DINO ROBINSON: All right, it’s October 28th, 2006, at approximately 6:45. Full name, please?

BYRON H. WILLIAM: Byron H. Wilson [Gene?].

DR: OK, be asking questions about the formation of the NorShore 12. And basically -- general terms, now, just kind of describe how things went, when was the organization founded?

BHW: I can’t remember the exact year but the founding individual that started was Jack Moss. We met originally at the Hunters on Emerson Street, the Hunters being excellent cooks, the Hunter sisters. We always had a full meal when we met.

BW: [That was Jean Hunter?] (inaudible)

BHW: Uh-huh. We always had a full meal when we -- we met two or three times before we decided to call it -- to name it. I think I am the only original or founding member left. So, I think I’m the one that suggested that we call it Norshore 12. But we don’t spell it out North Shore. It’s N-O-R-S-H-O-R-E, which, in -- my thought in suggesting that was that it would take off the stigma of us being Evanstonians from a standpoint that we figured we were higher than anybody else. But it still gave us the idea that we were
on the North Shore. We decided on having 12 members because we figured that having a larger group would cause a little more dissension and a little more problems. So, we kept it at 12. Our voting would be at 11 because the president wouldn’t necessarily vote. I was the first president. After we met for about six or eight months at the Hunters, we figured that it was too much of a burden on the Hunters to have all the meetings, so we decided to have the members at the meetings are -- generally, we met once a month. It was generally on a Monday and a full dinner was served with liquor, what have you. And eventually, a lot of the members, original members, who -- I don’t remember their names fell out, dropped out, and we ended up with original 12. We never kept the original 12 because some members moved, some members decided it wouldn’t be -- but we always tried -- kept the membership up at 12.

DR: OK.

BHW: Then, we finally brought in the members that -- or sustaining members [staying?] in that -- Rudy [Frasier?], let’s see. I can look on this and tell you. Rudy Frasier, Clyde Jones --

BW: Yeah.

BHW: -- Brian Wilson, Jack Moss. These are the members that stayed in almost from its conception. George Young came
in. [Tucson Massey?] was one of the original members, too, and I forgot that --

DR: Yes, one of (inaudible)

BHW: Yes. Tucson Massey, one of the original members. And James Boyd was one of the original members because James Boyd was married to one of the, sorry, Hunter sisters.

DR: OK. Who was this person right here, with the glasses?

BHW: That’s Norris Franklin.

DR: Norris Franklin?

BHW: Yeah.

DR: Yes, a name I didn’t have on there. So, what was the purpose of the organization?

BHW: Well, the purpose is designated when this is a social and civic organization. Our social affair was that we would give social dances to garner money for our charity activities. We were somewhat of a political organization, too, in that that we would do canvassing work for various candidates. We, at one time -- oh, I can’t think of his name. Is a Northwestern professor but he lived on Emers--when Grant Shockley was up for school board, which would have been the first black school board, they had a reception for him at this -- black professor, Northwestern, and the Norshore 12 took it over from a standpoint of running it because about five of us were bartenders and
worked for various catering outfits, moonlighting for that, so we had no problems there. Then, we did a lot of canvassing work in the community from the standpoint that we would garner people to work on the polls. We would garner people -- we never worked on the polls, but then we would also inform people -- like, on a Sunday afternoon, we’d take off and we’d put the Fifth Ward into sections and each group would take a section. And maybe we would cover four or five blocks and -- [00:05:00] encouraging people to vote. We especially were successful in the Grant Shockley deal. Each member was bound to call at least five people to tell them that Grant Shockley was on the school board and they were to call five people. And that was the largest plurality at that time, when Grant Shockley was on the school board, that they’d ever had.

DR: When was he elected?

BHW: [You remember?] (inaudible)

BW: [No, I forgot about it?], but trying to think --

DR: (inaudible)

BHW: Anyway, he was elected at the -- I tell you something interesting, also, about that.

BW: Was he at Northwestern, also? Grant?

BHW: What, Grant Shockley? I forget what (inaudible) Lorraine could tell me that because she knew him fairly well. I
think she’s dead now. But here’s what we -- here’s how that Grant Shockley got on the school board election. The North End Mothers Association more or less dominated who was going to be on the ballot and it was just by chance that I went to the meeting to canvas who was going to be on the ballot. The reason that I was there is because they had enacted -- the North Shore Mothers Association had enacted a law that said that you had to have at least 30 or 40 members to be on the school caucus board. Well, that eliminated the Toppers, the suburbanites, all the fraternities, sororities, black.

DR: yeah.

BHW: But it didn’t eliminate the VFW, the 190 members. And just by luck, I think I was commander there, which [would build me from nin?]-- I was commander from 1955 to ’57. I decided to go to Noyes School because I had heard that one of our delegates couldn’t come. Now, what they would normally do -- you submit names and then the caucus would decide by vote could that name go on the ballot? So, you got all the people on the ballot that they -- we accept one. That was Shockley. But they didn’t have enough votes to go. You only need one vote. Now normally, they would have a caucus among the delegates. They would suspend the rules and we’d go out in the hall, wherever. That normally
only took about two, three hours, if it -- that long. I got there around seven o’clock. About 10:30, 11 o’clock, one woman, white, changed her vote and that’s how Shockley got on the ballot. (laughter) Now, I’ll also say this, that most blacks in the Fifth Ward of Evanston didn’t vote in the school elections to start out with. So, it’s a cut and dry -- when the caucus put a name on the ballot, they automatically won. Well, when Shockley’s name was put on, that didn’t say he’s going to win. So, what the Norshore 12 did and the VFW (inaudible) Post, we got on the phone and we had a phone conversation and we go through -- to this phone book and find blacks that -- and then, we would actually go and get them, if necessary. As I say, it was the largest plurality they ever had and Grant Shockley got on the school board. That was the first one. And then, eventually -- and this is going up many, many years after -- Avery Hill, Dr. Avery Hill got [on, too, on two?] school board. But Shockley’s the one that broke the ice.

DR: OK.

BHW: And then, when Community Hospital opened, they used to have a -- not a picnic but they would take over --

BW: They would have tea.

BHW: A tea, outdoor tea. And they would furnish the -- all -- everything you needed. Flowers, tables, and so forth, and
they’d have it on the grounds and then we’d also have it down Simpson Street. And the Norshore 12 got in on that and because of our popularity and a lot of our b.s., we ended up turning in more money than anybody did. But somebody told, somebody -- I won’t call the name -- that we had a punchbowl that had some liquor in it. We didn’t have no liquor in the punchbowl. That was (inaudible) you know, we might have been crazy but we we’re no fools. (laughter) And, you know, they wouldn’t let us in anymore. We gave the --

BW: (inaudible)

BHW: -- [yeah, they backed all this?]. And they needed a -- what they call [examining?] room and it was $1,900. We gave two affairs in Swedish Hall and we gave them $1,900, but they never put our name [on a sign?] on [00:10:00] the door. I think there was a lot of resentment. We weren’t college people. The only person I knew of that went to college of the 12 (inaudible) would be Avery Hill, an optometrist. But we didn’t care. We were there to do a lot of (inaudible) but we sponsored Troop 30, the only black troop in the city of Evanston. We sponsored them for years. And then they basically, with the help of this young lady (inaudible) [Brownies?] (inaudible) we were able to start the cotillion.
DR:  OK.

BHW:  But it was Brownie-- was the backbone of the cotillion.  We were merely -- put up the money and the time.  And I’ll tell you this, you know, Edward Bennett Williams owned the Washington Redskins.  And he got Allen as his coach.  He made a statement once, he said, “I gave unlimited money to bring me a championship.”  And he overspent, yeah, and that’s what that young lady used to do with us.  We gave her unlimited money and she overspent that.  (laughter) But we had something that is absolutely unique.  I don’t think -- even the --

BW:  Links

BHW:  -- Links compared to our cotillion.  And we didn’t -- we only charged $100 and those girls who wanted to go who qualified or had (inaudible) we paid for them.  And there were a couple of times when the members, because the fathers either reneged or what -- that we escorted them as --

BW:  [As a?] --

DR:  Hmm?  Mm-hmm.

BW:  (inaudible)

BHW:  And then, there [was this time?] --

BW:  (inaudible)

BHW:  -- there was times that -- sometimes, I look back in
retrospect, I don’t know how we did that.

BW: The banks were really nice to you because I really -- I --

BHW: But you know how we got money from the bank, though?

Charles [Ashmore?] eventually became a member and Charles had credit, more credit than a lot of us had. And we would go -- he would sign a note for us to borrow money from the state bank, where the big bank (inaudible) and we started out with $1,500. That’s just to pay for the initial fees for us to get where we got. But now, there was one good feature about it: if we could give them about 200 dinners at the Sherman [House?], we get the grand ballroom for nothing. But then, too, I’d say a good 30 to 40% of the people that went to, you know, went there stayed there. And I would mention something else, to say that some of them had never been in a major hotel in Chicago, period, and spent the night, because a lot of them didn’t even have the money or they were turned down.

BW: The Sheraton Hotel was the [Palm House?] --

BHW: Yeah.

DR: OK.

BW: -- of Chicago at that time.

DR: [Gotcha?).

BHW: You know where the Sherman House -- you know (inaudible)

BW: It’s --
BHW: -- it’s now where the Thompson Building is. And after about a couple years --

BW: What was that man’s name?

BHW: Who? Mister --

BW: [Rick Rickman?]?

BHW: Yeah, whatev-- yeah, he was the catering manager.

BW: [And he’s a?] (inaudible) Mr. Rickman was the marketing man --

BHW: Yeah, (inaudible)

BW: -- [with the How?]--

BHW: [Holland?] was the head waiter and he had a school that -- where he trained waiters.

DR: OK.

BHW: And he gave us -- oh, God, he was -- between the two of them --

BW: (inaudible)

BHW: -- that he gave us unlimit-- we did anything we wanted there, within reason, you know what I mean? I think we were the -- one of the first black units to do that.

DR: OK.

BHW: It’s like the VFW was probably one of the first black units to go into five of the grand ballrooms on a pre-Thanksgiving on a Wednesday night.

DR: Oh, yeah, I remember (inaudible)
BHW: We went into about five. We went in the Palmer House [and Bast?]-- we went into the Knickerbocker. It was called the Sheraton at one time, now it’s -- I think it’s the Continental. We went to five of the grand ballrooms in a pre-Thanksgiving deal.

DR: OK.

BHW: After we’d gone through about five of them, we’d start the rotation again, but we couldn’t make no money because they’d say, “I been there. I did this.” (laughter) But the whole idea of the thing is build a better mousetrap and a -- or establish something that has never been done before and you got -- you had a -- we didn’t have no problems selling (inaudible) to it. You see --

BW: Excuse me, but did you tell him that your bands were, like, Marvin Gaye and Count Basie and --

BHW: Well, we -- well, Willie Randolph that we eventually got (inaudible) the reason for that was we had Morris Ellis for our first cotillion but --

BW: But I’m talking about the fundraisers and --

BHW: Oh, the fundraisers? Oh, yeah, we had Ray Charles at [00:15:00] (inaudible) Hall twice. We got him a Thursday for a guarantee of 775 or 7-- yeah, and he’d bring The Raelettes with him. We had Big Maybelle. We had Bill Doggett. We had Lefty Bates. I got -- who else did we
have? We had so many affairs, they were so successful -- we had the Swedish Hall -- that some of the other clubs say we were dominating the Swedish Hall.

DR: What kind of affairs and fundraiser-- you had a cotillion --

BHW: Yeah, well, no, the cotillion was not a fundraiser.

DR: No, OK, OK, does the --

BHW: No, the dancers were the fundraisers.

DR: OK, so how many dances [do you have, like?], for a year or something like that?

BHW: Oh, God, we might have three or four, maybe five.

DR: So, were they, like, seasonal or --

BHW: No, no, they were just -- well, we didn’t have -- in the summer because that place was not air-conditioned.

DR: OK, so you had, like --

BHW: Now, the reason we could do this is that we had formed the committees -- like, like, Avery Hillman and I probably had something to do with the booking. Then, we had somebody with the tickets, we had somebody with the advertising. Bob [Cobb?] and I were the bartenders. Rudy and [Forrest Hall?] were the ones at the door and then the rest of them were floating, keeping order and so forth. And then, we eventually took in [Babe?] Cooper as a member and Babe Cooper was an Evanston policeman, so we didn’t have to pay.
for no security through that because he handled that. I think the biggest affair we had was Bib Maybelle. The fire department came in and wouldn’t let us -- let nobody else in.

BW: (inaudible)

BHW: (laughs) That’s the truth.

BW: I remember that and it was (inaudible)

BHW: And that floor was a suspended floor.

DR: Oh!

BHW: There was nothing [in the center?] --

DR: (inaudible)

BHW: -- and you’d [go up there?] and that floor, it would bounce. (laughter) I went up there -- you couldn’t get through from back to front, it was so packed. And that -- and I finally wormed my way through and you didn’t have to move to dance. You just [tapped and?] the floor made you dance. (laughter) And Babe is our security. He couldn’t get through, so he’d go out the back, come around, go up the front and they’d -- because it was two floors. The lower floor is where we had the bar. The upper floor was where they had the dance floor.

DR: OK.

BHW: And we would make as much as -- the profit, we were making about 1,000 or more dollars in profit. So, if we decided
we were going to give an affair to -- anything -- it’s, like, when we had Troop 30, we had [tentage?] to cover all 30 of the men. We had all the camping equipment that they possibly would need. Bob Cobb was the scoutmaster for a while but then he -- [through his extra job?], so forth -- so, then we had about three scoutmasters. Troop was supposed to only have been about 20 men at the most. But at one time, that Troop 30, we had about 40. And then, we had the Lee twins and also the Moss twins. And that was trouble and double trouble and quadruple trouble. They were something else.

BW: Oh, I loved (inaudible) [Lee?]. And one of those Moss kids just died.

BHW: Oh, one of the Moss twins?

BW: You’re talking about (inaudible)

BHW: [Lon and Martha’s?] twins.

BW: That’s right.

BHW: Yeah, one of them died, huh?

BW: One of them died, yeah.

BHW: Yeah, yeah.

BW: (inaudible)

DR: Kind of going back a little bit --

BHW: Yeah.

DR: -- when the organization was founded, what was the reason
for its [founding]?  

BHW: Well, the reason that -- now, I’m glad you brought up that question. The Bachelor and Benedict’s had a winter formal. They eventually [went in?] from black tie to white tie. Tails. And we, when we first got it, we decided we’d have a summer formal. We couldn’t afford to go down to, initially, to go down to the Parkway Ballroom, which was very elegant ballroom on the South Side, on the Martin Luther King Drive, which is known as South Park at the time. We had our first one at Swedish Hall. Then, after we garnered some following and also some money, then we moved it down to the Parkway Ballroom. And this was given the outlet for the summer that we’d have for the winter for the Bachelor and Benedict’s, the Evanston Bachelor and Benedict’s. So, we ended up having as many or more people coming to our summer formal than the Bachelor and Benedict’s had coming to their winter formal. And then, out of that came the cotillion. Our first cotillion was held at the Parkway Ballroom.

DR: OK.

BHW: And I was getting back to -- [other than that?], our -- that was our social activity.

DR: Right.

BHW: For the formal, we didn’t make no money. [00:20:00] We had
to put up the money, plus the orchestra. The orchestra, at a Class A hall, you had to pay top -- I think Willie Randolph -- I don’t know if Brownie ever knew this -- Willie Randolph cost us almost $2,000.

BW: Is Morris Allen still living?

BHW: Yeah, Morris Allen’s still living and still playing.

BW: Oh, yeah.

BHW: Yeah.

BW: I’d like to see him.

BHW: So, we would -- to get the Parkway, the fee for the Parkway’s nominal because they had liquor license. They made their money off of liquor.

DR: Right.

BHW: And then, the dancehall was huge. And then, on either side, they had booths, like -- and then, if [you didn’t watch them?], they’d put up tables because people would pay [if they?] put up tables. But we stipulated in the contract no tables, which would cut down on the dance floor. And then, they did something they haven’t done in year-- I haven’t seen it done in years: we had a grand march. Have you been -- so, when’s the last time you saw a grand march?

BW: Never since (inaudible)

BHW: Yeah.
DR: I also had some of the pictures you gave me. [There was, like?] --

BW: Yeah.

DR: -- see? Everybody was filing out or filing in.

BHW: Yeah.

DR: Yes.

BHW: But now, that was a cotillion, that’s --

DR: Yeah, yeah.

BHW: -- and the escort’s the fathers.

DR: Yeah.

BHW: But at the formals, the whole group would be involved in it.

DR: OK.

BHW: And our group, we also -- we eventually had the 13th person who was not a member but he was our counselor. That was [Hop Griggs, Horace Griggs?].

DR: OK (inaudible)

BHW: Horace was a -- Evanstonian for many, many, many years and he was able to give us inroads into a lot of the older people that we normally were not connected with, you know? In fact, we -- and he was very popular. And he and Rachel, his wife, could run the grand march. You start out in doubles and then you go forward, then you end up at [eights, sixes?], and so forth. And Charlie [Fisher?] used
to do it for the --

BW: Bachelor-Benedict.

BHW: -- Bachelor-Benedict’s, but Horace Griggs did it for us.

DR: OK.

BHW: [And Father Uriss?], too, but he was --

BW: And it culminated (inaudible)

BHW: [She could stand right here?].

BW: She did that (inaudible)

BHW: I have pictures of her standing right here.

BW: -- [you really need to get those, David?] (inaudible)

BHW: Yeah, I have a picture of her standing there.

DR: Oh, wow, [another big theater?].

BHW: Yeah, and I gave it to her son, too.

DR: OK, but going back, when the organization was founded --

BHW: Yes.

DR: -- what was the reason for its founding? Was it, like, a [club with this?] over time where you guys were, like -- a group of you guys were talking about, “What can we do?” Or --

BHW: Well, yeah, you know, it was an evolution of trying to make it a better community through our endeavor. Because I say we were involved in (inaudible) not necessarily a specific candidate, not necessarily, but we did. But the idea was to get more people to vote and to become involved in the
political activities within the community itself. I don’t think that -- I don’t remember us ever having a candidate come in and talk to us. We -- that was -- in other words, we tried to keep it non-partisan. Evanston politics are non-partisan. You can’t run on the -- we know who the Democrats are, we know who the Republicans are, but we never had anybody -- now, we had people occasionally come in and talk to us. But mostly, they were trying to involve us into some of their activities. And we’d have discussions on that and then we might use it or we might not. But we -- consistent and always were an independent organization. Nobody could tell us what to do. We did it because we felt it would be a betterment or help the community, as such. I know at one time, God, he was -- [R. Golan?]. He [came over, there was?] -- meeting happened to be at my house and he came to my house and [he sold us?] on a [Big Brother?] deal. Well, by the time he came to our house, all of us are kids in college. We couldn’t do no Big Brother deal (laughter) because when you were in college -- my daughter was -- got divorced and I (inaudible) and my daughter’s coming to visit me and I just -- plus, I was doing -- [I had the cleaners?] at the time, plus I was moonlighting as a bartender, so I didn’t have enough time to meet nobody. I was meeting myself [in
’72?]. But he had an idea and we tried to help him as much as we could. But we were only 12 and most of us were almost in the same age brackets. And we just didn’t -- we had kids in college and kids of our own and it would be just too much of a burden for us to go into trying to mentor somebody else.

DR: Right.

BHW: Not that we didn’t but we just didn’t pick any particular person.

DR: Gotcha.

BHW: We tried [00:25:00] to help the whole community as a whole. That was our idea.

DR: OK.

BHW: Whether we’ve succeeded, I don’t know. I’m not here to beat our own drums but we did try -- endeavor to do that.

DR: OK. As your organization progressed -- you know, I notice that sometimes -- that a member will drop out --

BHW: Yes, yes.

DR: -- a new one coming, how -- what was the process of recruiting new members?

BHW: Mostly it was the members that were there would suggest a friend or a person who they thought would be a person that would be -- have the same ideas we had. And most of the members -- like, I think I had a lot to do with Bob Cobb
and Rudy Frasier. I think Rudy had something to do with Jimmy Hill. Jimmy Hill had something to do with -- what’s his name? He worked at night doing the security.

[Harlan?] --

BW: Harlan [South?].

BHW: Harlan South.

DR: OK.

BHW: And we tried always to keep it at least 12. Sometimes, it didn’t -- it’d fall down to as many as eight. But then, too, you were worried about getting somebody in who’s going to be destructive rather than be constructive. So, we were very [choicey?] about who went in. But we weren’t trying to be an elitist -- by no way, form, shape or fashion. We were not a fraternal organization from the standpoint of you had to be a college student or belong to a fraternity. You had to be, in most cases, what we considered, say, just a good person, a person that could work within a group. And in most cases, we were successful.

DR: Great. [Want to break?] this up in decades here, and it’s basically -- talk about what were your major activities in 1950s when you first started, ’60s, ’70s, and then to the ’80s?

BHW: Well, when we first started in the ’50s, if I go -- Christmas, we give out baskets. Maybe we spend, I don’t
know, maybe three, four, five hundred dollars giving, you know, a family a complete Christmas meal. And we normally would give them gift certificates or something. We found out early giving people cash is not necessarily the right thing to do.

DR: Yeah.

BHW: Give them gift certificates. Make sure that they spend it where it’s supposed to be -- could be spent. And that didn’t always work out, either, because they could tell -- gift certificate, say a -- fifty dollars and sell it to somebody for 25. So, anyway, we tried to better the community in one way or another, you know?

BW: How did you get the names of people that were in need?

BHW: Well, you know, that was easy to do because we had a cross-section of Evanston --

DR: Oh, OK.

BHW: -- members. You know, it’s different churches, different organizations [we’re drawn to?], and just people that you knew that you could help. Some cases -- and sometimes, it would be embarrassing, too, because there were people that lived far above their means but they’d put up a front. So, now you had to be diplomatic about that, too, you know? But that whole idea -- and I think that we were as successful as any organization in -- within the black
community in Evanston because we operated with a group that could be controlled from a standpoint of membership. We had only 12 members. And I found out through my being members of -- lot of organizations the larger an organization is, the less organized you have it. So, it was my suggestion just to have 12. Now, some people would say, well, it was elitist. No, it wasn’t elitist. It was controlled. You got groups of 30 or 40 or 50 people -- why, we could meet and get the meeting over in half an hour or 45 minutes, then we’d socialize among ourselves. You get 40 or 50 people in there, you might have a meeting for two or three hours.

DR: Yeah, believe me, I know.

BHW: Yeah, (laughter) which is ridiculous.

DR: During the ’60s -- what were your main activities during the ’60s?

BHW: Our main activities during the ’60s -- was primarily the cotillion, plus fundraisers to enable us to do what we did. Other organizations, I think, would charge, from a debutante standpoint, up to 500 to $1,000 to be -- we only charged $100. And in some cases, I think we’ve gone out of our way and helped them buy their apparel and so forth [00:30:00] and paid for the whole thing.

BW: Paid for the photographs --
BHW: Paid for the photograph and everything.

DR: Yeah, how ‘bout during the ’70s? What was the main activity?

BW: Cotillion.

BHW: Cotillion.

DR: [Same answer?] So, was the last cotillion, like, in 1971 or did it go on (inaudible)

BHW: When was the last cotillion? I don’t remember. I tell you who was in the last one, and that was probably the one we had the most trouble with --

BW: The Harmon girl’s.

BHW: -- the Harmon girl’s.

DR: Oh, gosh.

BHW: I forget what year that was.

BW: I saw her, I was (inaudible)

BHW: Now, you know, she works for the City of Evanston. I see her sometimes.

BW: (inaudible) and she hugged me and carried on. I mean, I had to kick her out of my house. We had a fight.

BHW: She was something else.

BW: Yeah.

BHW: In fact --

BW: She’s a mom now, yeah.

BHW: But was that Benita Harmon?
DR: Yeah.

BW: Benita Harmon.

DR: OK, so that was ’71, was the last one --

BHW: Yeah, ’71 was the last one. I never -- and her mother came to protest the way that we had misused the girls.

(laughter) And I asked the club -- I said, “Let me handle that, will you please?” And I did. When I got through with her, she almost -- she came to our meeting and it was -- I think it was at my house. She almost had tears in her eyes, because I -- and then, one of the -- I don’t know [if Dora published this?], but one of the members, [Neil Townes?], came down on the same elevator. Now, Brownie had set up a timetable. We had expected them to adhere to the timetable. For instance, the timetable was set up that for one hour, we had to -- because, in fact, it was a major hotel. We couldn’t operate the spotlight as the girls came down to be presented. We had to hire [lights and?] electrician, a union member. The girls wouldn’t cooperate. And twice, I ran the spotlight because that man left after his hours with -- from the timetable, you understand what I mean?

DR: Right, right.

BHW: And then, we would contract the orchestra, and you had to have a 12-piece orchestra because it was a 12-piece -- it
was a Class A hotel. We paid them top price and if you couldn’t get any cooperation -- [and two times, we?] (inaudible) then we had to overpay the -- we had to pay the orchestra overtime because it wasn’t adhered to. And this one time that Neil Townes is coming down on the same elevator as some of the girls are coming down, and the way they talked about Brownie was something else. They didn’t recognize -- see, we didn’t present ourselves to the [cotillionettes?]. In later years, we just had our picture -- half of them didn’t know us! They knew Brownie, and a few of us -- like, I would go over sometimes to keep order at the Foster Center. But the way that the young lady was talking about Brownie was some-- “Who in the hell does that [B?] think she is?” and blah-blah-blah. Neil Townes was on the elevator. He told her she didn’t even have to come down the line. If she didn’t like what we were doing, we didn’t even want her to come down the line. And she must’ve went home and told her mother all that. And when I got through with her mother, her mother almost had tears in her eyes. I don’t know if it’s any different in -- the youngsters now. I have had, and Brownie probably has, too, since she’s been back -- they want [you to?] start the cotillion again.

BW: Who, Daniel?
DR: That’s a later question when I ask -- both Brownie and you.

During the ’80s, what (inaudible)

BHW: [So, see?], in the ’80s and the ’90s, some of the original
cotillionettes had daughters in high school. What’s the
girl’s name that --

BW: [Delward?]?

BHW: No, the one that her -- [Mark Avery’s?] oldest son that
lives in Atlanta.

BW: Oh, [his aunt?] --

BHW: Yeah.

BW: -- [so, Carol?] will know that --

BHW: Well, now, I was in Atlanta, you know, for [that week?].
She went into raptures about it. She got a bracelet, you
know, with everything in it and she says that she gets --
she tells people that she’s from Emerson, Illinois, and she
was presented at the Norshore 12 cotillion. (laughs)

BW: (inaudible) I mean, this gorgeous piece of fabric, which is
a (inaudible) and I wore it at something that -- [IMC,
downtown?] something. I don’t know what it was (inaudible)
and everything [and I had to have?] (inaudible) to wrap me
and she -- Carol [McGonnell?].

BHW: Yeah.

DR: OK.

BHW: She’s married to -- and they were --
BW: Oh (inaudible)

BHW: -- very active. You saw their pictures, probably, in the book, yeah?

BW: Carol and -- [Booth?] and James Avery.

BHW: Yeah, but their son -- [that’s who she married?].

[00:35:00]

BW: That along with the [TV?] place --

BHW: Yeah, on the --

BW: -- Donald Avery --

DR: OK.

BW: -- is his nephew.

DR: OK.

BW: [And he?] --

BHW: And as the years go by, I have people come up to me, like the Jones girl that just retired from [Evanston Township?], she was a cotillionette. And, in fact, she’s in my book --

BW: [Janet Stone?].

DR: OK.

BW: Janet Stone, yeah.

DR: OK.

BHW: Yeah, she’s in my -- the book, the one that I finally -- I kept one or I did have it --

BW: (inaudible)

DR: So, today -- even for you today, you feel the impact of
[your influence?] (inaudible)

BHW: Oh, my goodness, yes. Oh, my goodness, yeah.

DR: People today are still talking about (inaudible)

BHW: Oh, my goodness, yes.

BW: I could probably talk to some of those girls.

DR: Yeah, because I think a lot of -- there’s so many girls I’ve talked to have a (inaudible) soon as I say Norshore 12 cotillion, they’re, like, “Oh, yeah” and -- (laughs)

BHW: “Happiest day of my life.”

DR: Yeah, I mean, [it was back on?] (inaudible) [nothing?] but smiles.

BHW: Yeah, and had to be, because, see, that was -- getting back in that time -- was the time that these Loop hotels started opening up. Now, I was never one to -- I didn’t flout the law. I just found what the law was and it was an accepted thing to do but not necessarily law. I [went to?] Chez Paree about three or four times. I took care of Chez Paree before we even got married.

BW: Did you?

BHW: Oh, yeah, we were -- see, I saw Nat King Cole at the Chez Paree twice. I saw -- what’s the little short dude’s name? Could dance and so forth -- oh, God.

DR: Sammy Davis?

BHW: Sammy Davis. I saw him at the Chez Paree couple times.
And I look around the sometime, I’m the only black there. That never bothered me. [Well, now, was at?] high school, there were about three or four classes [I was the only?] black in them. That never bothered me because I didn’t look at it from a color standpoint. I looked from -- ability standpoint. If I could, if -- why was I there? Obviously, I was there because I was qualified. Now, a lot of the teachers and some of the students resented that but didn’t bother me. I could’ve been a better student, but I never let anything interfere with me because I was black, because I never had an inferiority complex. Never.

DR: That’s good. If (inaudible) when did the organization end and why?

BHW: We ended because of age. Then, too, people got away from doing a lot of things that we were interested in. For instance, you don’t have no formal dances hardly anymore. At one time, I owned a tux, I owned tails, I had [summer?] formal, double-breasted, single breasted. We went to a formal once in the summer, we could wear Bermuda shorts that were made to wear with tuxes, [as?] tux, with the long socks and everything. I had all of that. There’s no more dress codes anymore, period. I ran into a situation here not too long ago where it’s a young lady -- I won’t her the name -- is a senior in college and was going to a seminar
to learn how to approach a job.

BW: Yeah.

BHW: And she was told by her mother and some other friends that she would have to dress -- no more blue jeans. She didn’t know how to go out and buy a capable garment to wear to this and she’s a good student. There’s no more dress code.

BW: They don’t know.

BHW: They don’t know. And it’s a shame, in a sense, because I was brought up -- my father was a tailor, to tell you the truth.

DR: OK.

BHW: If my father were to see me come in a zoot suit, all hell would’ve broke loose in that house. I wore conventional clothes. I see fellahs with the shirttail out. My father would have a hemorrhage I come walking around [with -- out?] -- my shirttail out, you know what I mean? I’ve never worn a pair of blue jeans in my life. Not that I’m against them. I wore the clothes that you could wear at [HEHS?]. If I walked in the HEHS from 1934, when I entered in 1934, when I left, if I walked in with blue jeans, they’d send me home. But the dress code was so strict that -- I had a Sunday suit and everybody had a Sunday suit. And I think I was a sophomore and [there’s a?] suit that my father bought for me [from the Henderson Lipmann?] when I
graduated. It was a pin-striped double breasted with a vest. I went into my algebra class and it was about 11 o’clock and it was -- and the school wasn’t air-conditioned, so I took off the coat. So, I’m sitting down, Miss Montgomery -- never forget the name, excellent [00:40:00] teacher, math -- [so, I?] walked in and she started class. She says, “Byron, you can’t stay in my class dressed like” -- said, “What do you mean? I got on a vest, I got on a tie, I wore my Sunday suit and a tie.” She said, “Gentlemen do not wear vests unless they’re covered by a coat.” OK, no problem. So, I went out (inaudible) it was right across from my homeroom, anyway, my locker. So, I went and changed, took off the vest, and I came back and I sat down. She looked at me, she says, “Are you trying to intimidate me?” I said, “What’d I do now?” She say, “You’re wearing suspenders.” I said, “I got to hold up my pants!” She said, “Gentlemen don’t wear suspenders unless they’re covered!” Had to go back out and put on the coat. (laughter) And I see kids going to school now (inaudible) God almighty. (laughs)

BW: [A little bit?] showing [in every way?].

BHW: Oh, Lord! (laughter)

BW: I mean, it’s amazing.

BHW: It’s amazing! But --
BW: It doesn’t even have a (inaudible) to go down the street.
I saw -- it was a white kid the other day, I just could not
believe it. I said I do not believe this kid. He had a
Mohawk hairdo --

BHW: With different colors?

BW: -- and some tight -- it was all different colors. Some
tight leather pants that were skintight. Something that --
I don’t know where -- why they would even let him into the
school.

BHW: You know, we were seniors and two white kids figured
they’re going to break down the -- seniors going to break
down the [siren?]. One of them came with a Mohawk haircut
and I forget how he was dressed. Another one came in and
he had all green, the hair tinted green, green [that’s?] --
the jacket on, green pants, green socks. [They told me
he?] wanted his diploma -- they had to convince him, “If
you want your diploma” -- but then again, I can’t argue
that point because the teachers look like the students.
So, you were there.

BW: [Oh, yeah, I?] was there.

BHW: Yeah.

BW: Yeah, I was there.

BHW: Wow, we (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) I never had a man
teacher that ever took off his coat. And every man teacher
there wore a collar with his tie. Mr. Tucker, I don’t know if he was there when you were there, Brownie. Mr. Tucker was the one that was in charge of the -- he was an English teacher. And young. The first time I ever saw a teacher come in -- [he was?] elegant in dress with a sport coat on. [These dudes wore?] two or three-piece suits all the time. I can’t argue with it other than the fact that dress to me denotes, in one sense, authority. If you don’t -- if you dress like they are, then you are part of them. Now, if you come dress-- it’s, like, where I work, [Schaeffer’s], we can’t -- those of us who are up front, we cannot wear blue jeans, we cannot -- we have to dress like I dress, like I’m dressed now. Plus, you got to have a nametag. You can’t be up front in the store and not have one on the tie. No way.

BW: Who owns Schaeffer’s?

BHW: George Schaeffer and his family.

BW: They live in Evanston?

BHW: Well, they say they live in Evanston but they live in the part of Skokie that is east of Crawford.

BW: OK.

BHW: So, now when -- he lives on [Monticello?]. But he says they live in Evanston. I don’t know why they want to l-- [I tell you one?] -- I guess I do know why. Their post
office is Evanston. Their taxes are [district?] 65 and 202. Your parents lived in --

BW: Yeah.

BHW: -- Skokie (inaudible)

DR: We call it Evanston.

BHW: They call it Evanston? Oh.

DR: Yeah, we call it -- they call it Evanston sometimes.

BHW: Yeah, yeah, they --

DR: So, when did the organization stop, cease, and -- yeah (inaudible)

BHW: We ceased about three or four years after the cotillion [ceased?] -- started -- stopped.

DR: So, 1974, [something like that?]?

BHW: About 1974, '75. And I think there were only about six members by that time.

DR: OK, because I have some minutes -- it looks like, I guess, they were trying to start it up again, maybe, in, like, 1980, 1981?

BHW: Not us.

DR: It wasn’t you? It was another group?

BHW: I don’t know, we -- after we broke it up and the little money that was left, I think we got about 25 or $30 apiece, that was it.

DR: OK.
BHW: But by that time, all of us were approaching 70 years old.

DR: [Oh, yeah?]. I’m looking -- [see we’re at, here?]. And this is a June 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1981 --

BHW: Probably. Probably.

DR: Looks like [00:45:00] some of the minutes of, like, a quick meeting. So, it’s -- [what’s?] (inaudible) [have are the?] small stack of, like, just minutes or -- in the, like, 1981 -- beginning of 1981 to about June and July and then nothing else after that.

BHW: Mr. Pettis, Mr. Pettis, Raymond Pettis? Was he a member?

BW: (inaudible) Raymond Pettis was never a member of the Norshore club (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

DR: I think they were trying to elect him. I think also [Hecky Powell?].

BHW: Yeah, Hecky --

DR: And --

BHW: -- Hecky was a member for a short while?

DR: -- and Fred Hunter, Jr.

BHW: Fred Hunter, Junior, yes.

DR: Yeah.

BHW: [But where’s?] (inaudible) P-E-T-T-I-S. I don’t remember him being a member. You said he was (inaudible)

BW: I don’t remember that. Well, I wasn’t here --

DR: But then, I think it --
BW: -- I wasn’t here --

BHW: Right.

DR: -- and also, ’97, I have some names in ’97: Maurice Jackson, [Holdman, Rob?] --

BW: Ninety-seven?

DR: I’m sorry, 1977.

BW: Oh, well --

DR: Holdman, Rob --

BW: -- Maurice Jackson, yeah, he was -- [wasn’t -- that was?]

(inaudible)

BHW: Huh?

BW: Maurice Jackson, he was.

BHW: Oh, yeah, was a member.

DR: When did he join the membership?

BHW: Pardon?

DR: Did he join membership in the ’70s?

BHW: He joined about -- the latter part of it.

DR: Yeah, like, ’77?

BHW: Yeah.

DR: [Along with?] Holdman, Lawson, and Ralph Bridges?

BHW: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

DR: OK.

BHW: Ralph Bridges ended up as the last president.

DR: OK.
BHW: Abbeville Room, Abbeville Room. What was the Abbeville Room?

BW: Was that at the Sherman House (inaudible)

BHW: No, no, no, Abbeville Room -- oh, the (inaudible) [calls the?] Abbeville Room --

BW: Oh, OK.

BHW: -- because the --

BW: OK (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

BHW: -- [owner of that?] --

BW: -- Fuller.

BHW: -- yeah, Fuller owned it.

BW: OK.

BHW: And he’s from Abbeville, South Carolina. So, when they remodeled it, they called it the Abbeville Room.

BW: I never knew that Raymond Pettis, well (inaudible)

BHW: I don’t think so.

DR: So, it seems like the -- so, maybe about ’75, it shut down, but maybe kind of lingered for several more years?

BHW: I think it lingered for (inaudible) few more years but we didn’t have anymore --

DR: Didn’t really do anything -- because, like, some of these we’re talking about --

BHW: [Well, no?] we didn’t -- you know what? It became a social affair.
DR: OK, OK.

BHW: We had dropped --

DR: The cotillion and --

BHW: We dropped the cotillion. You know, was something interesting about the cotillion: we tried to give the cotillion to one of the fraternities or the sororities or the -- what’s that very popular young men’s club now? The Chessmen? We tried to give the Chessmen -- we’d turn over all of our information to them as to how it was run and also [just the?] --

DR: (inaudible)

BHW: -- [connote?] -- no, the [230?].

DR: OK.

BHW: And we’d turn it over -- none would accept it. Now, if 12 can do it, why couldn’t 15 or 20 do it? But none would accept it, accept the responsibility. Because we did have it down that we couldn’t lose off of our social affairs we gained from fundraisers -- that once we had gotten it down to how much it cost us, [then we pro-rated as to?] how many tickets the members had to sell, that either you sell [or eat?]. But we expected the money. So, that almost guaranteed success. But then, we became so popular that members had no problems getting rid of tickets. No problems [whatsoever?].
DR: It’s, yeah, your biggest -- one of your bigger cotillions, as far as participants, was, like, ’61 or ’62. You had, like, 20 girls.

BHW: Yeah, and it only cost them $100 apiece. Then, the one that brought in the most ads got the scholarship if there was such, which was a scholarship. But she had to prove she was going to college. We didn’t give her the money. We gave it to -- we sent it to the registrar at the college.

BW: We didn’t even [accept them?] --

BHW: Nah.

BW: -- we, when we sent out the invitation to say that we were, like -- we’re extending an invitation for you to attend a tea to the high school, that’s how we got all of the names of graduating seniors. And then, we set up the criteria of what we -- our expectations were, that they were graduating from high school, expecting to matriculate at an institution of higher learning. And we had to have that information. If they weren’t going to school that fall, they were --

BHW: Didn’t get no money. We didn’t give you the money.

DR: Right.

BHW: We sent it to the school.

DR: Right, sent it to school for checks and balances.
BHW: Because we had had experience or some of us had experience where other clubs had given the money to them -- didn’t go to school. So, we made damn sure they went to school by saying that we would send it to the school, not give it to you.

BW: [Be the?] souvenir booklet would pay for -- that would pay for that souvenir booklet. We made it a popularity contest within -- [00:50:00] for the girls. If you won the Martin Luther King Scholarship or the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship, that’s how we paid for that souvenir booklet. Is that right (inaudible)

BHW: Mm-hmm. That’s basically what it was.

DR: OK.

BHW: But the souvenir booklet never really paid for itself. Once I suggested that we sell it for a dollar and I took [them down?]. I had about 500 of them. And then, we had a table set up, buy a souvenir book for a dollar, which would help us -- help defray some of the expense. They wouldn’t buy them. I took them back home. Kept them for about a year, then I threw them away. (laughter) You know, everybody wants to be a chief but nobody wants to be the Indian. See, don’t want to pay. Now, I will say this: those who came to the cotillion and got a seat were the ones that bought the dinner -- [tea, and never?] amount to
more than about $15 or maybe $20 a couple. Now, you had others that you could send invitations to, but they didn’t guarantee the seat. And I guess it was two or three cotillions where we found out what the deal was: [they’d?] buy the dinner ticket, then you were guaranteed a seat at the table. Then, we had to make sure that the waiters didn’t make a profit off of -- they were bringing in other chairs and other seats and other tables. But the only charge that was made was for the initial dinner -- the dinner guests, because we had to guarantee, I think, three or four hundred dinners or whatever it was, two hundred dinners to get (inaudible) ballroom to start out with.

BW: So, you had to sell so many -- the tables [were 10?] and you had to sell -- you were responsible. You would sell five tables [and, you know?], and so we had a schematic chart of the ballroom and Byron Wilson had table one, three, five, seven, or whatever.

BHW: And then, I was in charge of seating -- of getting the people squared away as to what table. Now, what I did, I cross-sectioned it. I, like -- say, Rudy Frasier would have table five. There’s 10 people. Well, I’d have the 10 people [at that ta?]-- but then, I cross-sectioned it by -- as you would come in, you say, “This is Mr. and Mrs. Dino” (inaudible) then, I could also tell you what table -- but
we didn’t do it. We had the [sub-debs?] do it.

DR: OK.

BHW: So, if you didn’t have -- but we would [set out?] to them -- tell them what tables they were at and [90% of them?]
(inaudible) “[I’m going to bring a date?].” So, when they’d come, they would come up to -- and we said it was a sub-deb’s table and then we got other sub-debs that would escort to the table.

DR: OK.

BHW: So, we [still had?] about four sub-debs.

DR: OK.

BHW: But by the time -- like, when my daughter graduated from Music and Arts in New York, she was a sub-deb for two years. But, you know, she got up to be -- she said, “I don’t want to be” -- [and say what?] -- she said, “It’s too elitist.” She would come through -- but she was a sub-deb, so they -- and then, she and Robin stayed at the hotel for three years as sub-debs. Sub-debs were not supposed to come into the ballroom to see the cotillion. Keep it in abeyance, you know, “You’re going to be a cotillionette.”

DR: Right.

BHW: But I know we -- they slipped in. I’d -- (laughter) well, they were [dressing formal and?] everything, you know? They slipped in. I didn’t [care too much?]. But I was
very disappointed that [Gayle?] didn’t come through. But then again, at Music and Arts, where Gayle graduated, they didn’t even have a cotillion. I mean, not a cotillion. They didn’t even have a -- (claps) what do -- they don’t call it cotillion. What do you call it, Brownie? It slips my mind right now.

BW: A Sweet 16 or --

BHW: No, no, the -- when the seniors went to have their [day?).

BW: A senior prom.

BHW: Senior -- they didn’t have a prom. She said, [though?], “That school that I went to, Music and Arts, we were too big for that stuff.” And it was until sometime almost in the ’70s that they had an integrated prom in Evanston Township. Was your prom integrated?

DR: Yes, it was.

BHW: [Ah, OK?].

BW: Did you go to Evanston Township?

DR: Mm-hmm.

BW: [I didn’t realize that?].

BHW: Yeah, [you at?] Evanston Township. But it wasn’t integrated when I was there. I was the president of the senior club. I was the one that [set up?] my prom at Nichols School.

DR: OK, because I heard it was either at Nichols School or at
the --

BHW: (inaudible)

DR: -- YMCA.

BHW: Yeah. Now, your mother showed me, many years ago -- I still hope you have it; I’d like to get a copy of it -- of our [00:55:00] invitation for the prom. And they showed the various songs that were played for us for -- when we were dancing with our --

BW: [You’re probably in there?].

BHW: Yeah.

BW: (inaudible) is so much (inaudible)

BHW: I know, [don’t tell me?]. (laughter) Yeah, you know, I lived in the same house, you know, for 50 years. I had an accumulation of stuff that you would not believe.

DR: I can imagine. You know what I’m looking for if you might have or somebody has it -- [William H. Gill needs to?] do a paper.

BHW: Yep.

BW: [Will?].

BHW: [And you probably?] --

DR: You could (inaudible) paper.

BHW: -- you know who should have that? He’s a member of Ebenezer.

DR: OK.
BW: Who?

BHW: William Gill, the realtor [near the -- South Evanston?] --

BW: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

DR: Did he (inaudible)

BHW: And --

BW: (inaudible)

BHW: -- but you know what?

BW: -- who --

BHW: My name was never in there and I was a pre-Pearl Harbor
graduate. I mean, a pre-Pearl Harbor inductee.

BW: Well, [who would have had?] --

BHW: Ebenezer because --

BW: Oh, well (inaudible)

DR: No, no, no, it’s gone. It’s destroyed, the -- just
destroyed.

BW: -- it was destroyed (inaudible) fire [they had, the?] --
they’re -- that --

DR: William McGill had done the paper for 15 years.

BHW: Yeah, that’s right.

DR: He’s recognized as being the editor of this paper. Nowhere
in the country is it archived. No one has an issue of it.

BW: Somebody’s got an issue. [Rose didn’t have any?]?

BHW: You know who probably might have -- what’s the dude that --

BW: Ben Johnson?
BHW: No, lives on Emerson Street. He did. His mother still is -- she’s 100 years old.

BW: Oh, Doris [Appel?].

BHW: Now, she has a copy of the Evanston Review with my picture in it, because the Revue had put all the pictures --

BW: (inaudible)

BHW: -- yeah, yeah, Mrs. Dawson might have -- she lives on Emerson --

BW: And, you know, it might be a whole lot of stuff there from Frances Bell. That was his aunt. And what was Mr. Bell? He was blind but he was -- [Brent?] -- Miss Dawson’s brother.

BHW: Don’t remember. I don’t remember. [I’m going to?] --

BW: You don’t remember Frances Bell?

BHW: Mm.

BW: They lived there on Emerson Street where -- Mrs. Dawson lived in Chicago and they came -- moved out here after Mr. Bell became blind or something. See, Dr. Howard stayed next door.

BHW: [Well, he?] (inaudible) [dentist?] --

BW: Yeah, and Dr. [Kim?] was across the street.

BHW: Across the street, I remember all that.

BW: and (inaudible)

BW: The [Humboldts?].
BHW: Yeah, Humboldt's lived on the corner.
BW: Yeah, yeah.
BHW: That's Cowboy.
DR: Yeah.
BHW: You know about Cowboy, don't you?
DR: Yeah, no, I have a picture of him.
BHW: Oh, God.
DR: Have a picture of him.
BHW: Cowboy and the one that was an artist.
BW: I forgot about Mr. [Gill?].
BHW: Yeah, and what was the [little dude who was the?] artist?
    He and Humboldt got --
BW: Oh.
BHW: -- citations for drunken bicycle riding. (laughter)
BW: Oh, you're talking about the -- Bacon.
BHW: Yeah, Bacon, Richard Bacon. He and Humboldt got citations
    for drunken bicycle riding. (laughter) Oh, Humboldt was
    something else.
BW: Cherokee Indian.
DR: Yeah.
BHW: Well, he said he was a Cherokee, but he was a member of the
    10th Cavalry, too.
DR: We did a short story on him in Shorefront (inaudible) I
think it was back in 2000. [Sahai Eber?] had a picture of them.

BW: OK.

DR: And -- because she had taken a picture when she was at Northwestern. And so, I’m [riding, took a?] picture of him. [He’s, I think?], standing next to the bicycle, whatever (inaudible) article --

BHW: Well, [and, too?], he was a World War I veteran and when his pension came through or his bonus came through, he bought a convertible Packard, I think it was, four-door. And he also had the Chow dogs, remember?

BW: Yes, he did.

BHW: And [there was?] Chow dogs -- and the car was the same color. (laughter) He come down Emerson Street -- oh, my God, (inaudible)

BW: You know who his niece is? You know, [Marianne?] Kennedy, the organist --

DR: OK.

BW: (inaudible) girl [to play in the -- Springdale, that?] --

BHW: Yeah, and plays also at Ebenezer.

DR: OK.

BW: Yeah.

BHW: That’s his niece.

DR: OK.
BHW: And, oh, he was a character. He was a character if there ever was one.

BW: I wonder if they still own that house, the Humboldts?

BHW: I don’t -- you know, they were related to [A.J.?] Robinson.

BW: Oh, really?

BHW: I think they were the ones that -- you know, she was supposedly married, but I think they’re the ones that [handled?] her so-called estate, if she had one.

BW: OK.

DR: Now, I’m going to switch gears here.

BHW: Yeah.

DR: We’re going to talk about the Norshore cotillion. I’m going to stop this and start it again.

END OF AUDIO FILE