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Walter Federspiel interview for Wright State University Oral History Course 685

Bridget M. Federspiel-Newbury

Walter Federspiel

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Bridget Federspiel

Dr. Marjorie McLellan

Oral History

March 3, 2003

Bridget Federspiel

Interviewee: Walter Federspiel

February 19, 2003; Dayton, Ohio

Tape 1 side A

Length of Tape- 30 min

Tape 1 side B

Length of Tape- 25 min.

February 25, 2003; Dayton, Ohio

Tape 2 side A

Length of Tape- 15 min.

Summary

Walter Brice Federspiel was born in New Haven, Indiana in 1934. His first six years were spent traveling around Indiana due to his father's job in the Soil Conservation Corp. Once his family moved to Dayton, his father took a permanent position at Wright Field Air Force Base.

As a child during World War II, Mr. Federspiel delivered papers. He recalled different aspects of the war, such as rationing and the ending of the war.

Mr. Federspiel grew up in the northwest section of Dayton. He talked about the different activities he did as a child, including playing a lot of basketball since his father had installed lights in their backyard so they could play at night. Mr. Federspiel attended Catholic elementary and high schools. His experiences at Chaminade High School are in contrast to school experiences today. Mr. Federspiel said,

"And we were taught there by the Brothers of Mary, the Marianists I should say. We didn't just have brothers, we had priests. They were actually ran the school. The principal was a priest and the brothers. They were really disciplinarians. So they, when you figure we had 12 to 13 hundred boys, there was no nonsense there. If you got out of line, most of the time, you were not sent to the dean's office, the brother would take of it, in his own room, himself, discipline in certain ways. It may be hard, what people thought, were very hard. They would smack us or throw books at us, wake us up. And then do things like this. But then we were there to learn. And there were choices at that time."

After graduating from high school, Mr. Federspiel was drafted into the Korean War. He returned and took advantage of the GI Bill by attending the University of Dayton. He eventually was hired by Winters Bank where he worked for twenty years.

Mr. Federspiel recalled some Cold War events but his most revealing opinions deal with the Vietnam War. As a veteran, Mr. Federspiel had a sobering viewpoint on the war.

"I kind of feel for them. My thoughts were, here we are again in a situation where, I felt, we weren't going to win anything. We were trying to help and which we did in South Korea, the Communist from taking over and the communists [from] taking over all of Vietnam. But a war I can relate to these young, young guys. And as it went on and on and on, I thought it was such a waste. And then when they, when it ended the way it did, and we walked away and it didn't mean a thing. All those lives lost for nothing because we didn't accomplish a thing there. We walked away from the place. At least in Korea, there was a truce and at least the South was still the South and they were free of the Communist."

Mr. Federspiel addressed three questions at the end of the interview regarding major changes in the Miami Valley. He also reflected on what the good life meant to him while growing up and at the present. Finally, he' described three inventions and aspects of technology that he has experienced in his lifetime.

Bridget Federspiel

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Oral History — Hst. 685

March 3, 22003

Content Outline
(Topics/questions)

Bridget Federspiel

Interviewee: Walter Federspiel

February 19, 2003; Dayton, Ohio

Tape 1 side A

Length of Tape- 30 min

Topics

Life in the Miami Valley during 1940s

- a. Early childhood
 1. moving around due to father's job
 2. relocation in Dayton
- b. World War II
 1. father's role at Wright Field in procurement
 2. job as newspaper boy
 3. end of war
- c. School — St. Agnes and Chaminade High School (counter — 62)
 1. classes
 2. uniforms
 3. lunch time
- d. Drafted to Korea (counter — 111)
- e. School — Chaminade High School
 1. interaction with non-Catholics
- f. Social life
 1. Elementary school — basketball
 2. playing at a local park
 3. hunting at park (in the city) (counter 196)
 4. basketball at Chaminade
 5. movies
- g. Cold war
 1. Berlin Air lift (counter — 304)
 2. Berlin Wall (counter 330)

Bridget Federspiel

Interviewee: Walter Federspiel

February 19, 2003; Dayton, Ohio

Tape 1 side B

Length of Tape- 25 min.

Life in the Miami Valley

- a. Chaminade High School
 1. school life
 2. brothers
 3. uniforms
 4. lunch time (counter — 50)
- b. Life after Korean War service
 1. GI Bill
 2. Winters Bank
 3. Phillips Industries (counter 157)
 4. Kettering City Schools
- c. Cold War
 1. Kennedy assassination (counter — 198)
 2. Cuban Missile Crisis (counter — 225)
- d. Vietnam War

Bridget Federspiel

Interviewee: Walter Federspiel

February 25, 2003; Dayton, Ohio

Tape 2 side A

Length of Tape- 15 min.

Questions

1. What is a major differences between now and then, living in the Miami Valley, then being when you were group up, in grade school, high school and now in 2003?
2. What was the good life?
 - a. Youth (counter —32)
 - b. 30s/40s age
 - c. today 60s
3. What were the three biggest changes as far as inventions, technology that made life easier? (counter — 87)
 - a. medicine
 - b. car
 - c. electronics
 - d. space shuttle

Bridget Federspiel

Dr. Marjorie McLellan

Oral History — Hst. 685

March 3, 2003

Transcription of interview

February 19, 2003

Walter Federspiel

Dayton, Ohio

Tape 1 side A

Length of Tape- 30 min

Bridget: This is February 19, 2003. My name is Bridget Federspiel and I am sitting here talking with Walt Federspiel. And he is going to start by telling me about his early life, where he was born, what his school was like, just life in the Miami Valley.

Walt: Yes, I am Walter Federspiel, Walter B. I was born in New Haven, Indiana which is a suburb of Fort Wayne in February 1934. And I went to school, I am not sure what city, I was for the first grade, because my dad worked for the Soil Conservation Corp, which was a government agency, which helped farmers to manage their land. In other words they would have to rotate crops and so further. And the reason he was in this type of work was that he grew up on a farm and his father had a farm for many, many years and so this kind of fell into his field of employment.

Bridget: I am sorry, did he, was this created out of the depression like the CCC or one of the programs that Roosevelt created to help the farmers, do you know?

Walt: I am not sure if that was the situation or not but the reason before when I said I didn't know where I went to school for first grade because we moved every, we lived in New Haven, around Ft Wayne, Indiana and we also lived in Bedford. We lived in Logansport, Indiana. We lived in Indianapolis. And those are the four or five cities that I know of. And I think, I know when as a child, I was real young, I was two or three, and I was in Bedford, Indiana. This is where Bedford stone is when people talk about Bedford stone. And I remember this was very hot and we use to go into the caves and that's where we ate our supper. We would take lunches every day because it was so hot in the summer time and so forth in there.

But then my first recollection is we moved to Dayton. My dad was transferred to work with the farmers here in Dayton, Ohio in 1942. He was here a short time, six months or so, working in that area and they had said that he would have to move and he said no. He wasn't going to move his family again. There was the three of us, my two brothers and myself, I was the youngest. So he got a job, on the base, worked in procurement until

1962 until when he retire after 30 years, partly with the base and partly with the Civil Conservation Corp.

Bridget: What is procurement?

Walt: Procurement is, he purchased aircraft. Later on, when they got into guided missiles and things like that. That's what he purchased for the government through contractors and bombers, he purchased those and all. It was amazing in the sense that he only had a high school education. And he went to worked into these jobs. Sure there were shortages but still normally you would have someone that had all kinds of degrees to actually do something. Because he actually knew farming. That was his expertise.

Bridget: It is amazing. There must have been training or?

Walt: Some type of training, I am sure he took and then he graduated into different fields of purchasing and buying and he'd travel around the country to where these, either the bombers or the fighters were, or the missiles where they were manufactured. I know that he use to go to Grumens. He use to go to Boeing, and so forth, some of the big names, I recall. And, but I recall, like I said I came in 1942, that was right when the war was on. I recall, I worked, I sold newspapers. I had a newspaper route. And I remember when the war ended because sold newspapers. I couldn't get them fast enough when the war was ended in 1945. And I was ten, let me see I would have been nine, I guess, something like that. But it was real clear to me. They talk about the Second World War. We had an awful lot of, there was rationing. My dad did have a car. And he got what they called an A rationing. He could get almost any, unlimited amount of gas because he had to drive to work every day. He had to be at work. They sent you to work. But, he, we did, he always repaired our shoes because you couldn't buy leather and he'd repair our shoes with rubber or anything that he could get. He'd repair shoes in the basement. And then we could only buy so much sugar; we could only get certain amount of dairy products so there were a lot of shortages. It was, I remember this, even though I was pretty small.

Bridget: Did you go on the base at all with your dad?

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Walt: No. You couldn't, it was restricted. In fact, if you go out near the base, Wright-Patterson, they call it Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Before it was Patterson Field and Wright Field. They were two different, two different fields. And my dad use to work at Patterson Field. I'm not sure exactly what each one did. Each one was separate. And then it was some years, I'm not sure exactly when, they combined it and made it Wright-Patterson Air Force Base it complete. But, no they had tarps, over the fences, inside. I think the fences were eight, ten feet tall and so you couldn't see in. And you couldn't really get too close to it. They patrolled inside. And sometimes you'd see them on the outside, the military people. But they had a road all the way around the complete base. So it was really a sealed base, during the Second World War.

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Then I said I sold newspapers. And I went to grade school in what they call the northwest part of town, the St. Agnes area. Out near Superior and Grand Ave. And lived on Veron Drive. That's where we lived. And went there for grade school. I came there in second grade. And then went to Chaminade downtown and then graduated from there in 1952. We road the bus downtown to Third and Ludlow and then we would walk from Third and Ludlow down to Chaminade down to the high school. And we were taught there by the Brothers of Mary, the Marianists I should say. We didn't just have brothers, we had priests. They were actually ran the school. The principal was a priest and the brothers. They were really disciplinians. So they, when you figure we had 12 to 13 hundred boys, there was no nonsense there. If you got out of line, most of the time, you were not sent to the dean's office, the brother would take of it, in his own room, himself, discipline in certain ways. It may be hard, what people thought, were very hard. They would smack us or throw books at us, wake us up. And then do things like this. But then we were there to learn. And there were choices at that time. It cost, I remember it was fifty or seventy-five dollars a year. That was the cost. And I hear people say that not much, but back then it was a lot of money. My parents couldn't afford it. There were, like I said my two brothers but then two of my sisters were born here in Dayton, both younger than I, so there was five of us. And my dad was the only one that actually worked. And I assumed he made pretty good money. I don't recall what his wages were. But I am sure in the position that he had, he made fairly decent money. We did have a house, not a big house, three bedrooms and one bath, livingroom, diningroom, and full basement, and so forth. Small yard out there in northwest Dayton what's called Dayton View. The house didn't have big yards, but they were big, two and half-story houses.

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So, but anyways, after, I graduated I went into the service right away. I guess it was '52, '53, into basic and then was shipped to Korea. At that time Korea, the war, I think was just finished in '53. I think it was. So I got there right after the war was over with. They said the war was over with but it wasn't over with. The people, if you weren't there you didn't know they were still fighting. The armistice was signed but there were skirmishes in the south, east or west of Korea. But I worked there, I was trained for work in anti-aircraft artillery and the army had different plans. They move you over there. They didn't use me in that field. I worked on the railroad, took care of keeping track of transportation of troops and all types of military equipment, tanks and everything that Moved up and down the lines. I came out in 1955. I should say, when I was in high school, I still carried papers until I was 15, 16 my sophomore years. Then I started working at the Metropolitan as a stock boy and all through high school. We, Chaminade go out of school at 2 or 2:15 and so we could beat all the public school to get the jobs downtown. And we were right there and we could be at work in a few minutes so we could work three hours a day, and Saturday. In the store itself.

Bridget: You mentioned the public school, you went to Catholic schools all your life and then high school. Did you have interaction with kids that went to public schools?

Walt: Yes, because the neighborhood I lived in, Dayton View, was all Fairview. And there was the biggest, in my neighborhood at my time, was Jewish. And they always thought I was, some of them, thought I was Jewish too, because dark complexion. It was mostly a Jewish community, along with Catholics. At that time, there wasn't any no African Americans, Negroes, whatever they were in, the west side, the other side what we called Wolfcreek Pike, which was the dividing, line between the whites and the blacks or the Negroes. They were, just lived on the other side of West Third street.

So, to answer your questions no I did interact with a number of, and now I think after that it changed to Colonel White the school. I don't know if Fairview is still in operation or if it just Colonel White now. But there was only one high school and that was Fairview out that way, at that time. We did have Stivers; it was still there. Kiser. And then I think later on then Patterson and Patterson Coop.

Bridget: Now was Roosevelt there?

Walt: Roosevelt was out off of West Third Street and they were one of the major schools and Dunbar was there too. At the time Roosevelt was probably still all, was segregated. I think most of them went to Dunbar until years later when it became integrated schools. And Fairview was strictly, there was no, strictly white. What you called a white school at that time.

And we, down at Chaminade, I suppose I recall we had a few blacks, or African Americans, or whatever, we called blacks, at that time, but most of them couldn't afford it. They couldn't, and there were no scholarships, of course like that.

Like I said before, my brothers and I, we paid our own tuition. And we paid it by working, working somewhere. Working at a paper route, or the Metropolitan. Compared to tuition today, it was nothing. But then it was a lot.

Bridget: Right

Walt: It was a lot of money

Bridget: What did you do for fun? What was, back when you were in elementary school?

Walt: We, my dad had put up a basketball court in our back, against our garage. That's what we did. We played basketball. In fact we put lights back there and we were the only ones on the whole block that had lights. So we would play at night.

Bridget: A very popular place.

Walt: Right, my brothers and I would, even if we weren't home, they'd come to the door and ask my dad if they could play basketball at night. And most of the time, he'd turn the lights on so they could play. And up above us, two houses above us, there was a big

field. It was undeveloped and had a great big pond on it. We had carved, or we had trampled down a place so we could play baseball and this place is called Princeton Park now. Its, before we had moved out of there, they had put tennis courts in there and they were developing the park. That was probably in the sixties or seventies, or maybe later than that.

We would go up there and as young kids were would play, we would play war, I guess, that we would do. Like we would dig foxholes and things like that. We would make rafts. There was a big drainage place up there. We would make a raft. It was maybe fifty or sixty feet across, it held that much water and it wasn't real, real deep but we would play in there. And then play in, at times, my dad, it was still not in the city as such and we could go up there and hunt. Hunt rabbits and pheasants and such. But it was that close to not being developed.

Bridget: Right

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Walt: Over the years, the whole city of Dayton has changed and everything was been developed, housing. Parks made up some of these places.

So that's basically it. Playing basketball. Everyday in grade school I had a paper route. My paper route was in the afternoon, after school. You were busy from 4 o'clock and if you carried, I use to carry, and I had a hundred customers. Sunday was a morning, a Sunday paper. I had between 120 and 150. So you would get up at 4:30 or 5:00 Sunday morning and deliver papers. Because people wanted the papers at six or seven o'clock, read it before they went to church or after they went to church.

Bridget: So that was when you were little, how about when you got older when you were at Chaminade what did you do outside of school, besides work?

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Walt: Mainly, we played basketball. I played some intramural basketball at Chaminade. Then basically went to the sports, the basketball games and football games at Welcome Stadium. As far as other activities you rode your bike anyplace you wanted to. In the wintertime, we would ride over the Island Park from where we lived and ice skate. Some people would go downtown to roller skate. I wasn't into that. They had a roller rink down there next to the Metropolitan, down there on Fourth Street. And then they had one out, north of town, out by McCooks that way. We had a movie theatre down, about a mile, mile and half on Salem Avenue, a Salem Theatre. Or take a bus downtown, because that's where all theatres were. We were lucky to have one at Salem. They had one out on North Main called the Daybell. They had about four or five: the Colonial, the Victory, Keiths, Colonial, the State, the, I forget the other one, it was on Main Street. There were five or six of them. That's where you went because we didn't have malls or anything like that. We went to the movies. The movies downtown were a little more

expensive because they had the first run (movies) The Salem that was close to our neighborhood wouldn't have the same, the same run. They would get the movies after they had played downtown, at the main theatre. We would go there.

Bridget: Did it cost just one price for one movie?

Walt: They would have double features, and you could see and stay there and see the picture over again.

Bridget: They didn't make you leave?

Walt: They would keep running. They had serials, sometimes on Saturday. They would have Superman along with or just have cartoons. I think I went a few times because I knew people that worked at NCR. They had cartoon, cartoon movies down there on Saturday mornings. But you were suppose to be family but they could take so many guests along with them to see those movies.

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And again, it was trying to get transportation there and most of the time we were riding the bus. You would take one bus and then transfer to go out South Main Street. We didn't have malls, as such. We had Miracle Lane, which was out, close to us, out Salem Avenue, which wasn't a big place, maybe, three or four stores. But that was big, what we thought at the time. I recall, but I lived in Dayton View, I remember that did have this Town and Country. I had never been to Town and Country. Because you never, you stayed in and ate in your own area. If you had a few restaurants and so forth, you'd eat in that particular area. But until the fast foods, I don't think these came about, I recall, until after I was married the first time in 1958. Then I recall sometime right after that, close to where we lived in East Dayton on Sharp Road. It was in St. Helen's area, real close to Carroll High School, which wasn't built until I think early 60s, they started building. We lived out that way. I think, as I recall, there was one of the first McDonald's was out there on Linden Avenue. My three daughters when growing up, we would go there once in a while. But as today, fast food people don't understand that we grew up in an area that you ate at home. Your mother cooked or your wife cooked or something like that.

My first wife, Susan, we had three daughters. They grew up in St. Helen's, until possibly some of them were in the sixth grade. Then we moved into Kettering. Then they went to one year to St. Albert's and then they went to the Kettering school system. They all three graduated from Fairmont High School. So, we have been in Kettering for about thirty years.

Bridget: Lets go back and talk about some Cold War events. All right. You talked about remembering World War II and it ending because of your paper route. Do you recall the Berlin; delivering papers you must have know what was going on in the world.

Walt: Right

Bridget: Do you remember the Berlin Airlift?

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Walt: Yes, I do. You were you realized, because there was a lot of traffic from the base; a lot of planes, even during the Second World War. All kinds of bombers, and fighters, always coming and going. And during the airlift, there were a lot of big bombers that were stationed; I should say transport planes that they converted some of them converted bombers. They took out the armament and used them as transport planes to transport, for the airlift. I don't think they were loading many goods here. They would probably fly them towards the East Coast and then loading up there. But they had a lot of traffic in here. I think there was a lot maintenance work and time they would do on these planes here. Then ship them on to wherever they would be loading up supplies. I think it was mostly from the East Coast. It was closer too. They could hop over to Europe or to Germany. I recall, I remember that it went on for so long, I don't know how many years.

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And then if you jump ahead I can remember the wall. We always thought that the wall was never going to come down. I couldn't believe when we finally broke through and released the East Germans, and became one unified Germany and broke the wall down. The Communists, broke the back of the Communists and reunited Germany. I'm not sure exactly what year that was but I can remember the headlines in the paper.

Bridget: Growing up in the Cold War, you saw all this tension and all this conflict and then to see it end.

Walt: We were tension because the fact we, there were a lot of people not so much us, but there were people who had bomb shelters because they were afraid of a war with Russia and the communists. So, you kind of finished one war and the Korean War came in. It wasn't a war, a police action, they said. But the people that were there, it wasn't a police action. And then you came into this, what you call the Cold War. People were tense. I remember in school we had drills. They made us get under the desks and go, in our school we had a basement and we would go there. Besides fire drills, normal fire drills outside. They would have testing, test sirens, around the city at different times. And it wasn't so much for the storms, it was strictly for, we didn't have anything for storms, or weather or tornadoes. This was strictly for, more so for the Cold War. I guess during the Second World War we had it too. We did have black outs. We didn't have to, I can't recall, because we weren't on the coast, we were inland. I think the coastal towns had more of the black outs then we did.

Basically that's what I can remember of the Cold War. Time just goes by so fast, flip by you. You don't, just days and years just slip by.

Bridget: Okay, lets take a break and then we'll get back.

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Tape 1 side B

Length of Tape- 25 min.

Bridget: While we were taking a little break, you were talking a little more about Chaminade and the new building and the new class, the actual first class to actually be in the building.

Walt: At first we spent the last two or three months. They promised us, in the beginning that we would be here for the whole year but as you know construction of a building and they were building this particular building in sections, as I recall. We went to school on the whole lot where the new building is constructed now. It was all brick. I think four, four or five stories. There was a brick wall around the whole school itself.

Bridget: Was the school kind of centered in the middle of the block? You know how it sits on the corner now, kind of wraps around the corner.

Walt: It closer to the opposite corner as to where it is now. So it made it a little bit easier for them to start construction. I think that is the reason why it is down there closer to Washington Street, on Ludlow and Washington. They were the biggest. The old school was closer to the next block which is. . .I can't. . .

Bridget: Perry?

Walt: Ludlow and it could be Perry. But anyway that was the reason on one end and then knock down a part of the other, of the old building as they were constructing because there was no way they could take all of us and put us, the freshmen, always went to Emmanuel, down the street. We, all the upperclassmen, were in the main building there at Chaminade. They couldn't take all of us out there and crowd us. I know that they did crowd quite a few of us into that as they were constructing.

Bridget: How big were your classrooms? When you are talking about being crowded?

Walt: I think we had normally fifty, sixty to a classroom. Some of them were small, or smaller. When it came to science and everyone, but when you took math or you took, the others, English or language, you had pretty good size classes. So how many rooms? I don't recall. I recall we were divided into A, B, C, D, E, and F. And A and B were what they call were normal, academic, normally guys that had better grade point averages in grade school or they were definitely going to go to college. They were taking the Chemistries, all the things that they needed for college. C and D were classes that I was at, more or less business. Not that we weren't going to college but we were taking bookkeeping, typing and things like this that you might need along with languages and religion and math that you were required. Then E and F, they were, what they called, mechanical types of students that were interested in maybe mechanical engineering or

just drawing or into automobile repair and things like that. They definitely were not thinking about college. When you went there, they'd tell you, thinking, no you weren't thinking about college or you were thinking about college. And, they classified you in this way. It wasn't because some were smarter than others. There were some real smart fellows in all different divisions. That's just at that time how they classified us in high school. But anyways that's how the building was.

We were allowed to leave Chaminade there. We had to stay. We had basketball courts outside. That's what we did. We would play basketball. We'd get teams together and play basketball. You had a half-hour for lunch to eat. That's why we'd get out early.

Bridget: Did you bring your own lunch then since you couldn't leave campus?

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Walt: Most of the time we did because the food wasn't, they did serve food there. They had brothers that cooked. But, it wasn't the greatest food in the world. So most of us, there were a number that purchased the lunch, but most of us would bring. Some of us would, there was a group, I, myself, most of, a lot of times, would sell my lunch to guys and get extra money and go out and play basketball for a half-hour. Not even, some of guys would look and see what was on the lunch and they didn't bring their lunches, and they would see what they were serving that day and they'd try to find people to buy. They didn't care what we had. If we had peanut butter, whatever, we had, they would buy them. We would go out and play basketball then. Intramural basketball out there. So, it was normally the lunches weren't really expensive. Most of us, we worked. Even if it was 35 or 40 cents a day to eat, that was a lot of money. You could at that time, you could buy milk maybe for, a pint of milk, for a couple cents or a nickel or something like that. We might buy that, something to drink. But you didn't want to spend thirty-five or fifty cents for lunch that you didn't know what you were going to get until that day, you know. It could be leftovers from the other day or something.

Bridget: They didn't post a menu?

Walt: Not normally.

Bridget: It was potluck?

Walt: Right. Whatever they got together for that particular day.

Bridget: Were there uniforms that you had to wear?

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Walt: No, we had to wear a tie all the time. A shirt and tie. So and if you did come to school without a tie, you'd get demerits and you could get so many demerits and then eventually you were thrown out of school. If you got caught smoking in the premises or

within a block of school and they caught you, they would, you could get thrown out of school for that. Or, for fighting. Different things like that. So some guys had their own lockers and they would come to school. They were suppose to have a tie but in the winter time you could come with your coat buttoned up and go to your locker and just throw a tie in there and put your tie on when you come in as long as they didn't see you come in without a tie on. A lot of guys did that and wore the same ties. You can't imagine what these ties looked like and even smelt like after someone wore that same one for a whole year. That was basically, we had to wear a shirt and tie. We didn't have, at that time, we didn't have jeans. That's what they say now, we had some type of dress pants or something like that you wore.

Bridget: And the brothers wore?

Walt: The brothers always wore ties. Black suits and ties. White shirts. Same with the priests. And we had a couple of lay teachers there. One who taught law. He was a lawyer. He came in and taught business law to us, to the seniors. We had another gentleman, people would know, Mr. Early. He taught government and civics. Then, I think we had another gentleman He taught mechanical drawing. He had a business in town and came in and taught.

Bridget: No female teachers at all?

Walt: No, there were none.

Bridget: Nuns?

[dryer alarm in background]

Walt: No, we had those in our grade school. We had all sisters that taught us, in grade school at St. Agnes. No females at all when trying to control all those boys in high school.

Bridget: Wow. Okay, we were also discussing some cold war events and we had discussed the Berlin Wall and Berlin Airlift. We were getting into the fifties. You were sent to Korea and came back. What happened once you got out of the army?

Walt: That was in 1955. As I had worked in the Metropolitan, even my last few years before I went into the service I had worked in the display department, window display which we would set up the different scenes, and different mannequins displaying suits, which they had in the windows. Nowadays, we have malls and you don't see windows but they had actually windows that would actually show suits on mannequins and shirts. And have all kind of different backgrounds: Christmas backgrounds, Easter, fall backgrounds We would change these every two or three weeks. That's what I actually did before I went into the service, a little bit, and when I came out I continued to work there at the Met.

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And I started going to UD, full-time, on the GI Bill. There was quite a few students at the University of Dayton that were going there and working and going there full-time. You'd work in the afternoon or evenings. I think you had to take 13 hours, 13 credit hours. I did that for about 2¹/₂ years and then in the mean time I had met my first wife, Susan. Then we got married in 1958. There was just not enough time to go to school. I went part-time at nights. Then I finally quit. Then I worked a short time still at the Metropolitan downtown. But then I went to work for Winters National Bank. What I was taking while I was UD was accounting so that's where I was sort of fitting into at the bank. I didn't work as a teller. I worked in what they called, at that time, installment loan department. We made personal loans, car loans. After about five or six years, we started what they called the first credit card type. We called it a green line. You had a line of credit on your checking account. You could overdraw your checking account and it would be automatically into a line of credit. You could either pay it back in full or make monthly payments on this line of credit. We actually issued a green card. They could actually use this card to come into our bank, into our branches, and obtain money based on, they'd have to check to see if they had enough line of credit, but they could borrow this money without filling out an application every time. We didn't have ATM's machines or anything. You had to go into a branch and check through one of the tellers to see, or call us in the green line department and ask us if person could draw out so much money against his line of credit.

Bridget: Back then what if defaulted on their loans? You had worked in the car — Did you repossess?

Walt: Yes, when I first started, I worked inside and then I worked in what they called the outside adjuster. We would have to, if they didn't take care of their bills, we would go out and pick up the cars. We also made loans for all types of home improvements: awnings and doors. And, these we couldn't take but we had to go out and try to get these people to pay their bills. It's the same as I would assume now, although, now, people, they have credit cards. And it's a little different than; we made more, different types of loans. Although, they still make car loans. But and I'm sure people make personal loans too. But the biggest portion today is your credit cards. And back them it was mainly just a car loan or a loan on your house. What we call home improvement loans, which they still make today.

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So for a number of years I did that outside, and tried to adjust accounts. Collect money from people that were trying to hide from us. This was a learning experience too. To figure out that people weren't and didn't pay their bills and they would try to hide from you. But, after a while I graduated from doing this and decided I could help them inside with my knowledge of credit. I worked for about ten years with Winters Bank. Then, the banking industry never was high paying. I don't know what it is today. I would assume it is a little bit better. There are a quite a few people who do work. It wasn't a high-paying

job and you were expected to dress, shirt and tie, suit. You had an image to make. But the image was always; the compensation was not always the greatest. So after ten years, and I had three children at that time, I felt I needed to find something that I could support my family better. I found a job in the credit line, as a credit analysts with Phillips Industries which was found by Jesse Phillips who, if you've been in town, he has given a lot of money, to the University of Dayton, and has did a lot of things in town. I went to work for him and worked there for twenty years until the company by the name of Thompkins, a British Company came in. He sold out. They decided to eliminate different areas. My area for one. So this resulted in, at that time I was probably 58, 57 or 58 years old. So, I then had to look around for a whole year, trying to find work. I wasn't able to find anything until finally I got into the school system, Kettering school system. I worked there for about fix or six years, in special education department. And that's probably brought me up to where I am today.

Bridget: To go back to a couple more Cold War questions. We talked about some major events during Cold War. Do you remember where you were when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated?

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Walt: At that time I was working for Winters Bank. I was still outside doing adjustments for the bank, for the collections department. I would always call, my wife was pregnant I recall, and she was probably due in a few months, so I would always call her around noontime or right after lunch, 1 o'clock and see how things were going at home. I would always call into the bank too. Because once I left in the morning, I never did go back into the bank until the next morning. So, I had called her and she said if I had had the radio on,. and I usually didn't have the radio on in the car, sometimes I did, but most of the time I was concentrating on what I was doing and didn't get it on. And she said, President Kennedy, she said, I can't believe this he was shot. So then I turned on my radio and listened and I couldn't fathom that someone would shot him. It didn't seem to be that controversial. He was doing things that would cause someone to go after him. I know there was the civil rights movement really involved at that time. But it was, just didn't believe, could hardly believe it. Some one would kill him.

Bridget: Back a little earlier, what were your thoughts on the Cuban Missile Crisis? When that was going on was there was a lot of activity at the base?

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Walt: As far as I know it was closed up, the base as. There was a lot of traffic in and out, airplanes. Nowadays we don't see as many planes coming and going probably because of the traffic patterns. Then they were going over your house. And every part of Dayton you would always seem like day and night you could hear planes. I guess it was, really, we felt really tense because we didn't get as much information as you do today. I mean today you know what is going on over the whole world and then I think we got a lot more through the newspapers. Sure television was there but we didn't get it as quickly as you

do now. Oh, you might get yesterday [news]; they did this or something like that in the paper. I think the newspapers, I think, were more, oh, yea the radio, but I think you got more this way and you weren't right up to date, like in some of the wars that are going on, like Desert Storm. They are showing you things that are going on immediately what is going on across the world. We didn't have instant media information. So I think we were kind of kept in the dark. I mean in a sense we didn't get, we knew what was going on but, yet sometime later on while they settle then they finally tell you.

Bridget: Now, you were in the Korean War. What did you think of the Vietnam War? When it started heating up more in the late sixties with protests, with the people wanting it and not wanting it and here you're not a veteran of the Great War or the war but of a little war in between it that didn't get a lot of attention and now all the attention was focused on Vietnam?

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Walt: I thought at times, well, the Kent State thing was just a tragedy. I mean, to come in and just because they were protesting and to send in the National Guard shooting to break up riots. I don't know if they had rubber bullets, or could have sprayed them with hoses but to start shooting and killing. That was in the Vietnam era. I thought what a waste. These kids were just voicing their opinions. They didn't want to go. I am sure there were a lot of them that went to Canada, weren't going to go fight in this war. I kind of feel for them. My thoughts were, here we are again in a situation where, I felt, we weren't going to win anything. We were trying to help and which we did in South Korea, the Communist from taking over and the communists [from] taking over all of Vietnam. But a war I can relate to these young, young guys. And as it went on and on and on, I thought it was such a waste. And then when they, when it ended the way it did, and we walked away and it didn't mean a thing. All those lives lost for nothing because we didn't accomplish a thing there. We walked away from the place. At least in Korea, there was a truce and at least the South was still the South and they were free of the Communist. The North is the way it is today. But Vietnam was just a tragedy. We shouldn't have even been there. I suppose it is just, I don't know what to say. That's just my feelings were, we shouldn't have lost all those people all those men for not.

Bridget: Okay, well let's stop again.

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Second Interview

Bridget Federspiel

Interviewee — Walter B. Federspiel

February 25, 2003; Dayton, Ohio

Tape 2 side A

Length of Tape- 15 min.

Bridget: Second interview. And there are a few questions that I failed to ask in the last interview that I wanted to ask you this time. The first question is what is a major difference between now and then, living in the Miami Valley, then being when you were growing up, in grade school, high school and now in 2003.

Walt: I guess the main difference is the communication. When you were growing up you knew the people in the area of the city where you lived but you really didn't have much contact with the whole city as you can now with communication. I should say with transportation. Transportation of getting to and from all parts of the city. I'm assuming too, with if you are involved with any type of club or organization that you meet people from all parts of the city. I think the transportation is easier. Mainly you have more cars today. Buses didn't take you to all parts of the whole city or the county. You had to get your own transportation, mostly by walking. And I think that is a main change I can see. Moving around.

Bridget: Do you remember when 35 went through? Or 75 being built?

Walt: Yes, I can maybe recall that especially I guess 35 when they cut through the city, the main city and went west. But 75 was the main, when you were talking about the main highway running north and to Cincinnati. Running all the way up north before you drove through South Dixie or take you along to Cincinnati and there was no major road went through every little city along the way. Once the big highways came in and everything bypassed Dayton and any other cities. You could get off on all these cities but there was no, there was easier transportation for everyone to move.

Bridget: Okay. The other two questions, one deals with when you were young. What did you consider to be the good life? When you were growing up in the Miami Valley, what was considered to be the ideal life to you?

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Walt: Well, I thought where I lived and what I did at that time when I was growing up was a good life. We lived in a pretty, medium class neighborhood. Everyone there worked. They had good jobs. A lot of them worked at the base, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. In fact a number of people on the street were engineers. A type of people that were, I would say, middle-class or above or at least that's what I thought. Because I never was subject to people in Oakwood, or some other. In fact, I delivered papers in a part of town called Dayton View. People I remember Harvard and Yale and Euclid. Then I realized I was, I wasn't poor, but I wasn't rich. Because these homes, when I delivered papers, I could never ride my bike or throw the paper from the sidewalk, I had to walk. They were big, big homes. And they're still there, some of these homes are. I didn't know of any Oakwood, I thought that was the really great life there. But I thought I was happy with what I was doing and where we were living. What we did even though I know we didn't have all the good things but when you only had one person working and there were five of you, five children, it was a little struggle.

Bridget: Okay, how about later on when you were in your thirties what did you considered to be the good life, the good life in the Miami Valley?

Walt: I don't think anything changed in what I was doing. As I was bringing up my three daughters but I thought it was still the good life. I worked in banking and finance. I enjoyed it. I felt you could always do better, and you try to do better but you were satisfied and you were happy with things that were going on in your life at that time. I think too that things move so fast at times so far the years slip by and you just took things, this was great. This was a nice city to live in and to work in and raise a family. Lots of opportunities with companies to work for and so forth.

Bridget: Okay. What about now? What do you consider to be the good life now in the Miami Valley?

Walt: Being retired and it is just, things just go. There is no pressure. I lost my first wife and I married again, a wonderful lady. I am lucky to have found her through some friends. And this is great. We both seem to enjoy it and each other. And what is going on day to day. Enjoying our grandchildren, our combined families that we have together. This is what I consider to be the good life. As long as you have your health and you are able to do what you want to do that's the good life to me.

Bridget: Okay. The last question is about inventions. You have seen a lot in your life. There have been major changes as far as inventions and technology. Even in the aspect of medicine. You know that is an aspect of the question I didn't ask how medicine has changed. From having heart transplants to before growing up with polio or polio scares, measles, I mean the whole gambit of things. But to get back to the question, what three can you think of three inventions that, or changes in technology that you believe have been most influential, in either your life or overall?

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Walt: I think you mentioned medicine. Invention but in a sense when we were growing up we had the problem that we couldn't swim some times. Late in the summer, when it got too hot, they didn't want to get you tired because you could get polio. Before they had a vaccine for it, everyone. It more or less wiped out at least in this part of the world. And then different drugs. Like you said measles and now we have heart transplants. All the medical knowledge that they have to keep a person alive that has all kinds of lung and liver transplants. Any thing that they can do with medicine. It may not be an invention but it is a great asset that we have today that we didn't have when we were growing up. Some of us.

And I think, as I think back, the automobile was a tremendous aspect to everyone. It created one and many, many jobs for people. Also a fast way of transportation for people that used to or were unable to get to one place to another except by buses and airplanes came in too. Airlines are another fantastic invention that created a fast communication, I mean, a fast transportation for people to connect all around the world all over the

continents that we didn't have. I suppose the electronics, radio and television although radio was here before television. When I was growing up, that's all we listened to was radio, Saturday and Sunday. And when television came out, I just couldn't believe that they could make an image in a box through electricity. You could see shows from almost any part of the country. Then as we moved along into the computer age. It's just a tremendous aspect too. It is good, communication itself and the way communication has gone on it is really something. I can remember in the 2nd world war you would get information from the radio but mostly from the newspaper. And now the last few wars, the Gulf War, this instant way we knew. In fact they showed us things that were going on at the same time, which is good and sometimes it isn't as good. Sometimes I don't think we need to know every living detail. Especially in Vietnam but some of the things that went on that they showed. But it's freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom we have in this country so it is hard to quell this freedom.

But that's my opinion on some of the great communication and inventions that I have seen in my life. I can see things, like the space shuttle and things like this. I never dreamed we would have people in space. And as a small child I can't, I could never think of that I would be living into the 21st century. Especially, when I was born in 1934. Oh, I would be so old. And now I don't think I am that old.

Bridget: I remember them saying that when I was in high school, our twentieth class reunion would be in the year 2000. And I remember thinking I would be 38 years old and thinking that would be so old. I don't feel that old.

Walt: Time is relative when you get to a certain point in your life. But I am sure these space programs and electronic communication in another ten years that we think are great right now will be another drop in. What these young minds and people that are in our schools at this time hopefully they will continue on and give us new ideas and new ways which will help our lives each year.

Bridget: Well, thank you very much

Bridget Federspiel

Dr. Marjorie McLellan

Oral History — Hst. 685

March 17, 2003

Transcription of interview

February 19, 2003

Walter Federspiel

Dayton, Ohio

Tape 1 Side A —111

Walt: So, but anyways, after, I graduated I went into the service right away. I guess it was '52, '53, into basic and then was shipped to Korea. At that time Korea, the war, I think was just finished in '53. I think it was. So I got there right after the war was over with. They said the war was over with but it wasn't over with. The people, if you weren't there you didn't know they were still fighting. The armistice was signed but there were skirmishes in the south, east or west of Korea. But I worked there, I was trained for work in anti-aircraft artillery and the army had different plans. They move you over there. They didn't use me in that field. I worked on the railroad, took care of keeping track of transportation of troops and all types of military equipment, tanks and everything that moved up and down the lines. I came out in 1955. I should say, when I was in high school, I still carried papers until I was 15, 16 my sophomore years. Then I started working at the Metropolitan as a stock boy and all through high school. We, Chaminade go out of school at 2 or 2:15 and so we could beat all the public school to get the jobs downtown. And we were right there and we could be at work in a few minutes so we could work three hours a day, and Saturday. In the store itself.

Tape 1 Side B

Bridget: Now, you were in the Korean War. What did you think of the Vietnam War? When it started heating up more in the late sixties with protests, with the people wanting it and not wanting it and here you're not a veteran of the Great War or the war but of a little war in between it that didn't get a lot of attention and now all the attention was focused on Vietnam?

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help and which we did in South Korea, the Communist from taking over and the communists [from] taking over all of Vietnam. But a war I can relate to these young, young guys. And as it went on and on and on, I thought it was such a waste. And then when they, when it ended the way it did, and we walked away and it didn't mean a thing. All those lives lost for nothing because we didn't accomplish a thing there. We walked away from the place. At least in Korea, there was a truce and at least the South was still the South and they were free of the Communist. The North is the way it is today. But Vietnam was just a tragedy. We shouldn't have even been there. I suppose it is just, I don't know what to say. That's just my feelings were, we shouldn't have lost all those people all those men for not.

Bridget: Okay, well let's stop again.

Summary

Walter Brice Federspiel was born in New Haven, Indiana in 1934. His first six years were spent traveling around Indiana due to his father's job in the Soil Conservation Corp. Once his family moved to Dayton, his father took a permanent position at Wright Field Air Force Base.

As a child during World War II, Mr. Federspiel delivered papers. He recalled different aspects of the war, such as rationing and the ending of the war.

Mr. Federspiel grew up in the northwest section of Dayton. He talked about the different activities he did as a child, including playing a lot of basketball since his father had installed lights in their backyard so they could play at night. Mr. Federspiel attended Catholic elementary and high schools. His experiences at Chaminade High School are in contrast to school experiences today. Mr. Federspiel said,

"And we were taught there by the Brothers of Mary, the Marianists I should say. We didn't just have brothers, we had priests. They were actually ran the school. The principal was a priest and the brothers. They were really disciplinarians. So they, when you figure we had 12 to 13 hundred boys, there was no nonsense there. If you got out of line, most of the time, you were not sent to the dean's office, the brother would take of it, in his own room, himself, discipline in certain ways. It may be hard, what people thought, were very hard. They would smack us or throw books at us, wake us up. And then do things like this. But then we were there to learn. And there were choices at that time."

After graduating from high school, Mr. Federspiel was drafted into the Korean War. He returned and took advantage of the GI Bill by attending the University of Dayton. He eventually was hired by Winters Bank where he worked for twenty years.

Mr. Federspiel recalled some Cold War events but his most revealing opinions deal with the Vietnam War. As a veteran, Mr. Federspiel had a sobering viewpoint on the war.

"I kind of feel for them. My thoughts were, here we are again in a situation where, I felt, we weren't going to win anything. We were trying to help and which we did in South Korea, the Communist from taking over and the communists [from] taking over all of Vietnam. But a war I can relate to these young, young guys. And as it went on and on and on, I thought it was such as waste. And then when they, when it ended the way it did, and we walked away and it didn't mean a thing. All those lives lost for nothing because we didn't accomplish a thing there. We walked away from the place. At least in Korea, there was a truce and at least the South was still the South and they were free of the Communist."

Mr. Federspiel addressed three questions at the end of the interview regarding major changes in the Miami Valley. He also reflected on what the good life meant to him while growing up and at the present. Finally, he described three inventions and aspects of technology that he has experienced in his lifetime.