

6-20-1991

## Evans, Robert O Oral History Interview: Longtime Residents of Macatawa Park

Joseph A. Kuiper

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### Recommended Citation

**Repository citation:** Kuiper, Joseph A., "Evans, Robert O Oral History Interview: Longtime Residents of Macatawa Park" (1991). *Longtime Residents of Macatawa Park*. Paper 3.  
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**Published in:** 1991 - *Longtime Residents of Macatawa Park (H88-0234)* - *Hope College Living Heritage Oral History Project*, June 20, 1991. Copyright © 1991 Hope College, Holland, MI.

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Interview With Dr. Robert O.  
Evans

Conducted June 20, 1991  
by Joseph A. Kuiper

Hope College Oral History Project, 1991  
Subject: Macatawa Park

Joe- May I have your name and current address, please?

Robert- I am Dr. Robert O. Evans. My current address is 681 Lakeside Road, Macatawa, Michigan, but we get our mail at the Macatawa Post Office (49434). We are longtime residents here. My wife, Margery Brooks, was born in Holland and grew up there. We have both kept our voting residence here even when we were away for long periods. We also own a house in Lexington, Kentucky where we spend part of the winters. Nobody but a darned fool would stay here on the lakefront during the wintertime.

Joe- What year do you first recall being at Macatawa?

Robert- I've been here almost since I was born. My wife, too. Macatawa goes back a long ways in both our families. My great grandfather, on my mother's side, bought the first cottage owned by my family here. It was also named the Chicago Cottage and was actually on the lot immediately next door to the north. It burned down in the great fire in 1922. I don't know exactly what year he purchased it - perhaps 1910 or 1915. After the fire my grandfather, on my mother's side, Robert P. Brown, bought this lot from my wife's grandfather, Walter Walsh, and built this cottage, starting it in the fall of 1922 and finishing it in the spring of 1923. It was the first house built in the north beach part of Macatawa after the fire. The fire destroyed everything

north of the house just north of Interlake Walk. That cottage was also owned by my wife's grandfather, and her family lived in it summers when she was a girl. Mr. Walsh's father, Heber Walsh, was one of the founders of Macatawa and one of the larger stockholders. He held 127 shares compared, for instance, to the Post brothers who owned 68 shares each. There were about eight or nine shareholders in the original corporation. You have copies in the archives of some of the original documents. Holland was only founded in 1847. Macatawa as a park company some forty years later. The first Dutch settlers led by Van Raalte came overland from Otsego or Allegan, or somewhere in that area, to found their city at the eastern end of Black Lake. Soon they must have come down Black Lake to Lake Michigan, probably by canoe. It could not have taken much insight to discover that if they could get from Black Lake to Lake Michigan they would have a natural waterway to transport goods in and out of Holland. The next step logically was to dig a navigable channel, which in time they did somewhat north of the silted original connection between Black Lake and Lake Michigan. That supposedly was about where Point West Motel is now. There is a story that there was an Indian settlement just south of the river entrance to Black Lake, and that the first white

settler met there and Indian who presented him with a skin or fur. However, sometime during that forty years before the resort was founded and after the founding of Holland, of course, there was a religious settlement at Macatawa, a Chatauqua - in those days a tent city with duckboard walks. God only knows what they used for toilets. These colonies were devoted to preaching sessions, probably circulating around the Reformed Church or perhaps the Presbyterians. Some still exist in the United States, though most have disappeared (as has one I visited as a child at Mount Eagle, Tennessee). The resort company simply bought the land - probably for a song - and proceeded to develop it into a resort. (There is an early booklet called Macatawa Resorts, printed in Chicago sometime around the turn of the century, showing many of the cottages at Macatawa and other resorts in the area. The early founders recognized the value of the area for tourism.)

Joe- How would you describe Macatawa at the furthest point back in you memory?

Robert- A typical early 20th century resort, much more open to the public as I first recall it. I do not remember the days when the steamer from Chicago landed in the channel, but I do recall when the breadwinners working in Chicago and other cities came over by steamer to spend the weekend with their families, who summered

here. In the 1920s most of the summer people must have stayed about ten weeks, the families that is, the women and children. The fathers liked to come by boat, though there were of course other ways. One could take the Interurban all the way from Chicago, if one had the stamina to ride it that far. Later you could come by train, the Pere Marquette, which was very plush, with parlor cars and diners. The ride took about four hours. But of course the automobile was fast becoming the major means of entry and egress to the Michigan resorts - in my time anyhow. Gradually the boat docks moved eastward until finally the steamers docked in Holland at the Harrington coal docks. Before that the steamers moved from the channel docks to a pier just inside the mouth of the channel. When that ceased to exist, there was a large steel barge where the boats docked. Then the steamers moved over to where the Yacht Club now is, to a large dock run by the Interurban company that must have had some sea connections. That last dock I remember quite well. I might add that the original Yacht Club was not on that property but rather on property adjacent to it. When it folded in the early days after the crash of 1929, Jesiek Brothers shipyard bought the property and the Yacht Club building, which in time they moved and used as their office and supply store. When the Yacht Club

was refounded it was on the old Interurban pier. The members built a pleasant building there and some slips, but that facility burned to the ground after a Fourth of July fireworks display in, I believe, 1958. Originally the boat trip must have cost something like four dollars round trip, but prices rose and competition also arose. The era of the resort steamers did not last very long, perhaps thirty or forty years, but after all that is not so unusual. The great clipper ships built by our Yankee forefathers in New England lasted only about twenty years. They were soon replaced by steam. The packet boats that once took all passengers from New York to Europe and back no longer exist, except as cruise ships out of Ft. Lauderdale, etc.

Joe- You mentioned the Interurban. What do you remember about that?

Robert- It was a dreadful street car affair - very bumpy and uncomfortable. One could go from Chicago to Grand Rapids on it, if one had time. But mostly it was used for short journeys or for transporting goods. Summer people would send their goods by Interurban. If Macatawa was their destination, the cars came as far as where Point West restaurant now is. There they made a circle, and there was a station in the center of the circle. In time that building was moved back to where

the old Post Office once was, where the Point West parking areas now are adjacent to the tennis courts. It was placed on the Black Lake side of the road, but I do not think it operated very long as a station. In time it became the "new" bowling alley with about five duck pin lanes and two or three pool tables. Later, after phil Brooks moved to the House Boat, Phil bought the building and razed it. Good riddance to an eyesore by that time. Mostly folks who rode the Interurban were on short hops, to Holland or Castle Park. It seemed even pretty far for a journey to Saugatuck. But it was very useful for the cheap transport of household goods. Remember that when families came for the entire summer they had to bring trunks of clothing and other supplies. The Interurban unloaded at Macatawa, and the goods were picked up by a wagon and taken to the cottages. If the recipients lived on the lake front, the wagon went down between Interlake and Michigan Walks, that being the right of way. When it reached the beach, however, it did not always go down Lakeside Road. For a time there was a plank road on the beach just a few feet west of Lakeside. I presume this was because the wagon was drawn by horses, or more likely mules, and the resorters did not wish to soil the streets where elegant ladies strolled.

Joe- Did you ever ride the Interurban?



Robert- Sure, but only for short rides. In my early days the main passengers for long rides were the black servants that worked for the summer people in Macatawa and other resorts. The nearest black community was in Grand Rapids, and the servants liked to visit there on their free afternoons (Thursday and Sundays).

Joe- You mentioned that passenger boats brought many resorters to Macatawa. Were you ever on one of those boats?

Robert- Yes, several of them, especially the City of Holland and the City of Saugatuck, though I never actually crossed the lake on one of them. In the late years of boat traffic, the steamers frequently made Sunday excursions into Lake Michigan. I believe the price was about five dollars for a ride that lasted perhaps three hours. We went once every summer.

Joe- What were they like on board?

Robert- They might seem a bit austere compared to the QE-2 or a Princess cruise liner, but compared to the car ferries they were plush. Lots of polished wood and brass, sweeping staircases. The two I mentioned were both sidewheelers; that is, they were propelled by huge paddle wheels on either side. They were quite fast, too. Under full power the paddle wheels set up huge waves, and once some people were playing too close to the steamers in the channel in a speedboat. The speedboat was sucked into the steamer, destroyed, and

some of its passengers were drowned. This was a tragedy witnessed by a crowd on the piers. If I recall correctly it happened on a Sunday evening when the steamer was leaving port. I also recall quite well the Alabama, the North America, and the South America, all of which wintered in Holland at the foot of 16th Street. I went aboard them a few times, although I no longer recall the occasion. At one time they were open to tourists during Tulip Time and supplied extra hotel rooms. These were all very nice ships. It is a shame they have disappeared but the life of a steamer is very limited.

Joe- What are your memories of the Macatawa Hotel?

Robert- A typical early 20th century frame firetrap! Quite beautiful. There was another even larger hotel at Ottawa Beach which was reached by a railroad as well as other means. These should have been preserved as historical objects, but fire destroyed the hotel at Ottawa Beach, and the Macatawa Hotel was torn down by Simon Den Uyl when he decided to build a modern hotel on that site. They remind one of the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island or perhaps the Coronado outside of San Diego. The best rooms in the Macatawa Hotel were probably on the first and second floors. Since there were no elevators, the higher you went the cheaper the price. I do not really recall the rooms themselves

very well, but I remember the lobby well enough and the ball room at the south end. In my time there were no eating facilities in the hotel proper. The dining room was across Michigan Walk. To the east of it was a grass plot behind which there was a building that for many years housed the grocery store. Next, east and north of the grocery store, came the refectory, or more accurately the Soda Fountain, which had a long porch and many chairs and tables for serving ice cream, etc. You must remember people did not go off to Holland or Saugatuck the way they do today. Macatawa was a complete resort within its confines. Before the age of automobiles a trip to Holland meant a long tiresome ride on the Interurban or perhaps a slow ferry boat ride up the lake in a launch. This was a small boat about 25 feet long with a sun roof and life preservers in the roof itself. It was operated by Marene Boshka, nicknamed Sub, for many years, perhaps because he was the only one who could make the engine run. The grocery was the principle supplier in Macatawa. It was operated by the people who ran the Central Park store for many years, but when the war came along it was abandoned by them probably because it was difficult to get supplies back and forth. Just east of the refectory was a building that contained a drug store on the corner, then a hardware store, and several other

stores that were mostly vacant during the depression. The drug store, which was operated by Mrs. Kelley for as long as I can remember, also ceased to operate. Mrs. Kelley was a Scandinavian (Norwegian, I believe) married to the Kent County Sheriff, but perhaps she was simply too old to continue the business. The store was rented for a summer or two by Phil Brooks and stocked as a grocery. His son, Jim, ran it. That was about the end of Macatawa businesses per se. I believe Mrs. Kelley was a licensed pharmacist, but she also knew many old time folk remedies and she was a great patcher of cuts and bruises among the local children. She may have made modest charges for her services, but I do not recall ever paying anything. She kept a salve in a dishpan filled with water and used to extract small portions of it on the end of a knife for a healing agent. I have never since found anything that worked quite so well. The hardware store next to her sold odds and ends and was run by a family named Camburn. Mostly they sold cigars, and the elder citizens spent a good many afternoons there chatting. In depression times all of these stores lost money or at least failed to make any. Mr. Camburn used to pick up a little extra as a real estate agent, and I recall my own grandfather once buying a lakefront lot from him for about \$700. That gave him a commission of about sixty

or seventy dollars which could feed them for perhaps two months. They were of course far too proud and independent to ask anyone for help. Just before the war the Camburns tried to spend the winter in their cottage. They must have undergone many hardships in those last days of their lifetime.

Joe- Did tourism slow down during the depression?

Robert- Indeed. The ships still came until the forties, but the number of passengers grew less each year. The hotel was seldom full - I might have said half full more accurately. But perhaps the automobile had more to do with the demise of the resort as it existed in the early part of the century than even the economic conditions. The automobile expanded the tourist horizon far beyond Macatawa. People began to come from cities like Chicago for the weekend instead of planning a whole summer at the lake. Parking problems arose. Where the remnants of the old Post Office now are, there was once a garage. When the automobile first became a factor in the lives of resorters, cars were sent to the garage and called to the steps of the hotel when needed. Then a number of small frame garages were constructed around and behind the garage itself. These were rented for a nominal sum to the cottage people who parked and retrieved their own vehicles. During the war these rotted away, and during the Den Uyl era they

were torn down as was the garage itself somewhat later. Now there is a parking lot in that area although it has recently been closed to the use of the cottagers by the company that owns the motel, restaurant, and much park property. At one time, after the Interurban station was razed where the Point West restaurant now lies, there was a parking area open to the general public for a nominal fee (50 cents a day if I recall). Gradually some parking was developed behind the old hotel, and this space was later expanded. The old right of way between Michigan and Interlake Walks had drifted full of sand and that was cleared again and used for parking. This area was of course owned by the park company - at this time the Den Uyls. They charged for parking. At first the rates were quite nominal, but later they became rather excessive. Hence the cottagers who need parking in that area eventually formed the Macatawa Parking Corporation and purchased the area behind the motel, which we now operate for our own benefit. We have owned this property now for three years and have not found it necessary to make any charges for parking at all. Prior to this there has been a running battle between the park company and the property owners often centering on parking as well as the rights of the cottagers to drive to their properties (though a majority do not have any room to

park on their lots). From time to time the company has tried to chain off the roads, which are private though that does not mean access can be hindered. The park youngsters have removed more than one chain and deposited it in Black Lake. Conditions were barely tolerable when Swan Miller owned Macatawa, grew slightly better after his death when his niece, Georgie Miller, inherited. They varied from passable to poor under the Den Uyl regime. Something of the history of such relations can be read about in Frank Baum's book Tamawaca Folks (creator of the Oz series). Macatawans are inclined to say, "Nothing much has changed!" In time the Den Uyls sold Macatawa to Phil Kelley and a consortium of partners, and Phil Kelley sold to the present owners, Mr. Case and Mr. Saborin, doing business as Valley Property Management. While all the company owners were willing to sell off small pieces of property, often bits of platted roads or parks, all of them resisted any large scale sale to a group of cottage owners. However, the present owners finally did concede the property that is now owned by the Macatawa Parking Corporation in return for a rather large sum of money (\$750,000). In desperation the cottagers hired Mike Doyle to negotiate with the company, and after about three years he was able to make a successful arrangement. This left the

cottagers, mainly myself, Rusty Swaney, Sandy Lecklider, Casey Wondergem, and Ward Dobbin, the task of raising a very substantial sum of money. We managed it in about thirty days, so now the cottagers through a not for profit corporation hold a vested interest in Macatawa. We closed in mid winter at the First of America Bank in Kalamazoo. At that time I was in Florida, and our Treasurer, Mr. Dobbin, was in Hawaii. Mr. Doyle got everything set and then asked for the money so that he could pay off the owners. To make a long story short, I finally had to FAX instructions to our bank in Holland to transfer the funds to Mr. Doyle's escrow account. And the deed was done.

Joe- Was the Macatawa Hotel important to the social atmosphere of the park?

Robert- To some extent. It grew less important as time went on as a central meeting place for cottagers, although for a long time the hotel management held dances for teenagers. It was of course a center for its own guests, but cottagers tended to shun the hotel after many battles with the owners. Sime Den Uyl was always annoyed that the cottagers did not patronize his hotel restaurant more than they did, but I suspect the indifferent cuisine accounted for that. When the present Point West restaurant opened, with its new liquor license, many cottagers became regular



customers. Incidentally, that liquor license probably had more to do with the tearing down of the old hotel than any other single factor. It has been said that the Den Uyls did not wish to spend the money needed to bring the hotel up to acceptable standards, and that may in part be true. But also they could not help see the kinds of money pouring into Saugatuck to the open liquor license there. By and large the cottagers opposed liquor in Macatawa, and they were supported by the Park Township authorities in those days. Then much of the township was on the south side of the lake; the present township lines are quite different. Township authorities then found it to their advantage to behave as local ministers advised, and they advised against liquor - despite the fact that most of the township people actually did drink wet, though they voted dry. The local farmer - back then there were still farms in the area- kept a bottle of gin in the milk pail. But times changed. The Den Uyls in time bought a license elsewhere in the township and moved it to the new restaurant. By that time of course the old hotel was long gone.

Joe- The Macatawa Hotel was torn down in 1956. What other reasons for its destruction can you recall?

Robert- Primarily, as I have said, because it needed extensive renovation and because the Den Uyl owners had been

unable to get a liquor license. No doubt there were other reasons. Some economic. The resort was not operating at a profit. Mr. Den Uyl had raised about half his initial cost, approximately \$50,000, from the cottagers who were his limited partners. About all they ever received from the company was a tax loss. Later Mr. Den Uyl offered to take some of them out for about ten cents on the dollar, and some of them accepted his proposition (or so I have been told). Another reason may have been that Sime Den Uyl was extremely annoyed with the cottagers. The major contention between the company and the cottagers at this time arose over Mr. Den Uyl's intention to sell the cottagers the electric plant. However, this may have occurred just after the hotel was razed and not actually been a factor in the decision to tear it down. Mr. Den Uyl offered to sell the electric plant to the cottagers for \$25,000 provided they accepted his offer at that time. If they did not, the price would go up. If they still refused to buy, the next season he would shut off the electric power. This was a serious threat because most of the cottagers not only had electric lights but also pumped water with electricity. As a matter of fact by that time Macatawa generated no electric power, as it had much earlier. It simply bought electricity from Consumers and delivered it with

a modest surcharge over its poles and lines. The system was antiquated and probably very hazardous, and anyhow the Trustees of the Cottagers' Association were in no mood to be forced. For once they seemed committed to the American policy: millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute! The Association hired its own attorneys and a hearing took place the following winter in Lansing before the Public Utilities Commission. I myself with Senator E.C. Brooks prepared the ground work for this hearing with the Commissioner. Mr. Den Uyl lost.

Joe- How did you feel about the hotel being torn down?

Robert- To be truthful I did not care one way or another. The real question was what would replace it?

Joe- Was there much controversy when the hotel was slated for demolition?

Robert- Not to my knowledge. A lot of people were somewhat sorry, I suppose. All the furnishings went up for sale during the fall or winter, and people came and bought what they wanted. The iron lamp you see there came from the old hotel and cost me one dollar. I wish now that I had bought several of them.

Joe- As a child, did you spend much time at Jenison Park?

Robert- Not when it was an amusement park, but every child in the area must have paid at least one visit there in a season. It was a long ways from Chicago's White City

or Riverview. Mostly sideshow games, like throwing baseballs at wooden bottles or tossing rings to win a cheap prize. The fun house was a bit better, if I recall correctly. No roller coaster, and in my time the ferris wheel was not working. There must have been a merry-go-round or carousel of some kind, but I don't remember it. Later the amusement park disappeared and there was a large vacant property in its place. We played both baseball and football on the property. At that time there was a softball league among the resorts, and we often played at Jenison. In fact we had two teams, a junior team and an older team. The schedule was irregular, but there were a good many games played every season. We also played tackle football without any equipment - a dangerous pastime at best. I recall one broken leg at Jenison Park. Incidentally much of this was once written in a story in the "New Yorker," appearing shortly after the war (or perhaps during that period).

Joe- What do you recall about Angel's Flight?

Robert- Mostly the ruin. The resort children visited it several times every summer and would still if it were not off limits. I presume some children finally set it afire, though I was not here at that time. I also recall my mother taking me there on the incline railway in maybe 1923 or 1924. It was then a pleasant ice cream parlor

and something of a dance hall - a tea dance sort of place, not at all like the Big Pavilion at Saugatuck. You have to remember this was during the era of prohibition - no liquor. I doubt if they even sold Near Beer ( a non-alcoholic substitute) at Angel's Flight. It was more family oriented. The depression killed all that, and vandalism probably destroyed the building, which was only frame at best. No heat, no facilities, no plumbing as far as I can remember, though they must have had toilets somewhere. In my time the kids broke all the windows, but then the place was near collapse anyhow. There may still be some remnants of the old machinery up there that was used for the incline railway. Mr Van Andel, who bought Lookout Park from the Den Uyls, does not encourage visitors to the site.

Joe- What do you recall of the many catastrophes that struck the cottages?

Robert- I was not here when the big fire came in 1922; we were supposed to arrive the next day. It started in the second house north of Interlake Walk, which was then occupied by a family named Ellis. It began on a Sunday morning. Estelle Ellis was giving her baby, Charles, a bath. In those days water was usually heated with a kerosene heater, and not infrequently they failed, sometimes starting fires. That is what happened that

morning. I have heard the story many times, from Mrs. Ellis herself and often from her son Charles, who did not of course remember it. (Incidentally Charles was here with some of his family just about a week ago staying at Point West. We reminisced about the event.) In short Mrs. Ellis did just what she should have done. She grabbed the baby and got out of the house. There was a strong southwest wind blowing, and in time all the houses north of that one - there were a great many more then than there are now - burned to the ground. My grandfather took his rocking chair to the lake and sat there watching his house go up in flames. That was the BIG FIRE. Made headlines in the Chicago Tribune. I forget the exact day in July. People to the north could see the fire coming and saved what they could, though often in the excitement they neglected the most valuable things. My own grandfather, usually a very level headed man, saved the breakfast by picking up the four corners of the tablecloth and carrying it outside. Some people saved the bath tubs. A good many forgot their expensive clothes. Of course disastrous fires were more common in those days. Most cottages not only heated the water with kerosene, but they also cooked with it. Thank God, Kerosene is a way of the past. Also many of the cottages, we discovered later, were wired into the electric current directly, without

meters or fuse boxes. Of course no code would permit that for an instant. After the altercation with Mr. Den Uyl, I managed to persuade Consumers to come into the park and take over the electric service. They then insisted on everything complying with the existing codes. Remember some of the people who watched Macatawa burn in 1922 could remember the Chicago fire of 1871 and the great Holland fire about that time, and perhaps even the Oshtego fire in Wisconsin that same year as the one in Chicago, perhaps the worst fire in the nation's history.

Joe- Do you remember any of the other fires?

Robert- Only individual ones that took one or two cottages. Fire protection grew much better in the 1920s. The property owners in the hills bought hoses and built a fire dock near the Boat House, so that they could pump water directly from Black Lake to the scene of a fire. And the local fire departments improved. We now have carriers equipped with gallons of water that can be transported quickly to a fire scene. Not that there isn't always a real and present danger.

Joe- Do you recall the burning of the Ottawa Beach Hotel?

Robert- Yes, but I was not here at that time. It happened out of season. I recall driving in and noticing that the hotel was gone. Some of the year around people, like Art Tazelaar, probably remember it and may have watched

the flames.

Joe- What do you recall about the boardwalk?

Robert- That is was made of boards, usually oak planking. As you know the big lake rises and falls occasionally. The water has risen many times to threaten the cottages, and sometimes it has taken cottages right into the lake. It also takes roads and walks. When the water is high, these are usually replaced with board walk; then later if the lake recedes concrete is used. At one time there was a fairly wide concrete walk along the shore connecting the cottages at the north end of Macatawa with those at the south end. This walk was made of reinforced concrete slabs about five feet long and two or three feet wide, and six inches thick. I cannot recall how they were connected, but nothing can resist the forces of Lake Michigan forever. Water got under the slabs, and there is a story about a resorting couple stepping on one that had worked loose and tumbling one of the two beneath the walkway, causing death. I cannot attest to this from my own experience. It may be hearsay, but it is part of the lore of Macatawa. So far as I know nobody was ever sued because of this mishap. Macatawa has been plagued with erosion since its founding. I recall vividly the high water of 1929, when I was ten years old. We put in three jetties in front of the Chicago Cottage, the



longest reaching 75 feet into Lake Michigan. Water came to within a few feet of the trees that are there now, but then the water receded, and our walk was saved. From this house south it was all boardwalk because the previous walk had been taken out by the lake. This happened a good many times. The best protection seems to be placing jetties that extend into the lake, break up wave motion, and deposit sand thereby building the beach. But it is easy to build the beach when the lake is going down and very difficult when it is coming up. The last major disaster did not reach our property, although the trees were once again threatened. But I do not intend to make a speech on lake erosion. Once we bought the concrete from a highway that was being replaced and dumped it into the shore to protect our property. Much of that material is there now beneath the sand.

Joe- Is the present lakefront row the location of the original front row of cottages?

Robert- Yes, here at the north end of the resort. Further south whole streets have disappeared into the lake and never been replaced, houses with them. At this end the lots are the same as were originally platted, but the houses are not. Some of them extend as much as ten feet into the road area. Of course the building inspectors should have stopped this sort of thing, but they did

not.

Joe- Do you recall a boardwalk that ran near the channel in an area just north of the front of Hotel Macatawa?

Robert- Yes, there was once quite a wide walk there narrowing as it came nearer the channel. It must have been boards, for I remember water sloshing under it. On the east side there were some substantial buildings. One housed a movie theater, and another a bowling alley. But most of the buildings, to my recollection, were just boat houses. They all disappeared in the decade of the '20s. Nothing ever replaced them except the apartment building that is there now and was supposed to be the model for a large condominium development planned by the Den Uyls. The resorters of course opposed this development vigorously, and in time it simply failed to get any farther. The building you can see now is built on filled in land and is presently owned by Mr. Van Andel. The only other relatively new structure along the west shore of Black Lake was the one now called the Boat House, but originally called the House Boat because the house was actually a houseboat. It was towed over from Chicago with a large party of revelers aboard and left for many years along the northeast shore of the lake. In time Phil Brooks bought the property along the lake that once housed the electric plant. He moved the House Boat there and refurbished

it, making it a very unusual and extremely fine home.

It belongs now, I believe, to the Eldean Ship Yard.

Joe- Today, when you look back on Macatawa, what are the things that come to mind?

Robert- Mostly nostalgic old memories of the good times. It has always been a very close part of my life. My wife's, too. We met here as children. In fact a good many marriages were started here in Macatawa during the long and leisurely summer days - and nights. A lot of people dear to me have left. Some are dead. Others just gave it up, though I don't think I ever could. For instance, my brother, who was as closely associated with Macatawa as I have been, and who until recently owned a cottage to the south of us, finally sold out and moved to St. Petersburg Beach. I don't suppose he will ever return. On the other hand, some of us may indeed be forced out by the outrageous taxes Michigan has levied against us. Between 1989 and 1990, for example, my actual tax bill doubled. This is of course almost obscene in a democratic country. The State of Michigan is going to have to make some hard decisions in the immediate future if it wishes to retain its vitality and its tourist business. But this is not the place for a dissertation on property taxes.