, there was three or 4 stacks of stainless steel trays and then the little tiny glass glasses, and we'd wash them and dry them and put them back in there and get ready for the next sunday, things like that I can remember just the you never get to do that, i think they got throw away cups now, the school was just one building, and it was a lot and we'd do that all summer and I can even remember what we had for lunch, if you want to know. Sometimes he had this garden and he was always in a rush and his wife would run in the house and put on a big pan of water to boil Harley would run to the carton that was out behind the house and he'd get a dozen ears of corn and husk them and a he'd put the corn in there when the water boil and get that all done and then she'd fry us before 2 eggs a piece and she made homemade ketchup [oh really] and Kathryn and I would eat and then we'd pour that homemade ketchup in there and get it ready and now this is many years ago, but I'll always remember that and how good it taste. And another thing that I can remember is the wonderful food that people made and I said, now how did go, that I remember that really great food cause they're always on a diet people don't cook, they eat out, and everybody back then was great cooks, everybody that I can remember in Howard was great great cooks My mom was a wonderful cook, she made pies and cakes and she made a lady Baltimore cake. three layers with like a pudding in between and 7 minute icing on the top. you'll never find a better cake than that. And now a days they get a box or they buy a cake and things are a lot different and that's one of my remembers in Howard. Well, in Howard a little, i might have been really young but there was a bank, there was a garage, that fixed cars and sold cars, there was 3 filling stations, small wee little ones, there was one up here and then one up at the garage and

then there was a bank, and on the other corner was a another filling station and then there was an ice-cream parlor. Did you know that?

AC: Well, they still have an ice cream parlor down there [yeah] but it's different?

BM: yeah, this caught on fire and it and it was in the night we , everybody was asleep and my father in laws brother came around the street to Howard and hollered fire, fire, and i remember mom and I and Dad we got up and my brothers and we just put a jacket over our pajamas or nightgowns or whatever we had and went down there, walked down the street, and my dad took the truck and the post office is right beside the of the and it's still there, right beside of the ice cream shop and it belonged to the ??whits?? And they took a rug out of the Whit's house and this was on fire and hung it up on side of the post office and kept it watered down.

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My Dad had a truck, he had a trucking business and he backed the truck up into the post office and if that would have caught on fire they was ready to put everything in the truck. And I can remember everything just so plain like it was yesterday. They had little round tables and metal ice cream chairs they called them they had the soda fountain, well, then down where the ice cream shop is now, that was a shell station and that be gone too. My husband's brother in law, Dwight, well first it was Bennie's Dad Carl Hall and his son Dwight. And they had that built after that and then where the ice cream place is now it's a bar. it was Don hogger's bar and then it was a post office and a grocery store on one side and they lived upstairs. Humbert's did, Fa??, Francis Humbert and Carol. and then the next place where Frankie's is now was Wheeler's grocery had both sides of it, had both sides of it, there was a little restaurant in there with stools and a tables and benches and in the back of that was a meat market run by Leonard Pinkman? and over there on the other side was a dry good store and had everything in there.

AC: Did you ever go um bridge jumping in Howard?

BM: I didn't but i did see lots of people go bridge jumping, scare you to death, a lot of them would jump from the first, but some of them would go clear to the top, [oh gosh] and jump off. ??? Ah now i can't think who else, would have been. i know he did, but i know there was other kids that did too. And we went swimming and that was a nice clean river and we had our place to go swimming but every year it would change you know and you would have to get to know where deeper holes was and things. and it wasn't just kids went, it was adults, married people, that would go down there, well after i first got married we would go back down there and we would stand up there on the bridge and a colored lady came down there and they said, 'did you see a colored man go by here in the water with red swimming trunks on' and here he drowned up there. And I don't think I ever went by, I can't remember going back, but we swim down here, but that was just a hangout in the summer for everyone, nice clean, sandy little sand bar there that you could sit down there on your towel and you know some rivers are so dirty but I don't remember that being dirty.

AC: It's still one of the cleanest rivers today. Are you upset that the Millwood bridge is closed now?

BM: No, I love it. I think it should be made a walking bridge, I don't think they should put all that money in it. I think they should fix the holes in it. I haven't been down for a while but across it, my son says there's some holes and if they fix them and just make it for a walking bridge what makes it if you do make it more and more of curve to go up and around. and for the safety of children up on this other end, which is my grandchildren, but it should just be made a walking bridge, and save it for memories.

AC: Um, have you ever heard of Millwood being called, the Crossroads of America?

BM: yes, the only place that 62 and 36 ever crossed, i don't know about now, but i guess yes. and years ago kids used to run up and round the front of the restaurant up here to watch wrecks, because there would be lots of wrecks. Cause they got up to see a wreck because that's where it crossed you know. Yeah, I remember that. This new restaurant's been up here, oh i can't say how many years, but i worked there 20 years, [oh you did] yeah i cooked there for 20 years.

AC: how was that?

BM: Fun! I really enjoyed it! and then it caught on fire and it burned the inside of the restaurant because it was a windy windy day it was after a hurricane down south and the winds was so bad here a man opened that door and i opened this door and both garage doors was up, because that was a garage on the other side at that time and the wind came around and it blewed the fire underneath the french fryer where the grease goes and the man that worked there he come and try to put it out with that, but he came up and it went up this way, and I think it was down about nine months and then they took the garage and made it into more restaurant. We fed lots of people, but when we first started out it was more like widowed men, or men who weren't married and when apple valley came in things picked up and ?? you know people went out for breakfast, we had a wonderful breakfast crowd.

AC: The same people?

BM: Oh yeah. then when Millwood campground came in people came to camp, but they come in to eat, we called them big time campers, hahahah, cause they you know if you camp you'd think you'd want to do your own cooking. I worked for Betty and Wendell Spearman for 20 years. Good people, that'd be the ones you'd want to interview, [yeah people have told me to talk to them] and then Moynie Humbert up here on the corner. [yeah I talked to the Humberts] Did you? Did they tell you any different than I did.

AC: No he talked about a time when there were 6 saloons in Millwood.

BM: Six saloons?

AC: But he also mentioned the barber shop that he would just go and hang out there.

BM: yeah he did.

AC: And Phyllis said, that she would, the women would just stand on their stoops and gather together and hang out outside, [talk]

BM: That I couldn't tell you when there was six. I know Ensly's had a beer license. And down over the hill they had a beer license, but i wouldn't know where anymore was. I can't think of anymore. where did he say they was?

AC: I thought they were all right there on the strip, but I think it was when he was a little boy.

BM: Oh okay because he's a lot older than I am.

AC: Yeah, so I think it was when his father was a man.

BM: Do you know what year Millwood became Millwood? I don't know. Do you?

AC: No, actually I'm going to go to the library and the historical society and see if um they have official dates and things like that? do you know why it is called Millwood?

BM: No.

AC: Lemoyne told me it was because there was a mill and it was a timber mill, and so Millwood.

BM: Oh yes, yes, i did know that too.

AC: I thought it was interesting that...

BM: The mill was over the hil right down, right down the end of this street down there. I can't say for sure. See I'm Betty Mills and I live in Mill Street in Millwood.

AC: That's what I was going to say, I found that funny, I thought I wonder if she's the owner of the town. hahahah

BM: there was a school here. [oh really] It's still standing, it's the last place on the other side of the little bridge going up 36 and there's two apartments in there and that was a little Millwood school.

AC: Did your kids go there?

BM: No that was before, it's been a long time ago. And there was 2 churches, there's still 2 churches, but the Church of Christ was up on 36. I can see it stand there yet, with it's bell. The bell's down here at the church down here now, it's just down there around the front.

AC: Is the community here still, is it close knit? Does everyone know each other?

BM: Not as much as we did, and people they don't neighbor like they did years ago, cause everyone's too busy. There is several older people here, TVs took away that, and automobiles. Them all years ago, cause you can go do other things. Lot of houses was built here when I first come, ??? they'd roads crossed you know 62 over well then let's see how they moved homes, this lady I was going to call, they moved her home from up here on the corner and moved it out by the cemetery right out by the township house, that house back in there they moved that when the road went through, there was apple orchards here [oh really] Mitchell's had apple orchards. But I can't...you'll have to ask someone where those orchards were cause I can't remember [ok i will] Mitchell's apple orchards.

AC: Do you think people were ever brought into Millwood for anything?

BM: Brought in?

AC: yeah to see anything? did outsiders come to Millwood for anything?

BM: To look a town over you mean? oh i don't know really.

AC: that's fine.

BM: I'm sure there was other things around here that I can't remember. There's a David Armat??? that has a book about Millwood, and he lives in Mt. Vernon and his name would be in the telephone book. I know he's got the book, because I can see it one time. What are you doing this for? for what class?

AC: It's called Life Along the Kokosing [oh] so it's focused around the river and we've decided our project is going to be a driving tour of Knox County and there will be an audio cassette or a cd that someone can put in their car or that someone can just listen to in their living room. And it will go from Waterford down to, I'm the second to last stop in Millwood, but let me look at what the . . . Mohican Greer is the last stop and then we're going to put together a booklet as well with pictures of the different places.

BM: Well soon as I find them picture of the flood you leave your name and address, I want you to see them. And another thing, my son fell off of that bridge [oh really] not on this side of the bridge. He's fourteen years old and he had one of those small bikes, one of those racing bikes and he started up the hill here and went like the dickens down through there, and whether he hit those tracks that's down there, they threw him, right down there and he went on the stones and someone happened to be wlaiking across the

bridge and seen him and helped him up outa there. Well they brought him up home and we brought him right up to Dr. Tide??? But he didn't have a broken bone in him, not a thing, he sure was lucky. he's lucky boy. And my husband worked at the Millwood sandlant for 27 and a half years and he used to ride the box cars down and they'd have a pretty decent sometimes it didn't work and they would take those box cars and they would paper, there was a brown paper that would come on big rolls and they would took it and so that sand didn't come out you know and they'd do that day after day and then they'd go out the door in bags and so many men would carry them 50lbs bags in there and stack them up. now that was a lot bags of sand to put in a box car. he did that. and they hardly ever shut down. and his fatherinlaw and him, we lived down there at that little house, they walked down the back road and by the time they got there there mustaches and everything was just gross and after they got there they didn't work anyway and then they had to walk back. it was really cold, it was a very very cold place to work, it wasn't any outside facilities, i mean toilets on the quarry side and theres a ??? ah, skiddy worked there about 30 years or more. and a lot of men died from silico, sand in their lungs, It wasn't good to breath. I don't know what year that it came down there, but jim put dynamite in the holes to blow up the rock to make the sand and now they have bought a long down further and it's expanded an awful lot and now they've bought another home across 36 on down the road from the sandplant that they're going to get rock out of down there now. [oh okay] and they'll truck that up to the sand plant plant and crush it.

AC: I heard the sand was then used to make glass bottles,

BM: I might have a picture here

AC: What was the name of the man with the book on Millwood?

BM: Trout. If I could find his picture.

AC: Well is there anything else that you wanted to share?

BM: well what we did for fun when I was a kid we roller-skated. I lived in a house up above the church of Christ in Howard and we'd start up there and we'd go clear downtown and go up to the right toward the schoolhouse and we'd go right up around the schoolhouse and we'd come right up down and go down through the town and out the other way. We'd do that hours at a time, just hours at a time And now a child has to sit in front of a TV with you know one of those things. [yup] It was so much fun. And we would up till we was 15 or 16 years old, in Howard in the summer we'd play hide and seek, go sheepee go, red light and green light, and we had scavenger hunts hude and go seek and whatever cause we had to do our own things you know. I have fond memories of Howard, more than Millwood. hahaha. I used to go round and help people, I'll tell you what i did once every summer this lady lived across the street from me and she'd bring two stools out in her backyard she'd bring all her pans that she'd use, may be pie pans and pans and she'd havbe two pans of water, and I supposed ????. And I suppose they had soap in them and I'd have to clean them pans and clean off the bottom of them

and when I got done she'd hand me a dime. and I worked mighty hard on that. But you could buy lots of stuff for a dime. But I thought about that a lot, that wasn't much moeny to do that. And then I'd I stayed with a family for several months, right down from my home, but the husband worked in Marion and they had two kids and i stayed there with her at night because she was afraid. and I'd go out with the kids in the day time in the summer and then I'd clean the house and then on Saturday nights Jack would come home and would hand me a half a fifty cent piece and I thought a kid would die today. if he did that. [yup] and then I remember going to the preacher's house one time and they had a daughter I was friends with and he'd want his shirt ironed and I remember getting the ironing board and the iron and ironing that. And he told me that's the nicest my shirts been ironed. And I often wondered if it was or he just wanted to make me feel good and memory, and i can see that to this day. hahah My friends up there didn't have any water and we carried water from the neighbors up to their house and that was an awful job you know people didn't always have a well. And they'd get it at the next house or you shared a well. It was a shared well at my house. It was in between the line. And you had to pump the water to heat it to wash, wash clothes and take baths, you'd get in a round battub on a saturday night hahahaha, i can remember that. I remember pumping water, mama washed on Monday, she washed rain or shine. You had your day planned, you washed on Monday and ironed on Tuesday. Mended on Wenesday and thursday night I come from school I had to clean the upstairs. And friday night I cleaned the two front rooms. then mom took care of the rest of the house. Well I knew what my job was and you, ???, that was the way you used to do it. and mom she always baked on saturday. you realy planned your work, nowadays you do it when you get the minute. I can't think about more about here in Millwood. People back when we first came here had chicken houses, We had chickens, had your own eggs, two cartons. canned all summer, you didn't have air conditioned so you canned. And it was hot but I don't think the way I remember, I don't think it was as hot there as it was now. do you think? I mean do you ever study that because of the?

AC: of the global warming? I don't know. I know my mom won't get air conditioning in our house. [she won't?] no, um, so it's pretty hot in the summers in my house, so I don't know.

BM: Do you sleep upstairs?

AC: I'm supposed to, but in the summer it's just too hot.

BM: Where do you live?

AC: Outside of Chicago.

BM: Oh you do, you come from big city. And what grade are you in? do you call it grade now?

AC: Well I'm a senior.

End of tape...