

Museum of History and Industry
Historical Society of Seattle and King County

Transcript

Robert McAusland - taped interview

December 17, 1984

corrected and edited transcript, approved January 29, 1985

Side A

This is an interview with Robert McAusland, on the 17th of December, 1984. The interviewer is Lorraine McConaghy for the Museum of History and Industry.

Q. I think one of the easiest places to start, is to start with Pearl Harbor. What were you doing, what do you remember? How old were you?

McAusland Well, let's see - I would have been twelve in 1941, and I think I was in the seventh grade. I think that sounds right.

I was trying to remember exactly what happened at Pearl Harbor, and I can't. All I can remember is what happened afterwards. There was all this big threat of invasion. It was going to happen immediately, and everybody was all worried about that. And all kinds of panic...

Of course, I was just a high school student, and I was at a boarding school, and so I was sort of out of contact with reality.

Q. A boarding school here in Seattle?

McAusland Yes, my father traveled for a company a lot and my mother often went with him, and I went to the Lakeside School out here which is a private school. It was the only place where I could be boarded and left. I sort of came along a little late - my brother is fifteen years older than I am. It was one of those occurrences! So my parents were busy with other things a lot of the time.

Q. That panic that you mention after Pearl Harbor, where people were afraid of invasion, was that something that you perceived from your parents, or were you reading the papers at that young age? How did you absorb that?

McAusland It probably came through official announcements from the school and so on, and mostly rumors, undoubtedly.

But there was a lot of - The Civil Defense department was issuing proclamations and they were trying to get people to turn lights out. Nothing was organized, of course, so it wasn't very effective.

And they finally did organize a Civil Defense Corps, and they did have people turning lights out, and they had exercises. I forget how long that went during World War II - I'm not really certain. But there was some of it, I know, at least practices.

Q. Do you remember blackouts?

McAusland No, I don't. I'm not certain that happened, actually. In Seattle, I don't think so.

Q. Were there any changes in the civil defense at you school? Did you guys have air raid drills, and so forth?

McAusland Oh, I think we did. There was a lot of that kind of thing. Of course at that age, it's awfully hard to know what's really going on. You're sort of dependent on the adults around you to give you the official word.

I just remember it as a period when everybody was uncertain - it was mostly ignorance, I'm sure, because any competent military authority could have told you the Japanese had no way of invading the whole West Coast, as they were talking about.

And I remember shortly after the war [started], there were lots of submarine sightings off the coast, and that raised everybody's concern. And they actually did some shelling - I think they hit one of the Coast Guard stations somewhere on the Washington coast. A submarine came up and fired a couple of shells and hit it. I don't know how much damage there was. I think that did happen.

I know it did down in California.

Q. As a boy, did you have any militaristic hobbies?

McAusland Oh, well, tin soldiers, and we used to make guns out of sticks and run around shooting at each other.

Q. But did you collect models? Were you excited by the airplanes and...?

McAusland I remember the airplanes. Oh yes, they were very exciting. I was always interested in airplanes.

I remember there was a lot of talk about the P-38 which was the hottest fighter plane of World War II, in my mind, anyway. And I remember seeing vapor trails up in the sky over the city, which I'd never seen before. Fighter planes flying around up there.

Of course, there were an awful lot of Boeing airplanes flying around the area, too. They were just everywhere. Boeing was producing airplanes at just a huge rate - at least, later in the war they did.

At the very beginning, I think they were doing some. I remember just in that period, Boeing started to fly the Flying Clippers from Sand Point, and they flew from there out to Hawaii. These are the big Boeing four engine flying boats - they were the biggest thing flying at the time. My dad used to take me out there and we'd watch them.

And I remember Sand Point was building up at the time. There were a lot of Navy airplanes flying around. We lived near the lake, so the Navy was always in evidence up there. I can remember a couple of accidents where airplanes crashed out in the lake. I remember a mid-air collision and seeing a trail of smoke going down from one of the airplanes that crashed somewhere out there, and I remember seeing some parachutes coming down. One of them crashed just off the Madison Park bathing beach where I used to swim all the time.

Q. Were these experimental planes?

McAusland No, I think it was just normal military activity. They had lots of accidents - they were very accidentprone in the Navy. During training, any military people [are]...

Q. Did you see the B-29 as an exciting aircraft?

McAusland Oh, yeah! There were rumors around about the B-29. See, the B-17 was produced by the tens of thousands here in Seattle. They were cranking them out ten or twenty a day.

Q. The "Flying Fortresses"?

McAusland Yes. And the whole Boeing field was under a camouflage cover, and I remember my dad taking me to the top of Beacon Hill in the car, and pointing out that this big city down there wasn't a city at all. It was the Boeing Airplane Company. The camouflage was a fake city built on top of the factory.

Q. Could you describe that, how you remember it?

McAusland I just remember a vague impression of looking out, and my dad telling me that wasn't a real city out there, but it looked just like one. And I was trying to picture in my mind how they could do that - how there could be buildings underneath that city. I was picturing dirt and concrete roads and all that, but it was just a big net held up by poles that covered the whole Boeing factory. It extended out quite a distance over the tag ends of the rest of the streets in Seattle.

It looked fairly realistic. But the airfield - of course, they couldn't camouflage that and anybody would know where the plant was in relation to the airfield. So if you wanted to bomb it, you could do it quite easily.

Q. Someone had told me that they extended the city streets onto the tarmac so it appeared as though it was still a grid of streets from the air...

McAusland Yes, sure, that could have been done. I think it would have been hard to fool an aerial photography expert, though. He could look at the pictures and tell what was real and what wasn't. You can always tell the difference.

Q. You said there were rumors about the B-29...

McAusland Yes, there were. About this new super airplane coming out. And that must have been quite a bit later in high school, because that thing didn't fly until probably '42, or somewhere in there. And then one of them crashed. I remember one crashed over - where was that? - it crashed into the Frye Packing Plant. That was it. The first prototype took off, and the Frye Packing Plant was just north of the airfield, and it

caught fire on takeoff. That was a constant problem with the B-29's - they were always catching on fire. It crashed into the plant, and lots of people were killed in the factory, and the airplane was destroyed. A lot of Boeing's top staff - aerodynamics and production people - were up in that airplane, too. They lost a lot of talent when that airplane went down. It destroyed that meatpacking plant, which is no longer there, I don't think. The building might be there, but it was destroyed.

There were lots of airplane accidents, all over the place. There were military training areas all around here - up at Arlington and at Bayview (there was a big one up there) and Sand Point and Boeing Field. Just everywhere.

Q. Did you get any kind of fascination with uniforms? Did you hope that it might last long enough for you to get into one?

McAusland Well, I had an older brother who was a fighter pilot in the Navy, and, of course, I was intrigued by what he was doing. And I always felt I was being cheated out of getting in on all this fun - that was my impression of it.

The real horrors of war didn't come through at all to my mind. We all looked at it as a grand adventure, and wished we could go. In fact, one of the guys from our class did quit, I think in 1945. He quit school and went in the Marine Corps, and then came back the same year. I don't know whether he'd been kicked out or what - he was sort of a cut-up, I remember. I remember the guy, vaguely.

Q. But there was only one guy who'd done that?

McAusland Yeah, out of our class. See, I graduated in the class of '45, and there was only one guy from that class who went into the service [during school]. I went right in after I got out. But he quit school - he wasn't doing very well, I think.

Q. Did the girls have any fascination with uniforms?

McAusland Not the high school types, no.

I think most of the uniforms around Seattle were looked on as - well, they were mostly Navy, and I guess there was a lot of Army, too, from Fort Lewis. But they were all trouble. They were drunk and they were disorderly.

There were a lot of race riots, too, in Seattle during World War II. I can remember riding on buses and having them stopped at Twenty-third and Madison by big gangs of people, mostly black. They were electric trolleys, and we had just gotten them. They would pull the wires off the back and the trolley couldn't go ahead, and there you were. And that happened lots of times.

Q. Did you know, could you tell - were they blacks who were newlyarrived in Seattle?

McAusland I have no idea - they were all military.

Q. Oh, they were in uniform!

McAusland Oh, yes. Most of them were in uniform.

Q. Oh, my goodness.

McAusland That's when the great cultural revolution really started, World War II. And you can't blame them - the way they were treated.

In the Navy, all the blacks were only cooks. That's all they would allow them to do. And mess boys, and waiters, and stuff like that. That's all they'd allow them to do.

Q. Was that your perception at the time? I mean, did you know all that then?

McAusland Yes, I think so. I'm not certain. But I knew it later when I went into the service in '45, and it was certainly that way then.

Q. How did it seem to you that Madison Park changed? Did it change because of the war? Was there any quickening of the pulse there?

McAusland Not really - it's pretty isolated. There was very little impact that I was aware of.

Q. How about Seattle, and the waterfront? Did you go down there much?

McAusland Well, I was told to stay away, but of course we all went. First Avenue was the place where all the military wound up - down there. And it was really jumpin'. The taverns were going fullbore and all of the peep shows, and the burlesque theatres up and down First Avenue, and all kinds of stuff going on down there. A lot of stuff I didn't know about. But we'd go down in gangs - a bunch of us would go together, and walk up and down and sort of soak up some of the atmosphere, I guess.

Q. Something I had run across in the paper, in the fall of 1943, is a statistic that arrests for juvenile delinquency had increased 40% over the first three years, two and a half years, of the war, and that a mayor's commission had been appointed in Seattle to look into the matter. And they had come up with some pretty logical reasons for that - that there were a lot of families that had been recently brought here and dumped, that a lot of moms were working for the very first time and the kids were alone, a lot of fathers were absent in the service or working weird shifts. And the consequence of all that was that a curfew was put into place. It was a late curfew, a 10:30 curfew...

McAusland Now that you mention it, I do remember it, but ...

Q. You were such a good kid that you didn't notice the curfew!

McAusland Well, I don't know. I do remember a curfew of some sort, but I don't remember the details of it.

Q. Did you notice any change in kids your own age, that they had become rowdier? That they dressed differently? Listened to different music?

McAusland No... Well, there was ... I guess jazz became very popular in that period. At least, that was my first introduction to it. And there were a lot of traveling bands, I think, or maybe they were just locals.

But the way the really hip group dressed was in these zoot suits. One of the guys that I went to school with - his brother had one, and he wore it to school one day. It was a ridiculous looking thing with great big long coat and big puffed out pants and a long key chain and a crazy looking hat. I don't know what you'd call it now but in those days, it was called a zoot suit.

I remember going to a - Frank Sinatra appeared in Seattle, and that's where I first saw all these guys in zoot suits. All the in group.

Q. It wasn't an ethnic thing?

McAusland No, no, I don't think so. Uh-uh.

No, it was sort of the hip group - they wore these crazy outfits. And I think a lot of servicemen. They didn't have to wear their uniforms all the time. When they were off duty, I think they were free to change, and I think a lot of them did. And they got into these crazy outfits.

It was the first time an awful lot of people had been away from home. These young men in their twenties and teens were suddenly free, and they had money to spend, and they were in a strange town, and they just raised all kinds of hell.

Q. Were there any Japanese-American kids in school with you?

McAusland No, I don't think... I think from what I heard about the Japanese, I would have been veru surprised to see any of them around. I don't remember any at all.

Q. I'm not sure I follow you. "From what you had heard about them...?"

McAusland The stories were the Japanese were all very cruel and vicious people. That was pretty much drummed into...

Q. Even before the war?

McAusland No, no! Not before the war.

Q. Oh, okay. I was wondering if there had been any Japanese-American kids in school with you who were then interned?

McAusland In grade school, there probably were some, because the grade school we went to, the McGilvra School, did have Japanese living in that area in Madison Park. But I knew that later. I don't think that I was aware that they were any different from anybody else at the time. I may have known

some...

But later on, in high school, there were none. And I think everybody assumed that all the Japanese were in these camps down in Tule Lake and so on.

Q. This is a hard question - but did you as a child have any opinion or impressions of internment?

McAusland No. I heard about it, and sort of accepted it, and never thought about it again. I don't know what the adults thought of it. A lot of them, I read later, were very upset by it. But at the time, it didn't make any impression on me, no.

Q. After the war, when you went to college, did the Japanese-American kids comes back into the educational system?

McAusland Yes, sure. There were a lot of Japanese-American kids in school. In fact, Norio [Harui] was at the University when I was there.

Q. Did you know each other?

McAusland No. But there were a lot of Japanese-Americans there.

Q. What was the atmosphere? Could you detect an atmosphere? Were they hostile or afraid or ...?

McAusland Well, I imagine they were on edge because they were still called "Japs," and they were still bad guys. And I imagine that it took a lot of guts for a Japanese-American to go to school in those days in a college because there were an awful lot of servicemen in college, too. I was one of them, back from service on the G.I. bill. And I think it would have been very - I don't recall anything specifically. But they were around, I know.

Q. I'm not sure how separately to think of Madison Park from Capitol Hill at that time. Did you perceive Capitol Hill to be very close or rather far away?

McAusland Rather far away. Because between Madison Park and Capitol Hill was the area where all the blacks lived, and that was an area where, as a child, I was told to stay out of. And there was a great deal of prejudice against blacks in those days. I was told to stay away, and I guess I did.

Q. Now were those "old blacks" or "new blacks?"

McAusland Oh, they were the ones who had lived there forever and ever. They settled in that area.

Q. So what was the population of Capitol Hill? Who lived on Capitol Hill?

McAusland The Catholics. The Catholics owned Capitol Hill. I knew some people up there - in fact, I had a girlfriend up there. But, in my impression, they were all Catholics.

The church is right up on top of the hill there.

Q. So's the Episcopalian Church, though...

McAusland Well, it's further on.

Q. Where was the Japanese-American community in Seattle before the war? Do you know?

McAusland No, I don't really. I imagine it would have been in the International District down there. There would have been a lot of them there. And after the war, I know a lot of them lived on Beacon Hill, so there may have been some there [previously], too. But I'm not sure. As a high school kid, I wouldn't have had much to do with them, really.

Q. Did your school participate in intermural sports? Were you involved yourself?

McAusland Very briefly.

Q. I was wondering if you had any sense of how the school system throughout Seattle changed with the influx of new people into the city?

McAusland Well, it was a lot more crowded. They brought in lots of what they call "portables" - the wooden buildings they stick out in the playground and they filled up all the schoolyards in Seattle. The grade school I went to had half a dozen of them anyway, and all the other schools did, too. There was a big influx of people - of students.

Q. I wonder if there was any kind of "teacher-crunch?"

McAusland Yes, I do remember that because the school I went to - it's a private school, and it had sort of the traditions of the English public school, and all the teachers were men. We wound up with a couple of women teachers, which really surprised everybody. I remember we gave them a pretty bad time, too. (laughing) But I think in the public schools, there were an awful lot of women teachers - there always have been. But not in that school. It was sort of traditional - they were trying to emulate the British school system.

Q. It sounds very outside the mainstream.

McAusland Oh, absolutely. It was a very cloistered sort of environment. Oh, yes, definitely, that's true. Private schools are always that way, I think.

Q. Did any of the kids that you went to school with try to take jobs in defense plants to make extra money, or was that not a priority?

McAusland No, I didn't know anybody who did that. We had paper routes and things like that.

Q. Did the war change the curriculum in any way that you could

see?

McAusland I wasn't aware of it, if it did. No, I don't think so. I don't think there was any change in that.

Q. No junior ROTC kinds of programs, or map-reading, or...?

McAusland No, nothing of that kind.

It was sort of a traditional school - the one I went to. And I don't think it changed elsewhere either. I'm quite sure it didn't. I don't think it would have.

Q. Were you in any way aware of rationing?

McAusland Oh, yes! Very definitely.

Q. In what ways?

McAusland Well, mainly gasoline. (chuckling)

I had a friend with a car and - now this would have been in high school - and we liked to ski. And the only ski area worth going to was Stevens Pass, at that time, which was 90 miles away. If you were just an ordinary person working on a job somewhere, you got three gallons of gas a week - I think that's the number - if you had an "A" card, it was called.

If you were somebody important, you got five gallons, and if you were a doctor, you got eight or ten. It went up from there.

But getting enough gas to go up to Stevens Pass and back was a real chore. You needed about three or four gas-rationing stickers, so we were always going buying, and selling, and trading in gas stickers. I mean, ration coupons. You had to give one with every gallon of gas.

\$.28 and a little tiny sticker, and you got a gallon of gas.

It was always good to cultivate the doctors' kids, and get them to come along with us because they could always bring lots of stamps. I remember the one doctor's boy that we knew, he didn't like to ski, and he would just give us the stamps. And then he decided that he wasn't going to do that any more because he was using up all the stamps he could get from his father. We finally convinced him to go skiing once more, and that time, he decided to ski rather than just sit in the lodge and, I remember, on one of his first trips up the rope-tow on Stevens Pass, he got tangled up and fell and jammed a ski pole through his hand. Right through his hand, and we couldn't get it out.

And we rode all the way back to Seattle, in the car, with him holding this ski pole in his hand and bouncing along. It was very painful, and he was yelling his head off.

Q. He was a doctor's son.

McAusland It used to take about three hours to get from Seattle to Stevens Pass because you went through all kinds of little back roads, and there was always snow on the road. The chains were always breaking - we had to keep changing them. Finally, we got back and took him home, and there was nobody

home. So we took him to the hospital and they admitted him and finally got the ski pole out of his hand. But he never skied again. (laughing)

Q. Were you aware of other rationing?

McAusland Yes, it seems to me that meat and butter and, I think, sugar were the three items that I can remember that were rationed.

Q. Did this affect you personally? Did your diet change perceptibly?

McAusland I doubt it. I don't think so. I don't think it had any real affect. I remember in school they had a lunchroom, and they came up with some rather strange things that they fed us, but it was a way for them to save money and put it off to the war effort.

Q. Do you remember any of those strange things?

McAusland Well, unidentifiable soups, and pieces of meat covered with gravy and stuff, so you couldn't tell what it was. And, of course, everybody said it was horsemeat. I don't know what it was!

But I was very definitely aware of rationing, and of shortages. And I think shoes - that's another thing I remember. I think you were allowed a pair of shoes a year, or some such thing. I remember you had to "be nice to your shoes" - I recall that.

Q. Did you take part in any recycling drives?

McAusland Yes, there was an effort to collect scrap metals, and I do remember something about that - a group of us went around, ringing doorbells and asking people to go into their basements and get all the scrap metal they could find and put it out on the street. And then it would be picked up. I think they actually did that in Seattle. Trucks came around and picked it up.

And I sort of vaguely remember my mother complaining that she was not able to get the vegetables and the fruits that she was used to getting, because of the war. Everything was put off to the war effort.

But it wasn't any hardship at all. I certainly never went hungry, or anything.

Q. At the very beginning of the tape, you were saying that it seems foolish to have feared that the Japanese would attack the entire length of the West Coast, although they did do some small attempts at it. You were very young then - were you confident about the outcome of the war?

McAusland Oh, no. We were - a bunch of teenaged kids would get together and tell you we were going to be invaded! And, of course, all the stories were, "They're already in Tacoma, and they're coming fast!" There were all kinds of wild stories like that, and I can remember being very worried about it.

You'd see all these airplanes flying around, and there was lots of evidence of the military everywhere.

The only place where you could really see what was going on was in the theatre, where they had these newsreels going on with every feature movie. I can remember, in the newsreels, they were showing the mobilization, and what was going on in the training, and all the flying, and you saw lots of picture of the results of air raids and so on - buildings falling down and so on. Cities burning - London was burning. You saw a lot of that, and you could sort of picture what might happen...

Of course, by the time all that was going on, there was no real emergency on the West Coast - nobody was concerned.

The East Coast had a lot more than we did, because of all the submarines out there sinking ships. But that didn't really happen out here, I don't think. I don't know if there were any ships sunk off the West Coast.

Q. I know of a couple ships bound for Alaska - they were Merchant Marine cargo ships - that were sunk.

Side B

McAusland ...about keeping secrets, too. I remember there were signs everywhere about loose talk. That was mostly aimed at the military, I think. Telling people not to tell what they were doing in the military and so on.

Q. Do you remember any other rumors that flew?

McAusland No, not right off.

Except that there was a lot - as a high school student, I had the impression that the Japanese were just absolutely beastly. They were raping and pillaging and murdering and torturing everybody they came in contact with. I got most of that through the newsreels, and the stories about China. There were more movies about what happened in China before the war that were shown here that showed how the Japanese operated.

And then some of the same sort of stories started to come out about the Germans, and it was the same kind of stuff they'd used in World War I, about how they bayoneted nuns, and this kind of thing. Of course, you believed all that, because they were bad guys.

Q. You did believe it - you had no rebellion against this sort of propaganda?

McAusland No, I wasn't that perceptive, I'm sure.

You can see it now for what it is - but when you're a high school student, it's a little hard to tell.

Q. Were you aware of any fraud, or any kind of petty crime among kids?

McAusland Yes, stealing ration stamps. Gas ration stamps. I remember there was a bunch of guys that I used to know who'd go to a gas station in Madison Park, and they'd distract the

owner, and then another guy would go into the room where the cash register was, and steal the stamps. They were all just sitting in a cigar box. I remember him telling how he did that.

And we used to get lots of gas rationing stamps, and you could sell them, and they were worth - I forget how much but you could get more for them than the gallon of gas was worth, that's for sure.

There was quite a lively trade in gasoline rationing stamps.

Q. Were tires a problem? - I know that tires were rationed.

McAusland Oh, yes. Very defininitely. They were rationed, and that's when the recap was invented. But they didn't work very well - they came off. But tires were a problem.

And, of course, there were no new cars at all. So they just kept fixing up the old ones, and they just went on and on and on. I remember my Dad had a '41 Dodge, one of the newest cars in the neighborhood, and that was really considered something pretty fancy.

Q. He was really pretty lucky... He must have timed that just right.

McAusland Well, yes. He got it in the fall of 1940, so it was the '41 model.

Q. There were two huge groups of people in Seattle who were new there, and one of them was the military, and we've already talked about them a little bit. The other was the workers at Boeing and at the shipyards - they didn't live where you lived, and they didn't go to school with you. How did you perceive them?

McAusland Well, I was aware of the Yesler Housing Project, because I'd been driven...

Q. Where is that?

McAusland Well, it's sort of uphill from downtown Seattle. It's north of Yesler, on top of the hill there. It's near Providence Hospital

Q. So [it's] quite downtown.

McAusland Very close, oh, yes. A lot of people park their cars up there no and walk downtown to work.

Q. Was that land vacant when they built the Project?

McAusland It probably was. Or a slum area. But it was completely built, and was blessed by Mrs. Roosevelt who came up to oversee the dedication of it, or something like that, and it's still there and it's still functioning. It's been very successful. There must be several hundred apartments, all builit all out of wood - two story wooden things.

I remember seeing that, and being driven through

it, and I guess as far as any other contact [with in-migrant defense workers], I don't think so.

I guess the only other one would have been the gang of men who got on the Madison to Kirkland ferry to go over to the [Lake Washington] shipyard and work. They all rode down the Madison Street buses and got on the ferryboat and rode across the lake. The ferry operated all through World War II, I believe. Yes, it did.

Q. Did you ever see the KALAKALA?

McAusland I went for a ride on it. I remember it rattled something terrible. It was just awful - you'd get up to speed, and the whole thing would clatter and shake.

Q. What route was it on?

McAusland It went to Bremerton, I believe. I think that's right.

Q. I think so, too. I think it was used as a commuting ferry.

McAusland Yes, people commuted to the Bremerton Navy Yard, because there weren't many people living over there at the time. The Bremerton shipyard was a big one - one of the biggest ones on the coast, I think.

It [the KALAKALA] was sort of a disaster.

The other thing that was sort of similar was when the Tacoma Narrows Bridge - no, that was after the war, when the bridge went down. The Tacoma Narrows Bridge was completed before the war or during the war, and just after the war, it fell down. That was pretty exciting.

Q. That Frye Packing Plant disaster, and others like it - you've mentioned the planes in the skies a few times. You must have begun to feel a bit paranoid - not just you, but Seattleites in general - about the Boeing plant. About the Navy pilots. Weren't you afraid? It could have torched the city.

McAusland To me, it was all fascinating. I loved it. But I imagine some people were a little apprehensive. I would think so.

It didn't bother me any - I loved airplanes. I remember - I got a ride. My brother showed up in Seattle in a big Navy patrol plane, a PBY, and he showed up out at Sand Point and he took me for a ride. I remember I got to fly it. My first airplane ride was in a PBY, Navy patrol bomber.

Q. And you thought he was really neat... How did your parents see him?

McAusland Well, they were very worried about him, of course. My mother was very worried, I remember that. She used to read all the letters that came from him. He was a pretty good letterwriter - he wrote a book, actually, but it never got published because he wrote it in the wrong person. (laughing)

And he sent back lots of pictures from the South

Pacific, and we used to see all those.

That all sounded very romantic to me.

Q. Was he very frank with you about...

McAusland I never knew him, really. He was never home.

Q. So he didn't write you individual letters about his conquests and fun.

McAusland No, he was fifteen years older than I am, so I never really got to know him at all until much later.

Q. When you used to go out on dates, what would you do? How was your dating changed by these weird things that were happening all around you?

McAusland Most of the dating was to do with high school dances and so on. I don't think there was much else in the way of dating.

Q. How'd you get there? Did you take the bus?

McAusland Usually someone would come up with a car. Someone else would come up with some gas and we would work it out, one way or another. There were several guys in the school who had their own cars - who had hopped-up Fords. That was the big thing - to have a Model A with a V-8 engine in it. I knew a lot of guys - in fact, I helped build race cars.

Q. I wonder what that sounded like!

McAusland Oh, terrible! And they were very dangerous, and there were always lots of accidents, and people getting hurt in car accidents.

But the dating sort of revolved around - well, one of the things you did when you didn't have a date was to find somebody with a car and you'd go to one of the drive-in restaurants - they had just started. I remember there were about three Triple-X Drive-in places where they sold root beer. That's about as exciting as it was. And you'd hang around there, and there were these guys with the hot Fords, and they would start to organize a race.

And there was some car racing going on - quite a bit of it in Seattle. Sand Point Way was the favorite place. And you'd go to these sometimes when you didn't have a date. Or if you had a date, you usually ditched her if you found out about something like this going on because it might have been a big race, and somebody really important was going to race.

Q. Somebody important locally.

McAusland Yeah, one of the big luminaries in the high school crowd.

And I was never in with this group well enough to be really in on what was going on, but I'd get it second and third hand. And you'd hear that at two o'clock on Sand Point Way, there was going to be a race, and so-and-so was racing

somebody else for the title of his car!

Q. Oh, my goodness!

McAusland And you'd get out there, and it would be a mob scene. And there were a thousand people there and cars everywhere, and a lot of people had walked. By then, of course, the cops were alerted, and they were there - and usually, the whole thing would fold up.

Q. Mostly kids? Or servicemen?

McAusland Yes, mostly high school kids. Some servicemen. But mostly high school kids. And they had a lot of hopped-up jalopy kind of cars, you know.

Q. Where is there a part on Sand Point Way that's a straight part?

McAusland Right in front of Windermere, there's one, and another place was Holman Road, out in Ballard. That was another good one. Cause that goes downhill, and you could really get moving there.

There were some really serious accidents involved in that kind of stuff, too. There were these guys who'd get going too fast, and they'd blow a tire - they were always running on bad tires and so on. And they didn't know what they were doing anyway. And the cars had mechanical brakes - so they had a lot of accidents.

Q. How did you see the Seattle police? I mean, it doesn't sound like they came rushing in with nightclubs to break this up...

McAusland Well, they couldn't control mobs like that. There was nothing they could do. They'd just crack a few heads, and haul a few people off. They were much more effective than they are now as far as moving in on people that were breaking the law. They didn't mess around. They'd just crack them on the head, and haul them off to jail, and put them in the tank and leave them there - forget about them. Now they worry about all the rights, and everything. They were a lot tougher then. I think. Of course, my perception of them... - I was looking at them from a different point of view than I am now. Now they're good guys; in those days, they were bad guys.

Q. This is just a parenthetical question - but something that comes up in the newspapers in the forties all the time is gambling. Seattle police seemed to have spent an enormous amount of time trying to root out gambling. Did anybody you know...?

McAusland Well, there were cardrooms. There were guys who sort of leaned toward that, and went to the cardrooms down on First Avenue.

Q. Kids?

McAusland Yeah, kids could get into them, and usually got

taken, I would think.

I had an impression that the police sort of had a tolerance policy toward a lot of things like that - prostitution and gambling and drinking by minors. As long as nobody was getting hurt, they just kind of let it go on. There wasn't a big enough staff to do anything about it. And it was also pretty lucrative for a lot of police, I'm sure. Whenever you have a tolerance policy, you have payoffs to see how tolerant you're going to be.

Q. It seems like many services, like police and fire, must have been totally overwhelmed.

McAusland Oh, they were, yes. Very definitely.

I wasn't aware of any woman police or firemen, though.

I don't remember any really big fires - I didn't see any:.

Q. You talk about high school dances and dances for kids your age, were there any popular bands that were local?

McAusland There were quite a few of them. They always had a band at a dance, and it usually a local group. Occasionally at a senior prom, it would be somebody that you'd heard of somewhere before. But they were all local bands, and they all sounded exactly alike - a whole bunch of saxophones. And usually a guy who could do a solo on the drums, and a couple of singers.

Q. "Vocalists"?

McAusland Yes.

And they all played the same kind of music, fox trots, I guess it was. I guess they got in a little - jitter-bugging is what they called it in those days. I don't know what they call it now, but swinging your partner around - more like square-dancing than anything.

Q. Women, because of not being able to get nylons, suffered tremendously during the war and had to go to great lengths to make pretendnylons, using rayons and cover their legs with leg paint and stuff - were there any changes in men's clothes? You were a kid - but did you see any changes in fashion because of the war?

McAusland Just that thing I mentioned about the zoot suit - that was sort of popular among that group.

Q. Kids didn't wear flak jackets and things like that, like they did during the Viet Nam war?

McAusland No, there was nothing like that available. No that was all surplus from after the war. There wouldn't have been anything like that.

I think there were a lot of kids that wore patches, division patches and so on, from the service on their jackets. I remember some of that.

But, no, I don't recall anything specific like that.

I remember one thing my mother was involved in - an organization called the Gray Ladies. It was a bunch of women who went to military hospitals and helped out, and would read to the servicemen, and just sort of help entertain them and so on. She did that four half-days a week - she went to quite a few of the hospitals around - an awful lot of her friends did the same thing.

She had a uniform - a gray uniform. The Gray Ladies - it might have been part of the Red Cross. They were strictly sort of nurses aides, just there for entertainment. Just to have somebody to talk to for the servicemen.

Q. Did you have any view at all of people who worked in the yards or down at Boeing, and were of an age where they might have gone to fight? Did you have any feeling for people who were 4-F or were dodging the draft? There was a great absentee problem and productivity problem from time to time here - as a kid, did you think a guy in a uniform was automatically better than a guy in a working outfit?

McAusland No, I don't recall that. I remember being upset by the people that were conscientious objectors - that seemed like a real cop-out to me, at the time. I've since changed my mind.

But that's the only group I would have been aware of.

Q. How were conscientious objectors portrayed to you, and from what sources were you getting your picture?

McAusland Well, I don't really recall. It must have been some family friend who was a conscientious objector and somehow that was looked down on. I don't know where I got that impression, but that was my impression anyway - that they were just goof-offs.

Q. I wondered if they were treated in the newsreels?

McAusland I think there was so much more exciting stuff going on that they wouldn't have even bothered to mention them. I don't think so.

Q. When you mentioned dating, you didn't mention movies - was that something that wasn't done very much?

McAusland Well, I think the - I don't remember taking girls to the movies. I guess maybe I probably did.

I'm not sure when the drive-in movie came in - that's what I'm trying to think of - because that was a popular place to take a date, of course.

Q. Well, I think there was a drivein movie at a place called Midway...

McAusland Yes! Halfway to Tacoma. I remember that now. And that was a long drive -

Q. A lot of gas.

McAusland Yes, a lot of gas, and that was always a consideration.

But I do remember going down there a couple of times to see the drive-in.

Q. Were they mostly war movies? You may not recall.

McAusland There were a lot of war movies - I think most of them were involved with [the war].

That's another place where you got your impressions of the cruel and vicious Japanese, and the cowardly Germans, and so forth. That was the way they were always portrayed in the movies.

I think that most of the movies were somehow related to the war, though I'm not sure of that.

There were an awful lot of musicals, too. That was another popular thing.

Q. Oh, completely light-hearted, gay kinds of things?

McAusland Yes, Fred Astaire kind of things.

Q. People like the Andrews Sisters - was their appeal to your age group or to an older one?

McAusland Oh, sure, I thought the Andrews Sisters were great!

Q. Who else did you think was great?

McAusland Well, I liked Glenn Miller - of course, everybody like Glenn Miller's band.

Q. Were the Dorsey Brothers ...?

McAusland Yes. I remember one of them came to Seattle - the one who played the clarinet, Tommy Dorsey. I saw him in Seattle once. It couldn't have been a high school dance - it must have been some kind of stage performance they had somewhere.

They had lots of stage shows at the big theatres downtown. They would have bands come and play, and you'd just sit in the theatre and listen to the band.

And at that time, too - and this would have been earlier, I guess, [before] high school - there was quite a strong program in elementary schools in the city to try and get children to go and hear symphony and musical events of all sorts, ballet and the like. I remember the conductor here was Beacham, Thomas Beacham - a very flamboyant ...

Q. Character?

McAusland Yes, character. And he was director of the Seattle Symphony during World War II.

I remember him. Great white hair. I remember he used to get just furious with people firing off flashbulbs. He would stop the performance and walk off the stage.

Q. Do you remember that actually occurring?

McAusland I was there when it happened. Somebody took a picture, and he turned around and stared at them, and said something which you couldn't hear. And the guy took another picture, and Beacham walked off the stage. And he didn't come back, as I recall.

He had a very short temper.

But those were all programs that the city put on. And they had somethings at Volunteer Park, too, for grade school ages - take you through and show you all the Chinese collection of stuff they have up there.

Q. When we were talking about fraud, and petty juvenile crime, we talked about stealin ration stamps, but you didn't mention siphoning gas. Somehow it seems...

McAusland Oh, yes! That was a big - I got to be pretty good at that. (laughing)

Q. Where'd you get the rubber hose - rubber was so scarce?!

McAusland Oh, you'd cut it off somebody's hose.

Yeah, you'd just find a garden hose, and cut off a few feet. I got to be pretty good at it.

You'd get a big mouthfull of it, and belch and burp. It was terrible.

Yes, siphoning was a very popular event. You always carried a rubber hose and a can in the back of your car because you never knew when you were going to run out. That was the only thing you could do - to siphon some gas. It was terrible, you'd always get a mouthfull, and you'd choke on it.

Q. Running out of gas must have been a common occurrence...

McAusland Oh, yes, sure! I remember pushing cars miles and miles and miles, it seemed. And you developed techniques for keeping them running, once the car started to sputter. If you let you foot on and off the gas, then the car would jump around, and the gas would slosh back and forth in the tank, and you could keep it running quite a bit longer that way.

But usually, you carried a hose and a can. Yes, you're right there.

Q. The atmosphere in downtown Seattle sounds scary and exciting and kind of irresistible - to go down there and just see what it was like. Were you at physical risk? Did kids get beat up by servicemen?

McAusland I doubt it. I don't think so - I was never concerned.

I was only concerned that I was going to get in trouble when I got home because I wasn't supposed to go down there. But for a nickel you could get down and back on the bus, I mean, on the trolley.

Q. What were the USO clubs? What did they seem like to you?

Were you able to go in them? Did you want to go in them?

McAusland No, no. I remember knowing where there was one, and having it pointed out to me, driving past it with my father. But, no, high school kids definitely wouldn't have gone in. You would have to have a uniform on.

Q. Did they look like pretty dull potatoes next to the downtown clubs? I find it hard to understand why servicemen went to the USOs when there was so much more exciting stuff going on.

McAusland Well, a free ride, I guess. They could get a place to sleep, and a free meal. I don't know exactly why they did, though

When I was in the service later [in 1945], I remember they were just awful. It was just a bunch of guys there drinking beer - that was all it was. The beer was cheap, and the cigarettes were cheap, but I just couldn't see much of an attraction to it.

Q. When the war was on, did you tend to read the newspapers more than you had before?

McAusland Well, I read the funny papers. And looked at the pictures.

Q. Did the funny papers become more anti-Japanese - I've not read them. I've always skimmed over them when I've been reading the forties papers. That might be kind of fun to see.

McAusland I think they were, yes. There were a lot of sort of militarytype ones, and I'm sure they would be very much against the enemy. Yes, I would guess that's the case.

Q. Did you buy comic books?

McAusland Yeah, comic books were big, and baseball cards that came with bubble gum - you'd trade those around.

Seattle had a baseball team at that time that played - the Seattle Rainiers, I think. And I used occasionally to go to baseball games, but that was also a long ways away.

Q. In looking at the sports pages [then], it looks like a lot of sports figure got drafted out of their sports.

McAusland They kept going. Baseball and football and all these things - they just kept going, they didn't stop. They might have lost a few of their stars, but when they went into the service, they went into service teams.

The base where I was stationed - El Toro Marine Air Base - they had one of the best football teams in the country. It was all All-Americans who had been drafted. When they got them in the Marine Corps, they shipped them off to one of the football teams.

Q. Do you remember Victory Square?

McAusland Yes. Vaguely.

Q. What was it like?

McAusland It was right where the Seattle Times building was - isn't that that triangular-shaped building? And there was sort of a big square there - that was before they put the monorail in there and cut it in half. There was a big open place there and there was a big celebration there when the war was over in Europe and it seemed like we all went down to see that. And the place was just a mob of people.

You mentioned Victory Square, and I remember the name now, but I don't remember much about it.

Q. How wonderful was that - V-E Day? What was that like, as the war was ending? Did it seem like it was going on forever?

McAusland Well, it seemed like the other part of it, the part of it that we weren't so intimately associated with, was over. I think, on the West Coast, people were more aware of the war against the Japanese than against the Germans.

I was an airplane nut, and I knew more about their airplanes than about the German airplanes.

Q. Sometimes kids who read a lot know more about this kind of thing than their parents do. Did you have any suspicion that there was some major weapon in the works?

McAusland No.

There was a lot of talk, though, of the German secret weapons. And that was very exciting when those things came out.

Q. The V-2?

McAusland Yes, the V-2 and the V-1, buzz-bombs and rockets, and so on.

Q. How did you perceive the atomic bombs, when they were dropped?

McAusland Well, it was a hard thing to get a grasp on. I just perceived them as huge because they said the one they'd set off was equal to all the bombs dropped on London in four years, or something, and it was just hard to even reckon with that. Nobody thought - or, at least, I at the time didn't think - of there being anything wrong with using it. It seemed like the logical thing to do.

Q. It seems in reading the papers at the end of the war that the reporting was quite accurate, that the Japanese were preparing to defend the home islands and that they were going to make a last stand there. You were anticipating going into the military at the time, how did you think your role...

McAusland I wanted to get into the Marine Air Corps, which I did. It just still all seemed like a great adventure to me. I

think kids always look at it that way - they get all fired up, get this nationalistic spirit going, and get all excited about going out and getting those bad guys and flying this big shiny airplane.

Q. What happened to self-preservation?

McAusland It never occurred to me that anybody got hurt or anything. Of course, I saw all the pictures of it, but that doesn't happen to you, that happened to somebody else.

Q. So when the war did end, when the Japanese did surrender, were you somewhat disappointed?

McAusland Well, I don't know if I was actually disappointed. I guess I did feel that I wouldn't get in on it, yes, that I wouldn't get to fly military airplanes and everything like my brother had done. And I think that was a little disappointing.

Q. I bet your parents were delighted.

McAusland Oh, sure. They had an entirely different attitude toward the whole thing, of course.