

October 5, 1999

Oral History with Brian Swanson

- Jerry - Mr. Swanson, usually the way I begin these interviews is to ask people what year they were born and where they were born.
- Mr. Swanson - I was born in 1939 in the County Hospital which was then and still is the welfare hospital. My parents were like most anyone back then. They had no money and they lived in a duplex on Pioneer Drive here in Glendale and I was brought home to the duplex. We lived there until about, I guess it was about 1942. We moved from the duplex into a home, a new home at 737 West Dryden, the home my dad built with a contractor friend of his.
- Jerry - This was in 1942?
- Mr. Swanson - About then.
- Jerry - You said that you were born in the County hospital and like a lot of people your parents didn't have a whole lot of money. Was it because of the depression years?
- Mr. Swanson - Yes. My father and his family had come from South Dakota, my mother lived in Gardena. They met at Gardena High School and my mother was... Gardena at that time was a very agricultural city. It was mostly Japanese people who had large truck farms. Well, my mother didn't like that society very much and she wanted to move elsewhere and the story, I guess, is they looked around a good deal and they moved here because my uncle Tanner was an artist and had landed a job drawing cells with Walt Disney, for the old Disney cartoons, for the Disney films. He actually drew parts of Fantasia and other things. He had a job here and liked the city very much. Disney was out in the studios but he had located here and liked it very much and so they came and looked at Glendale and that's how they arrived here.
- Jerry - And they got the place on Pioneer?
- Mr. Swanson - Yes and they were absolutely, I think they were absolutely destitute. My father got a job quickly at Cornwell and Kelty which was a sporting goods store on Brand Blvd. and worked there for many years, into the war years and because they were struggling. He got a job on swing shift at Lockheed just I guess putting in bolts and he used to tell me that mostly what he did was sleep in the fuselage of the planes that they were building because he was exhausted all the time. He was drafted in 1943 because he was a lot older. He was in his late 20's when he was drafted. They were kind of running out of

young men and he always laughed about the fact that all these young kids came from all over America in his platoon and they were bitching and moaning about how difficult it was and for him it was a stroll in the park. It was the first descent night's sleep he had in years. But he built this house at 737 West Dryden and we lived there until I was 12, which would be about 1951. We moved then to 1540 Ben Lomond Drive up in the Hoover district. While we lived in the house on Dryden I went to Mark Keppel grammar school, I went next door to Eleanor J. Toll and then across the street to Herbert Hoover High School.

Jerry - So it's a lot like kids who live in that neighborhood now?

Mr. Swanson - Yes. I hope it is because it was a great life.

Jerry - At Keppel what was the student body made up of--do you recall any minority kids in the neighborhood?

Mr. Swanson - No. Glendale in the 40's and 50's was very white bread. I knew a couple of Jewish kids. I knew two Hispanic kids, only in high school never in grammar school or Toll, which we used to call junior high school now they call it middle school or something. There were two Hispanic kids the ... brothers who came to Hoover and I knew them very well because I was in a club at Hoover and they also--in fact I adopted one of--Larry ??? was my younger brother in the club because we were football players together. In any event, as a matter of fact my house at 737 West Dryden I grew up just a few doors from Sheldon Baker. I'm not clear, Sheldon was a little older than I. I think he was 3 or 4 or 5 years maybe older than I. I was trying to think last evening when they came to Dryden. I'm just not sure exactly what the years were but they lived there for years, and years and years as did we. I knew them casually. At that age, 4 or 5 years is a huge age difference. Sheldon was busy--I remember he was a very good student and he was always busy with his academics you know when I was still out in the street playing baseball or football. In any event, Glendale was a community back then of one-story bungalows, garden apartments, almost all homeownership, I think. My memory is that it was almost all single family residents. There were no apartment buildings as we think of apartment buildings now but there were duplexes, triplexes, beautiful garden apartments and everything above and what is now the freeway, above and below Glenoaks, was beautifully manicured homes, lawns. I was telling my boy the other day that I still remember so well on Saturdays, you got to think back to 1940's, we had no air conditioning, we had no central heat, there was no TV, there were no computers, there was none of the things that brought us indoors. So everybody was out of doors and nobody could afford a gardener. Everybody was out of doors on Saturday cutting the grass, edging their lawns by hand and I can remember

so well walking or running down the streets around Dryden and Palm Drive and Concord and smell the fresh cut grass because everybody was out cutting their lawns and taking care of weekend work. Very few people worked odd hours back then. Everybody kind of had an 8 to 5 job and weekends off and mostly the father worked and the mother stayed home. It was just a real different society. Some good and some bad. Like I said, it was very white bread. The first African-American I ever even had any contact with of any kind was when we played, when I was a sophomore in high school, we played Centennial High School in the coliseum for the 4A football championship and I lost. But it was the first real contact I'd ever had with an African-American and they scared me to death. I mean in addition to the fact that they're great football players, I just didn't know what to make of it. I hadn't known any, although then we had a black woman who worked in our home. Aida was her name. She came twice a week and was a wonderful person. She began coming to our home on Ben Lomond Drive when I was about 12 or 13 and stayed with the family I guess until maybe 7 or 8 years later. She was very much of an eye opener because along with a lot of that kind of segregation that is caused by economics which they now call de facto segregation, a lot of it was also pretty mean stuff. I mean remarks and people had real prejudices that went very deep. Glendale was known for that. Glendale was known for a tough Police Department and if you looked even a little bit different, you were going to get stopped. So it was a different town; it was a different community back then. I remember it being very safe. I remember in the summer time we have a little pack on our block of kids, like every block did, and we would take our shoes off on the last day of school and put them on the first day of school the next year. We ran out all day everyday, our parents never worried about us. I never remember locking our house until I was in about high school up on Ben Lomond Drive. Our home was open, there was no such thing as robbery or, that I knew about or was conscious of it.

Jerry -

So that's through the 50's.

Mr. Swanson -

Well no, that was actually through the 40's, I guess. I began to be a little more aware of things really after we moved to Ben Lomond Drive. I got into junior high and high school and I began to notice the lack of minorities in town and kind of wondered about it. Never said much about it because it wasn't something you talked about very much. But I did wonder about it and when I was a senior in high school I met a very good friend, Sylvester Cooper. We played East Bakersfield High School. I met Sylvester just playing against him. He was just a great guy. Most everyone that I met on the football field wanted to do to me what I wanted to do to him and here was just a really nice guy. He was a great football player. Actually he had a try out with the New York Giants which you got to

be pretty good to do that. Played college ball and all. He was the first African-American I ever really talked to--ever exchanged a word with. So it was a different--Glendale back in the 30's and 40's and early 50's very much reminded me of Faulkner. ?? writing of the south. There was a lot of that in this town. It was quiet and it was slow and everybody knew everybody and everybody knew everybody's problems. Everybody went through the depression together, everybody went through the war together. I remember there being some financial differences but not very many, I mean on Dryden there was one family, the McCallisters, who had a lot of money. He made money in oil. In fact, I later played on his middle league baseball team. Glendale, especially on Dryden, now if I had lived up above Kenneth maybe I would have noticed distinctions like that but in our neighborhood nobody had much of anything so everybody was kind of equal in a way. I never thought about not having much. When my dad was drafted my mother went to work for the Salvation Army. She made 50 cents an hour and the reason she went to work for the Salvation Army was that we got first choice of used clothing and it was fabulous. You know we were putting cardboard in our shoes and kind of keeping up appearances you know and all of a sudden we were getting these great--you know when you're a kid you want to be the same as everybody else, you don't need to be better you just don't want to stand out. And that was very important and it was important to my mother. She told us later on that was one of the real, you know you talk about fringe benefits today, that that was one of the benefits to work with the Salvation Army. To this day I give them \$100 at Christmas time. I go up and down Brand Blvd. and drop a hundred bucks in one of their pots every year, I'm so grateful to them.

Jerry -

You said your dad got drafted in 1942, was he stationed over seas.

Mr. Swanson -

Yes. He actually went to Fort Ord and then was shipped to Fort Benning, Georgia. He was in the 101st Airborne. I don't think he ever jumped, he was in supply. He was then shipped to Tinian, in the Pacific. He was on Tinian and then on Okinawa after they took Okinawa. He never saw combat. They moved them off of Tinian in a big hurry--they moved everybody off of Tinian and I remember him saying "We couldn't figure out what in the world was going on. We thought we were going to take an island and nobody was real thrilled about that." The reason they took them off was because that's where the Enola Gay took off from and they had to bring them into Tinian and they had to practice take-offs because the atomic bombs were so heavy. You know the big boy and little boy, they were so huge that they had to practice take-offs and landings and they had to have absolute security so they took everybody off the island and they moved them to Okinawa. My father was one of the original, they were called shock troops, into Japan. He was one

of the very first people who occupied parts of Japan. He was in northern Japan, actually.

Jerry - While he was gone, your mother had to make ends meet. Did she do that by working at the Salvation Army?

Mr. Swanson - Yes. You know we just made it through. She had some very rough times. We all had some very rough times but everybody did. We lost a fellow in our block during the war and his father never came out of his house again.

Jerry - Do you recall at all what Glendale was like during those war years?

Mr. Swanson - The truth is Glendale didn't change much. Glendale was a model dynamic place back then. It was a great place to live. The most vivid memory I have of the war is my mother giving me a spoon and a pie pan to run down Glenoaks Blvd. as part of this parade on VJ Day, when the Japanese surrendered. They had the honor personnel carriers and what we used to call "army cars" which were big OD sedans that the officers used to transport them around and they were all lined up and running down Glenoaks Blvd. as a celebration. They had bands playing and we were beating on these pie pans and we were so happy because we thought that God, Scotty will be home tomorrow--the wars over. So where is he? But I don't remember Glendale changing much except that as I got older I understood that people had lost people. I really didn't understand it at the time very much except for Frankie Thomas. I mean I knew exactly what happened there, but I didn't really know much.

Glendale was affected I think much more by polio than it was by the war. Polio was a terrible scourge in the 40's in Glendale. My mother was scared to death and my mom and dad--we used to swim all the time at Pickwick and up at the Kehoe?? here and I later was a lifeguard at Indian Springs up here where the shopping center now is. They closed those pools and we couldn't swim any longer. We stayed in a lot. We didn't play as much as we had before because nobody knew how this terrible disease was communicable. Again, a fellow on our block, Terry Gilday, contracted polio and was in an iron lung all his life. So it was a terrifying thing. As it grew and began to really be--I mean in Southern California especially--so when Salk developed that vaccine, it was a huge thing for the people in Southern California. Especially just seeing we were always close to pools and the beach and that sort of thing. Boy that stopped as the real fear of polio began to spread because it was everywhere.

Jerry - It's just incredible how medical technology has changed and in such a relatively short period of time.

Mr. Swanson - Oh it is, it absolutely is.

Mr. Swanson - Oh sure, I mean I remember it when I had my tonsils out. God I went to the hospital, I had a general aesthetic, I was in the hospital four or five days then came home and I was in bed ten days afterwards. Now a days you can actually go for a doctor's visit and have your tonsils removed and go back to work.

Jerry - And lots of other things that we used to consider major surgery.

Mr. Swanson - That's right.

Jerry - You said that you were always around pools and you said something that fascinated me also that you were also at the beach. How did you get there?

Mr. Swanson - Well back then you drove out to Western Avenue, turned south and drove down to Huntington Beach where it intersects PCH and you made a left and went to Balboa. We rented a house in Balboa. I guess the years I was, in the summertime, usually for two weeks, when I was maybe 9, maybe 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, something like that for about five years there. We went down every summer and we loved it--just loved it down there. I still do to this day. I remember my parents always wanted to buy a place in Balboa and they fantasized about it. Years later, Anna and I were married and we had met, we were on Balboa Island and there was a beautiful old Mediterranean home for sale on Balboa Island, right not too far off the marina. Right in the sweet spot of Balboa Island, for \$65,000. I remember Scotty saying \$65,000 for this place, are you out of your mind? Well, it's a million six-hundred. So anyway, but so we spent a lot of time in Balboa, at Newport, and as I grew into high school, we went down all the time in the summertime because we then had access to cars and we surfed 50's Street, 60's Street??, I surfed the Wedge when I was a kid down at Newport. In college my roommate, one of my roommates in college, was a lifeguard in San Clemente and he showed me the beauties of San Onofre and the Trestles and so we did some surfing down there and I've always just felt like part of the beach.

Jerry - For recreation in Glendale, what did you do as a kid?

Mr. Swanson - Oh God, as a kid, as a young kid--youngster, we just played. We played baseball, you have to remember that in those days everything was open so we could go to Keppler field, we could go to Toll, we could go to Hoover.

Jerry - So it was usually at the fields at school not at parks?

Mr. Swanson - No, it was in the street. We played baseball in the street where the cars were bases you know and you'd run by the car and slap the

windshield on the way by, but we played at Nibly Park, we played at Pelanconi Park, we played down at, I never can remember the name of the park just south of Glenoaks near Pacific and Glenoaks. I don't know if it's called Pacific Park or not. Anyway, there's a beautiful park down there where we played at, where we used to take tennis lessons.

Jerry - It was probably Pacific Park down near Edison School.

Mr. Swanson - Yeah. But we were able to play anywhere. I mean because everything was available to us, even in high school. When I was in high school we would go to Hoover, all the football players, and we'd play 25 on 25 touch tackle football games all day long right on the Hoover field. Now, because of liability and everything, it's all locked up. Now these youngsters have to belong to an organized sport to play anything. We used to just play all day, every day anything we chose because everything was open to us. You know if it was locked, you just climb the fence. Nobody bothered about those things, as much. I'm sure we got thrown out every now and then, but there wasn't the horror of the billion dollar lawsuit, you know that worries people like Scott Howard today. He drafted the agreement I just signed.

Jerry - You said that you played sports in high school and you talked mostly about football. You also mentioned that you went to college. What did you major in and where did you go to college?

Mr. Swanson - I went to UC Berkley for two years right out of high school, right out of Hoover and then finished at UCLA in Zoology and worked for my first, in fact my only job, for 8 years was at Allen Laboratories right on San Fernando Road. It's now a fractionation plant. I guess. Is it still a division of Baxter?

Jerry - Would you explain what fractionation is?

Mr. Swanson - Well they basically fractionate plasma into its component parts and I think they still do that down there but when I worked there...

Jerry - So it's a medical laboratory?

Mr. Swanson - Yes. But it was really a medical laboratory when I worked there. We produced--that's how I met my wife. My division, they were there to work in a donor center in downtown Los Angeles at 4th and San Pedro and then I worked my way back up to the main plant to Highland here in Glendale and we produced diagnostic reagents for cross matching blood for transfusions, for grouping and typing blood and cross matching. We produced immunoplates?? for measuring plasma proteins and that sort of thing. A wonderful company. Then it was--Highland Laboratories was purchased by

Baxter Labs out of Meringrove, Illinois and Baxter Labs then became Travenol, on the New York Stock Exchange, Travenol Labs. Then Highland got, the diagnostic division got spun off to another company I guess. I was no longer with them but they got spun off and went in various directions. Anna and I moved in 1968 or 1967, I took a job in New York right out of Highland. I was recruited out of Highland to do basically the same thing with a division of American Hurst which is the American Operating Company of ??? Hurst which is a huge German company centered in Frankfurt. We were there about 3 years, came back to California and moved to Monterey--to Pacific Grove, you know where that is.

Jerry -

It's my favorite place.

Mr. Swanson -

Yeah, its where the big new aquarium is and all that Hewlett Packard money. We bought a home there, our first home we ever owned, at Pacific Grove and absolutely loved it there. But, I was always--I was just never at home. We were gone a total of about 5 years I guess, came back because I had an opportunity to go into business with dad who was in the sporting goods business, and did. My dad died on December 30, 1974 just about a year after we'd gone into business together. I carried that business forward for many years and sold it in 1996.

Jerry -

What was the name of the business?

Mr. Swanson -

It was Brian Swanson Associates. We were located right up in Montrose. I had an office at the corner of Rosemont and Honolulu for many years.

Jerry -

You said it was sporting goods?

Mr. Swanson -

Yes. We were sporting goods agents, sporting goods reps. We were involved in everything from hunting and camping to fire arms, to ammunition, to fitness equipment, air guns. My company still exists, now it's located in Huntington Beach and owned by someone else. We have a variety of clients all across the sporting goods spectrum at the end. But it all began with my father and I basically acting as sales reps here in Southern California.

Jerry -

It kind of sounds like your dad followed through on his employment with Cornwell Kelty.

Mr. Swanson -

When he came back he did. He loved like a father Albert Cornwall. I knew Albert and I knew his son Glen very well. I don't know if Glen's still alive but if he is I'm sure he lives here in Glendale. They had a condominium down at the head of Brand Boulevard and I'm sure he's still there. In fact he tried to sell me his house up in Montecito Park when he was getting ready to move into this

condominium. But Scotty worked there I guess 4 or 5 years after he got out of the service. You know Glen and Albert are in the retail business and it's tough to pay a clerk a lot of money. Scotty and my mother had ambitions and so Scotty left to work for a company called Hoffman Hardware. He was then going to move onto the other side of the business. He was a supplier to people like Cornwell and Kelty. Hoffman Hardware was a big distributor in Pico Rivera, Los Angeles. From Hoffman Hardware after about 7 or 8 years maybe--10 years--he went on his own as an independent rep. It's at that time we came together. He had wanted to do this for a long time and we had talked about it for a long time but I had never--I had always been on the technical end of things. I just felt that I could never talk to people, I could never present myself because I never had to. I had always been able to sit with my lab coat in my laboratory and quietly go about my business. The idea of walking in and putting myself forward was just terrifying to me. Interestingly enough, within 2 or 3 months of starting out I knew this was the very thing I was meant to do all along. I was so happy doing it. I just loved it. Isn't it interesting that you're educated one way and you're employed one way and really it was not my niche and I later found it almost by accident. In any event--

Jerry - It sounds nice that it was through a family tie as well.

Mr. Swanson - Yes. The really sad part about it, of course, is that Scotty really didn't live to enjoy our success, or his own years of slowing down and enjoying life a little bit. But, life is messy. In any event, to get back to Glendale, when I went to high school Glendale was growing up a lot. When I was 5 years old I opened my first bank account at Security National Bank at the corner of Broadway and Brand, a savings account with 5 bucks. I remember the bank being just this fabulous place, marble and brass, they had the little windows??? It was just great. They had the armed guard.

Jerry - That bank, since 1977, has been one of Glendale's historic treasures. It's been a locally designated landmark.

Mr. Swanson - I believe that that bank, then Bank of America, moved across the, kitty-corner, across the street. I think those were the only two-story buildings in town at that time. I think everything else was one story. I may be wrong but that's how I remember it.

Jerry - The Security Pacific Bank building, or Security Bank building was a skyscraper for those years. Six stories and that was a skyscraper.

Mr. Swanson - When I got into high school I began to, I guess, have some problems in town. I got to know the police department pretty well. I guess what I'm trying to say is it was such a different experience then it is today. I did have difficulties. I drank a little, fought a little and, of

course, that was just as frowned on then as it is now. The difference was I played football with a guy named Bob Bartle who was on the Glendale Police. I believe he passed away some time ago, Bob did. His dad, Joe Bartle, was usually on the desk at the police station. So Joe would call my father and say "Scotty, come and get him, he's here again." It was more of a small town environment. People did know other people. You did develop a kind of cache in town that helped you through difficult times. I met a man at Hoover High School by the name of Vic Cameron, one of the most influential people in my life. He and Ed Siminsky were my high school football coaches. Vic Cameron tried to get me out of--to stop self-destructing and found me employment because he knew I needed money. I would--it was against the rules at Hoover to wear your club jacket on campus, so I would forget and I would come in and my locker was right across from his office. I would forget that I had my club jacket and I'd be standing at my locker and he'd go like this--and he would say put it on the chair and pick it up when school's over. Don't get crazy.

Jerry -

Now you said club jacket. Which club was this?

Mr. Swanson -

It was club called the Ulmani??? at Hoover and it was mostly high school football players, basic thugs. A group of people that I liked very much, in fact, a lot of them work for the City. Through the years I would see them riding lawnmowers and stuff around and I used to see them years ago. I used to run into Rodney Knudsen and Tony Solo down here at Glorietta Park playing slow pitch softball but I really don't see as many people from town as I once did. In fact I see them less and less. I don't know whether we're dying--I guess we are dying off or moving away. I'm now 60 and I think a lot of people have left. In any event, high school and junior high school and grammar school in Glendale were a wonderful learning environment and experience.

Jerry -

You know I interrupted when you were talking about the Vic Cameron.

Mr. Swanson -

Yes. He was the first vice-principal of Hoover. He, for what reason I don't know, took an interest in me. Maybe because I was always in trouble. I'm really not sure but I became his reclamation project. Maybe he had many reclamation projects that I just didn't know about, but I took it personally and maybe that was his gift that everybody thought they were his boy. He always watched my athletic events, always was willing and wanted to talk about it. Wanted to know about my grades, wanted to see my report card every time. He would call me out of class and bring your report card. I mean literally, but he took an interest that was so strong in me that I began to thing gee, if this guy really takes an interest in me, maybe I should take an interest in myself. He was just a great

person and he always had a feeling for what was going on with people in school and campus. I think he was very politically incorrect. He was a great big guy and he had a very gruff voice and a very gruff exterior and he used to swat people around. He didn't bear fools gladly but he was a great person to me. But what I wanted to say about the Glendale schools is that when I went through the Glendale school system, you absolutely had to work, you absolutely had to study, nobody skated through the Glendale school system. The teachers were truly great teachers. I mean they were truly great teachers. I can list them for you. I had many wonderful teachers through the years but you had to work at it. If you didn't work your parents were there at school and there were notes going home and there were homework assignments being signed and sent back to school, back and forth. I mean they jumped right in the middle of a problem and tried to resolve it. Probably not successfully all the time but they really tried. I graduated from Hoover High School with the ability to write, read prodigiously, speak relatively well and I was one of the people sitting in the back of the class with his feet up on the desk saying "I'm not interested" all the time. Imagine what the kids who sat in the front of the class got out of it.

Jerry - And you got into one of the top colleges in the country.

Mr. Swanson - Yes, but my point is I then came back, now fast forward to 19?? and I don't mean this as anything other than chance. I came back in 1973 and Matthew, we had little Mat in Verdugo Woodlands--my son. I thought Mat was having some troubles so I went down to Verdugo Woodlands School and I introduced myself and said "You know could I make an appointment to come and sit with you and discuss..." The teacher said "Well I don't know when that would be." I said, "What do you mean"? I said "Could I come early in the morning." She said, "I don't get here til 5 minutes before class starts." I said "Can I come in the afternoon"? She said "I leave 5 minutes after class." We enrolled my son and my daughter at Holy Redeemer School, they went all the way through Holy Redeemer, Matthew then went to St. Francis

Jerry - As a result of ...???

Mr. Swanson - Absolutely. Because it was not my experience, it was the tone of the school, all schools. They had become a union and they would go on television and say we need the help of parents, but God forbid you actually wanted help. I felt that that was a terrible thing that happened to our schools. On the other hand, I watch these things that they do on the public access channel with the brave little kids that are so smart. That the weatherman does, Fritz Coleman, does. I don't know what they call them exactly, but like the old College Bowl programs on TV. These kids are so smart and they're so

bright and I think to myself, God they must be doing something right in the schools. So, maybe our experience was unique, I don't know. But, even at that, Holy Redeemer was available to us here in town and St. Francis and my daughter went to Holy Family. My son graduated from UC Santa Barbara and my daughter graduated from Loyola Marymount and got her Masters at Loyola Marymount, her MBA, and is now living in London working for ???

Jerry - That's wonderful.

Mr. Swanson - So, you know not necessarily public schools, but they--but good citizens came out of the City. I guess I just wish that today's kids had the same opportunities in the education system that we did because I truly think we were prepared for anything out of the Glendale school system. I'm not sure that's true today.

Jerry - You mentioned that your kids went to Catholic school, did the church play a role in your early life?

Mr. Swanson - I did not have any religion. My wife is a Catholic but our kids went to parochial school for one reason and one reason only, discipline. Whatever you feel about the parochial schools, they are absolutely--they will not stand for any nonsense. You have to work at parochial school. There are no short cuts and there are no secrets. The Belmont Learning Center is not going to help those kids learn. They're going to learn if ??? and you have some glue on their fanny and study. Just like you had to do when you were in college and I was in college. But it was for me, because I'm talking about the Glendale I knew, up to 57, 1957 when I graduated from high school, was a fabulous school system. And I believe Glendale High was the same because I knew a lot of the kids at Glendale High School and they have the same kind of educational experience that I did.

Jerry - So it was throughout the district?

Mr. Swanson - I think so. I mean a lot of guys that graduated with me went on the SC, UCLA, we went all over the place but I mean for us, the exception was not to go to a university. Now I think the exception is to go to the university. For us it was really--if you went to Glendale College and didn't go to the university, there was shame in that. I'd be the first to say Glendale College is a first rate community college but it was just the way it was--it reflected on us if we weren't accepted. You know back then they didn't have SATs they had something called the College Boards so you basically got in on your GPA out of high school and your grade on the College Board. They didn't consider the College Board all that critical. They really wanted to know--you had to fill out questionnaires about you as a person and that sort of a thing. In any event, Glendale has, I hear Ginger Bremberg and Sheldon and all of them talking all the time

about what a fabulous place Glendale is and I mean I am a voice nobody has ever heard from about the City of Glendale. I'm here to tell you it's a fabulous place to live and to grow up. It always has been and I think it still is. I hope that Glendale can try--I know that it's changing--but I hope that it can try and remain as much--retain as much of its character for the future and at the same time address the problems that I know confront it. I teach at the public library at the Adult Reading Program and I'm just shocked at what happened to that library. I realize that the homeless have to have a place to live and everybody has to have a place but I parked my car yesterday afternoon in the library parking lot and there were 20 guys sitting on the lawn in the sun right where I parked my car drinking wine. That's inexcusable and they had made a pigsty out of the front of that library. I know it's a terribly politically incorrect subject but somehow Glendale has to find a way to become welcoming and gentle with people like that but at the same time not ruin the City for the people who built the City and I don't just mean old people, I mean all people. Young people are paying taxes here just like us that have been around a while.

Jerry -

You know a lot of those decisions are probably political. During your school years were you aware of City politics and City Council?

Mr. Swanson -

No. Listen, I wasn't aware of City politics and I'm not very much aware of City politics to this day. I spent my whole life trying to succeed and that's a very unforgiving thing to do. I mean I've really worked hard at that and I just haven't had time for all of...I mean I missed a lot of little league games too and things that I should have attended when my son was involved and my daughter was involved. So no I had not been but certainly when I was growing up I wasn't aware of City politics up until you got to a certain level. I mean I knew about the politics and I knew when Ed Siminsky?? got fired at Hoover as the football coach it was politics. I knew it was because he didn't like to be told what to do and they wanted him to do certain things and he refused and they fired him. I knew that kind of politics--I understood that at that time but City politics, no, I didn't understand them. I mean they built a freeway through Glendale. You know Glendale is in a funny--I mean its problems seem almost everywhere that's relatively old in Southern California, relatively old. They're trying to find their way through this growing process. You can't close down the borders and say no more people can come to Glendale. You can't, I mean Sheldon to his credit and Ginger Bremberg and all these people and many before them, have tried to kind of guide Glendale into becoming a corporate center, financial center, and frankly I drive down North Brand and I'm very proud of how beautiful it is. But I think the freeway, in a way, destroyed the City. It separated the City between OK and poor, between homeowner and tenant. I think that their task is to redress that balance of homeowner versus renter, have versus have nots

and become again more of a homogenous City. We'll never be homogenous in the sense of being white and Baptist but we could be homogenous again in the sense of everybody having a feeling of belonging and everybody's got a stake. I listened to Guz Gomez and I think he's just the sharpest guy that's come around in a long time on the City Council. Where he talks about having districts and should we go from the open sort of, I can't remember what they call it here, but essentially it's the candidates for City Council can come from anywhere.

Jerry - Right, general election.

Mr. Swanson - The fact of the matter is that the people probably in North Glendale, this part of Glendale and the Hoover district, would vote much more prolifically than the people in the southern part of Glendale and so the representation on the City Council is somewhat skewed. I can understand how those people that live south of the freeway may feel disenfranchised to a degree. Those are the kind of things that I think in its struggle Glendale has to address to become more of a-- I loath this program of the fellow I'm teaching to read, his name is William Galdamez, where he was from El Savador. He went to--they had a thing about this homeownership program where Glendale either puts up the down payment and guarantees the loan, I don't know exactly how it works, but I'm going to find out.

Jerry - First time homeowner program?

Mr. Swanson - Yes. He went and he went to a meeting at Glendale College apparently and he sat down with somebody from somewhere and they said to him how much--he's worked at the Red Lion for seven years--somebody said to him "How much money do you make." I guess they said "Do you make \$25,000 a year." and he said "No." They said "Then you don't qualify." Well, I'm going to see if I can find out what the program is for William because I think that he probably didn't say anything. He probably got up and left because he's afraid to reveal to people that he doesn't read and write or really speak very well. So, I'm going to try and find out what that program's all about and see if maybe I can help him because I mean, God almighty, how many people work for the same place for seven years anywhere any more. He certainly is stable and if he could get involved. That's where people feel they have a stake in the City when they own something here, when their stakeholders. You know that's the new buzz word around City government "stakeholder." You're a stakeholder if you own property. You're not a stakeholder if you live in somebody else's place. My wife is saying "calm down." I get turned on with this stuff.

Anna and I have rented--our first home was up at the top of Briggs Avenue--we rented a little house,when we first married. A house behind a house up at the top of Briggs on Rockdale. Then we rented a place on Bel Aire Drive, then we moved to New York. When we came back we bought a house, we sold our house on Pacific Grove and used the proceeds to buy a house at 1636 Camulos down in the Verdugo Woodlands. We lived there seven years or something like that and then we moved here in February of 1980 and will be here. I will go out horizontally from a 911 call. This is where we're going to be.

Jerry - I hope that's a long, long way off.

Mr. Swanson - So do I. I remember when Canada Blvd. was the way you got to Montrose. When I was a little boy there was a woman who lived, now maybe I'm hallucinating but I don't think so, there was a woman that lived in the burned out shell of a oak tree on Canada Blvd. and she used to hang her clothes out to--and she'd stand on Canada Blvd. and wave to people as they drove by. We used to beg my mother "Take us to see the woman who lives in the tree, take us to see the woman who lives in the tree." She was like a, and I don't know whether the City finally laid her off or--

Jerry - Was this in the 40's?

Mr. Swanson - This would have been in the early 40's, like maybe during the war or maybe just before the war. I don't know. But when I was just a youngster, I can remember we had an old Plymouth, an old 44 or 45 Plymouth. I used to love to drive up Canada Blvd. because it was like driving in the country. There was nothing around. It was like there was Glendale and there was Montrose and between was just beautiful open space. I mean the Woodlands itself was a kind of a natural valley and there's a underground ??? for the ??? the Woodlands. When we lived on Camulos there was a little home on the corner near the park where they had a stream running through it and they had ducks and geese on the property. I think they've dammed that up. I don't think that that exists any more but there's a--it's a naturally green belt in that canyon down there, that's why they call it the "Woodlands." It was like driving through the country because there were very few homes up this way. It was just a great treat for us to go out and drive up Canada Blvd. back then.

Jerry - Do you remember the Verdugo Adobe? What's now called the Verdugo Adobe.

Mr. Swanson - I do remember it sure but only because we lived near it. Camulos is right--you ride up on Camulos and that's the entrance. I don't remember, I remember Brand Park very well, because we lived on Ben Lomond Drive I was just a hoot and a holler. I've got drunk in

Brand Park, I've played baseball in Brand Park, I've taken painting classes in Brand Park now, I took a figure drawing class with a ?? a year ago in Brand Park and I remember Brand Castle. We used to hike up behind the Brand Castle when I was a kid. There used to be a big shrine up there behind the castle. I don't know if it's still there.

Jerry - The cemetery?

Mr. Swanson - Yeah.

Jerry - Yeah. It's still there.

Mr. Swanson - We used to hike way up in those hills behind Brand Castle and we fought fires up there. There was a huge fire right up above Mountain and we were in about high school I guess, sophomore or junior in high school. We were constricted right off the street to help sandbag and take shovels and dig firebreaks and ?? actually burning right up above a of friend of mine's home.

Glendale was and it still is--still maintains that charm but Glendale was very, very rural. When we lived on Dryden we had, as I said earlier, we had chickens and rabbits. We grew tomatoes. Everybody had animals. They didn't have animals because they liked pets. They had animals because they were a food source. During the war, you know, everything was rationed. The meat was rationed, butter was rationed, sugar was rationed, tires, gasoline I mean it was--you were sort of restricted a little bit. I didn't notice it because I wasn't going anywhere anyway. I was just a youngster you know but I can remember our car, I mean the tires would literally get flat on the old Plymouth because it would be driven so seldom. My mother walked to work and walked home. It was definitely a different atmosphere.

Jerry - While it was more rural, was it also more wild? Did you see a lot of animals that would come out of the hills?

Mr. Swanson - No, not really. We have a lot of animals here but even then, the part of Glendale that I lived in down by Glenoaks on Dryden, you had Palm Drive above us and right above that was Keppel and there were a lot of buildings south of Glenoaks. It was quite built up so we really didn't have a lot of wildlife where we lived. We began to see more wildlife when we moved up onto Camulos. The coyotes actually come down quite a bit into the Woodlands also and we began to see a lot of coyotes and that sort of thing down there. But, we didn't have much exposure to that sort of thing when we lived on Dryden or Ben Lomond. Ben Lomond, again, that was--the time we went to Ben Lomond was in the early 50's and it was very much built up. Glendale was very developed by then. I used to tell Mom

I remember taking a girl to the movies on a bus. You catch the bus on Kenneth Road and ride down to the movies.

Jerry - Down Brand Boulevard?

Mr. Swanson - Sure, absolutely and back then you could see--every movie was two movies. There was always an A and a B movie, so you would go to see a movie but then they would have two or three cartoons in the middle. I mean you could have a really great date, eat popcorn, drink coke and whatever and come home for 60 or 70 cents. You know we could ride the bus for a nickel and it was just--. Again, I tell my kids that I used to take girls to the movie on a bus and my son just can't imagine the humiliation of taking a girl to the movies on the bus but everyone did it. There was whole group of us on the bus taking girls to the movies. It wasn't like it was not done.

Jerry - Brian, if I could ask you to hold you're thought, I'm going to change the tape.

TAPE 2

Jerry - Brian, you talked about going to the movies on dates in high school and you said that you took the bus. Which were some of the theaters that you went to?

Mr. Swanson - You know I don't even remember all of them. Of course the Alex was there and that was the big time. I mean if you really had a lot of money, if you have more than a buck, you could go to the Alex. But there was the Roxy and there was the Capitol, I think. Later on I got my first car when I was 15 -1/2 when I could get a learners permit, and then we began going to the Pickwick and the Sandval. There was one up off of Foothill in Tujunga, a drive-in and of course, by the time I got to be about I don't know, maybe 14 or 15, then I also became too important to take the bus on a date. This was when I was 11, 12, 13 I used to do that a lot. Downtown Glendale, interestingly enough, you know when I get below the financial district, you know North Brand, I know it's different but I don't see it all the much different. I mean I think there are still some stores and shops that were there when I was a kid and haven't changed much. Cornwell, you know, made it almost through the Galleria era and finally they just couldn't hold out any more because the business on Brand Blvd. was just gone because the Galleria was such a huge hit. But I think Brand Blvd. now is coming back because people are kind of--that shopping mall fever is gone a little bit. There was no such thing as multiple theaters, you know, multiplexes that we have now.

Jerry - I guess the double feature was sort of the multi-plex of that era.

Mr. Swanson - Absolutely, and also actors were contract players back then so they made five, six, seven, eight movies a year. It took them three weeks to shoot a movie and they went on to the next one. Now a guy makes a movie--Schwarzenegger makes a movie every couple of years then all the money is spent on advertising, promotion and hype and they show it one of these multi-plexes and it makes \$100 million dollars the first week and then you never see it again. It's just a different deal. Downtown Glendale, I mean these theaters are gone now, but I still remember it very much as it is now, the theater part of Glendale. The Alex was the Alex and it still is. I mean I used to just think the Alex was the greatest place that there was. I mean it was just a thrill to go to the Alex--just to be inside that theater because it was so ornate. It was just like being able to go to Grauman's or something. It was wonderful.

Jerry - And the way it's been restored it probably similar to that now.

Mr. Swanson - Yes, absolutely gorgeous. I remember being so proud to take a date there. It sounds ridiculous but it's true. I can remember feeling so good about having enough money to take a girl to the Alex. It was great. The Alex was always a little bit more money than everything else. They were very smart. They made themselves upscale, they knew they were and they charged more. I can remember very much of being able to go on Saturday as a kid, as a young kid, to the Roxy and see for a dime you could sit and watch westerns all day long. They just ran Hoot Gibson, Ken Maynard, Hopalong Cassidy, all just ran them one right after another all day long and they separated them all with a cartoon and you could sit there all day. For my parents, man that was great. Get him out of the house all day on Saturday--"Here's a dime." In any event, that was--it was very much the same except that to the extent that Glendale like any other City is a little dangerous. None of that existed and I don't know if it exists today. I don't feel it and I'm kind of reflecting what I hear. I mean I go to downtown Glendale all the time and I feel very secure, I never feel any of that. But I do talk to people who say that they're hassled by one person or another down there and it probably existed back in 40's too. I see it not much different than I did then. Now this area of town has changed enormously. I mean all of Montrose. Although what they did in Montrose was so brilliant when they put that grand prix course through the center of Montrose, brilliant because people have to go slow. So Montrose has remained a little walking district which is really nice. We eat dinner at La Puccini, Divina Cuccini, ?? the Star Cafe, the Black Cow and up and down Honolulu all the time because we just enjoy the ambience

Jerry - It probably benefits all the businesses within that few blocks.

Mr. Swanson - I absolutely know it does. In any event, that was my experience as a young person.

Jerry - Taking the bus, you probably also saw the railroad going down, the passenger railroad, the Red Car Line, going down Brand.

Mr. Swanson - Oh sure, many times, absolutely. Also, I guess I should have mentioned it but forgot to, I remember very well the Grand Central Airport. When I was a boy we used to love to have my dad take us to, I guess it would have been Sonora. Sonora was-- because they were all crop planes and we would go and we would park on Sonora and get out of the car and lean up against the fence and when the planes came down the runway they would turn to take off in the other direction and when they did that we would get the prop wash. It would just blow your hair back. It was just fabulous and we would just sit there and oh boy, here comes another one and then they'd send another one out and we'd sit there. When they revved those engines to take off down that runway, man it just blew everything. It was this fabulous place that I loved to go to. An old beautiful terminal. I guess it's gone, I don't know.

Jerry - No, it's still there. As a matter of fact, it's actually been a subject of some discussion in the newspaper. Disney owns it now and they're planning on making a campus-like area throughout that whole area.

Mr. Swanson - I saw that presentation on cable access.

Jerry - Right, and they're planning on using the Grand Central Terminal building as the gateway. In fact you know I mentioned that the bank building is one of the officially designated resources in Glendale, historic resources, and so is the Grand Central Terminal.

Mr. Swanson - One of the jobs that I told you Vic Cameron got for me was a company called Bedermans Precision Instruments. It was right across the street from the terminal. What Mr. Bederman did was he reconditioned and sold also new speedometers, all of the instrumentation that was used in the cockpit of an airplane. My job was that I went through--there were about three or four buildings right in a row there and probably eight or ten labs all toll--I went through with a wet mop and wet sponges and wiped everything down in every lab every day and you would get to the end and just start right back again. On Saturdays, two other guys and I would come in and we would strip and wax every floor in the place because he had to have a dust free environment. There was no line and flow back then??? So the only way they had to control dust was to use wet mops and just always be going through those labs. So these guys would be sitting at their benches working on these instruments and I would be going all around them. Mr. Bederman would come in and say "Now Brian, don't you worry

about that. You're not disturbing them. You get in there and do what you have to do." Because I always thought, geese, you know I don't want to get close to them. They're doing this precision work and I don't want to disturb them. They would say no "You've got to keep this--you have to keep this dust free."

Jerry - I guess that's where the term "clean room" came from.

Mr. Swanson - Exactly. But they didn't have clean rooms as we think of them. When Anna and I were at Highland Laboratories we had ??? flow rooms that were literally dust free--clean rooms. Then it was a little more rudimentary but we were getting to the same thing. So anyway, that was one of the jobs that Vic Cameron got for me. So that's also an identification I had with Grand Central.

Jerry - You know just a little bit down the road from Grand Central Terminal is the railroad depot. Did you ever ride the train to or from Glendale?

Mr. Swanson - Well I did once. A friend of mine and I-- a fraternity brother and I took a freight from Berkley. We hopped the freight in the open railroad yard. I guess I should have left this story out, I suppose.

Jerry - No, this is great!

Mr. Swanson - We rode down in a gondola car. We rode down into the Glendale railroad yard. Fabulous trip. We had cans of scotch broth, Campbell soup that we, and a little can opener, and we ate raw scotch broth on this trip. It took us--we boarded about I guess 8:00 at night or 9:00 at night and we waited until maybe 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning before it took off. We didn't know. All we knew was that we had information from a friend that this one was going near Los Angeles. Talk about dumb! We weren't alone. There were probably, I don't know, 10 or 12 guys in this gondola car. Everybody's kind of looking at everybody else thinking are these guys all kosher. They looked at us and here we are with our gaberdine pants on, with penny loafer shoes from college. Anyway, it was a great trip. It's the only time I can remember riding the train into or out of Glendale station. I didn't do much of that.

Jerry - You know we've been talking for quite a while. There's something that I usually do to bring the interviews to a close. You have imparted, I think, some phenomenal stories that are going to be very useful for people in the future, and I think especially kids because of all your knowledge of the Glendale school system and how you think its changed over the years.

One of the questions I ask almost everybody that I interview--I don't mean to put you on the spot-- but if you could describe

Glendale in one word or phrase what would that be and feel free to elaborate.

Mr. Swanson - My home.

Jerry - Your home. I think that tells it all. I really think that tells it all. What I'd like to do, Brian, is bring this to a close. I'd like to thank you very much on behalf of myself and the City. What I usually like to do is try to leave this open. If you'd like to get together again, I'd be happy to come back to talk again.

Mr. Swanson - Any time. I'm available.