

# *Joan Perrault*, by Julie M. Luker

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**Joan Perrault**  
**Narrator**

**Cole Steinberg**  
**Concordia University, Saint Paul**  
**Interviewer**

**Landmark Associates**  
**Transcriber**

**July 12th, 2022**  
**Minnesota**

**CS: Cole Steinberg**

**JP: Joan Perrault**

**CS:** This is an interview conducted as part of a larger faculty and student research project initiated by Dr. Julie Luker of Concordia University, Saint Paul. Today is July 12th, 2022. I'm here with Joan Perrault. My name is Cole Steinberg, and I am an undergraduate student at Concordia University, Saint Paul. Today I'll be talking to Joan about what life was like growing up in the Twin Cities.

During this interview, I'm going to ask you to reflect on your childhood life experiences as they relate to a variety of social topics from that time period. For the purposes of this interview, we have defined childhood as birth through 17 years of age. To begin, please state and spell your full name, including a maiden name, if applicable.

**JP:** Joan, J-O-A-N, middle name Marie, M-A-R-I-E, last name Perrault, P-E-R-R-A-U-L-T, maiden name Berglin, B-E-R-G-L-I-N.

**CS:** Okay. Please identify your race and gender.

**JP:** Caucasian female.

**CS:** Please state your date of birth.

**JP:** July 22, 1950.

**CS:** Finally, please share where you grew up, such as the name of the neighborhood or nearby street intersection. Include any major moves you made during this time period.

**JP:** I lived in two neighborhoods. First, I lived in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood until I was in fourth grade. Then we moved to Roseville, where I completed high school.

**CS:** Okay. Thank you. I would like to learn more about your family life. Let's begin with the memories you have for immediate and extended family. Please share some memories that you have about these relationships.

**JP:** If we can break it into two, I'll talk about my memories of being—living on Dayton's Bluff neighborhood. My grandpa bought us a house in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood. To me, being a little kid, it was like a mansion. There was five bedrooms upstairs. It was just a beautiful, old house. In order to help pay the bills—I didn't realize we were poor. In order to help pay the bills, my parents took in boarders that lived upstairs.

The neighborhood was filled with kids. Oh, my God, there were so many kids in the neighborhood! At birthday parties, we would have 30 kids just from the immediate neighborhood, playing in the backyard and the—our little wading pool and running through the sprinkler. The neighborhood started getting rough. When I lived there when I was a little girl, I went to a Catholic school, Sacred Heart, and we had to walk there.

I went there kindergarten through part of fourth grade. My brother was a year-and-a-half older and, so, we would walk to school together. The neighborhood was starting to get rough already. Dayton's Bluff, as you know, probably, is a very, very rough neighborhood—still to this day—so that's why we moved out of there, but while we lived there, we were very happy and joyful. I loved living there. I loved all of my friends. I loved all of the community.

My parents decided we had to get out of there. We moved to Roseville. My dad became a policeman. Still, I didn't know we were poor. Back then, women wore housedresses. They stayed home. They did not work. The kids would just run crazy. We all did from dawn until dusk. My mom used to have—they used to call them coffee clutches. Her and the neighbor ladies would all sit around and drink their coffee and talk about their life, their kid, their families, their thoughts, their religion, especially, because everybody was very religious.

They were usually held at our house. My mom hated coffee—never drank it. She would *[laughter]* take her little coffee cup and pour it into her saucer and swirl it around so nobody would realize she wasn't really drinking it. All of the moms wore their housedresses. All of them got together at 10:00 every morning, and none of the mothers worked. That was just unheard of. Nor was divorce ever heard of. Nobody had heard of divorce.

When my parents ended up getting divorced, we were the only ones. I was so embarrassed. I didn't want anybody to know because it was considered sacrilegious, if you will. When we did move to Roseville, we made some friends very quickly. The neighborhood, again, was filled with kids. There was a vacant lot down the block. We would all sit and play kickball and softball. We'd *[laughter]* have these old barrels that our parents used to burn the rubbish in. They didn't have rubbish pick up.

We'd empty out the barrels, and we would "walk" the barrel, we thought—a vintage idea of the log rolling that they do in the water right now. One of our favorite things to do was to sleep in our cars. In the back, my parents had a station wagon that we could put the seats down and, so, we would all pile in there, tell ghost stories *[laughter]* and sleep in the car. It was crazy. It was a happy time. Even though we were poor, it was such a happy time. We had so much fun.

I was completely oblivious to the chaos of our household. I did not know that—my parents kept very private and quiet as they were leading up to their divorce. We lived in a bubble if—when we lived in Roseville, all the way through high school. I still talk to a lot of my high school classmates. We lived in this little community bubble. We were not at all aware of the world outside of our immediate little school and neighborhood.

I think the first time we really became aware of the big world outside of us was when they started the draft for the Vietnam War. I remember being at school as—the draft was based on birthdates. I remember being in school and watching the boys come into school just hysterical because their number—their birthdate came up for the draft. I think that's really the first time we became all aware of the world outside of our confined little space.

I know I'm jumping all over, and I apologize, Cole. When I was 13, I think, my father—I think I mentioned my father was a cop, but he was also a gambler. He played cards at a place called Johnny White's on Rice Street. A lot of his friends were well-to-do people. One in particular—his name was T. Eugene Thompson—I don't know if you're familiar with that story. T. Eugene Thompson—fascinating—you'll have to look it up—was convicted of hiring someone to kill his wife.

T. Eugene Thompson was one of my dad's gambling buddies. I remember we had—all of a sudden, this dog showed up in our household, and I didn't know why. It was a little Dachshund. It was an idiot dog. It wasn't very bright. A week after the dog showed up at our house, we heard about T. Eugene Thompson's wife, Carol, had been murdered in her home. My dad and his other friends—his other gambling buddies, Jim Playsted—there's a few others—were all part of this conspiracy to murder her.

Just as a sidebar, my friend Sandra—my friends Scott and Sandra—Scott's uncle wrote a book about the murder. My friend Sandra shared it with me, not realizing that we had a part of that piece of history. Carol Thompson, they lived in Highland Park when she was murdered. That was a horrible situation. Like I say, I was 13. It was right around the time that President Kennedy was murdered. That was like, "Oh, my God. There's a world outside of us." I remember sitting in class—again, I'm—apologize for jumping all over, but I remember it so—

**CS:** That's fine.

**JP:** In class, we were talking about—I was in my social studies class. They turned the loudspeaker on and—and talking about President Kennedy having been shot. At this point, it had not yet been released that he had been murdered. The entire day, my junior high, we all sat quiet in our classrooms, nobody saying a word, listening to the news over the loudspeaker. 1963, that was a big year when I started realizing that there really was a world outside of our little community.

The murder of President—and we all—everybody thought John F. Kennedy was the most handsome man. He was like a rockstar. Everybody thought he was so handsome and so charismatic. We were no exceptions. Just as a sidebar, after I had my daughter in '76, she went on a field trip to Fort Snelling. She said all of her teachers were going just crazy because there was some man there. I said, "Well, what was the man's name?" She said, "I don't remember. The last name was Kennedy." It wasn't JFK. It was Ted. That's just a little bit of a sidebar.

When we were growing up, we were—our life was very rigid because of our Catholic upbringing. Everything had to be rigid. We had to do our chores. We had to eat our dinner. We had to have manners at the table. If we were even five minutes late coming in at—in the nighttime, we would be grounded for two weeks. It was very, very rigid. We went to church every Sunday. We went to bible study. We went to confirmation. Everybody in the neighborhood did. We all did that. That's the way the families were.

**CS:** We'll get to the religion part at the bottom—or not the bottom, but there's a part for religion going forward.

**CS:** Did you have any family pets growing up?

**JP:** Mm-hmm. [*Unintelligible 12:30*]. We had a dog named Cindy. It was a Collie. Cindy, she was a beautiful dog. My parents weren't very bright when it came to recognizing signs of Cindy being pregnant. She was laying in the basement, and we had company over. I think it was the Thompson family, actually. We brought them all down. "Oh, come and see our dog, Cindy. She's laying downstairs. She doesn't feel good."

Well, out popped babies. *[Laughter]* It was embarrassing. Back then, our dogs could walk around the neighborhood. They weren't leashed. They weren't confined into a fenced area. Cindy was very inquisitive, and she was sprayed by a skunk. My parents, of course, didn't realize—I don't know why they weren't so—they were smart people, but they didn't understand pets, I guess. "Quick, get the dog inside! We smell a skunk outside," not realizing it was the dog that had been sprayed.

My dad started calling around. "What should we do?" He started running around the neighborhood to everybody's house trying to get tomato juice because tomato juice was supposed to help with the stench *[distorted audio 13:47]* out. Didn't have enough tomato juice, so the only other thing he could think of was to shave the dog. He had a sense of humor. He decided to shave Cindy to look like a lion, with the mane around the head, and around the paws and things.

It was adorable. Back then, we could bring our pets to Como Park. It was so much fun. We used to go to Como Park and show everybody our dog. There were actually some old people who thought Cindy was one of the lions that we were taking for a walk. It was just one of those fun, goofy things that our—we had a sense of humor. We had a good upbringing. We were happy kids.

Every Friday night, my parents would make malted milks and hamburgers and homemade french fries. Every Friday night. Every day of the week, we had a special meal planned. Sundays was always roast at Grandma's house. They lived next door to us. Mondays was chipped beef on toast. Because we were poor, we had these odd things. Tuesday was a pasta dish with creamed corn. That was it—pasta and creamed corn. Of course, back then, they called it noodles.

Every breakfast, we had oatmeal—period—nothin' else. For lunch, my mom would pack our lunch every day for school. It was Worcestershire—no—Braunschweiger sandwiches and sliced apple that, of course, by the time it was lunchtime, it was all brown and icky. I hated the Braunschweiger, so I didn't really eat lunch. Back then, we didn't have free and reduced lunches, so we just had to make do.

We were too poor to buy bread, so my mom used to make—every Sunday, she would make five loaves of bread. Every day of the week, we would go through—there was seven of us in the family. She was not a happy woman, I will say that, until after my parents got divorced. Then, she turned and changed. She was still kind of a mean, angry woman. My dad was the one with the sense of humor, and most of us kids picked that up.

**CS:** Okay. Next, please describe the ways in which your family's economic status influenced your childhood.

**JP:** Well, like I mentioned, we did not know that we were poor. For example, if we would go to the—our entertainment would be the—be things like go to the drive-in theater. We would all have to wear our pajamas. My parents would take the paper grocery bags, fill it with popcorn, and that's what we would eat at the drive-in theater. We couldn't afford to go to a concession stand. It was the same thing with the state fair. We could not afford to go to the state fair.

*[Laughter]* We would drive close to a state fair, and then my dad would open the trunk and put all of us *[laughter]* kids in the trunk, and then he and my mom would pay to park. There was just two of them. Then, they would let us all out *[laughter]* at the state fair. Of course, we couldn't eat at the concession stands. We didn't have any money, so we would have to go back to the car to eat our lunch that they would bring.

When we moved to Roseville, I was in fourth grade. I didn't have any shoes, so I had to wear moccasins for school. At the time, I didn't realize that I should've been embarrassed more. We rode our bikes around a lot. That was our entertainment. My dad, who, because of his gambling, he actually traded some winnings for scuba tank and scuba diving stuff.

We would go to the local lake, and we would jump in the water and think we were just hot shit because we got to do this scuba diving, even though we didn't go deeper than knee high. But we still thought we were pretty special. We never took vacations. We couldn't afford them. We didn't know anybody else *[audio cuts out 18:26]*. We didn't care. We didn't know. I didn't know that we were poor until I got to high school.

**CS:** Okay. Now I'd like to know about your experiences with religion, such as Catholicism, Lutheranism, *et cetera*.

**JP:** Right.

**CS:** Just—

**JP:** Well, our family—

**CS:** Oh, sorry. Describe what you can recall about your family's religious practices when you were growing up.

**JP:** Well, we were very, very Catholic. Sacred Heart is where I went to school, kindergarten through fourth grade. I remember they used to have what is called the "crying room", where the mom and their kids would all go up and sit in the crying room, so they did not disturb the congregation. I remember sitting in that room. I specifically remember, back then, we had to get

all dressed up for church. My mom would curl my hair in rags. We didn't have curlers back then. We didn't have hot rollers—nothing. She would tie my hair up with rags—twirl it and then tie it in a knot. That's how we used to curl my hair. I remember sitting up there one time. My brother spit at me. I said as loud as I could, "He stuck his tongue out and spit at me," just as the microphone's being turned back on in the crying room. Of course, I didn't—my parents did not think it was funny at all, even though everybody was cracking up.

Every day in our Catholic school, we went to church every day. Every single day we went to church. I remember the kindergarten teacher, and the first-grade teacher, they could tell if we were swinging our legs in the pew because our heads would have some kind of a reaction. They would hit us on the head with a yardstick. The school was very, very strict. It was run by nuns.

Our parents expected us to behave 100 percent. When we moved to Roseville, they could not afford to send us to Catholic school anymore. We went to public school, but we did go to St. William, which was a Catholic church in Roseville, which was up near Victoria and 694. We would do bible study class. We would take all—every Wednesday night, we'd go there.

After the fact, my girlfriends from high school all said, "Well, why didn't you come out with us? You stayed and went to religion class, and the rest of us were out running around in so-and-so's car." I wouldn't dare because my parents would [*audio cuts out 21:24*]. My parents decided to leave the church when my brother was going through confirmation. Marty was four years younger than me.

He was going through confirmation class, and the priest called my parents in and said, "Here's the [*audio cuts out 21:43*]. Your kid cannot be confirmed because you are not giving 10 percent of your income to the church." That was the rule back then. My parents said, "We can't afford to." They said, "Well, then we're not going to confirm him." That's when our whole family lost—gave up on religion. We couldn't even talk about religion at that point after that.

I'll tell you what, when I was—because I was so ingrained with religion and Catholicism, I remember being probably in about fifth grade, looking at a book about the human body. I, obviously, could clearly find the heart, but I could not find the soul, and I was too embarrassed to ask about it. I thought I must be missing it, so I didn't ask anybody about it. I believed that there was actually a physical organ in the body called the soul.

Back then, we would say—we'd—the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost. It was the Holy Ghost back then. It's not anymore. Now it's the Holy Spirit. In my later years in high school, I started missing religion, so I would take the family station and go to the cathedral. I would go to High Mass just simply because I felt I needed the presence of God 'cause I was raised with it. I



thought, "I'm really making a mess of my life if I can't [*distorted audio 23:20*] God." Nobody went with me, but nobody stopped me from going.

**CS:** Okay. Now I'd like to learn more about the neighborhood in which you grew up. If you moved during childhood, you may wish to reflect on more than one neighborhood. This is fine to do, but please indicate as you do it. Please describe what comes to mind when thinking about the neighborhood in which you grew up.

**JP:** All right. 'Til fourth grade, I lived on the East side of Saint Paul—Dayton's Bluff. The big thing was the amount of kids. We had all had sidewalks. We all could just run across the street to play with our friends. The boys in the neighborhood decided they wanted to have a club and, in order to join the club, you had to know your initials. Well, I had no idea what [*distorted audio 24:09*]. I was probably five at the time, I'm guessing. I would just cry at the door because I wanted to be part of the club.

Finally, that night, my brother told me what my initials were. In our home, it was the old Figge home. It was owned by William Figge, who—my grandfather bought it from William Figgy. William Figgy was the brew master at Hamm's Brewery. Even though we didn't—we always felt like we were special because we were growing up in the Figgy house.

They had a back porch—a huge back porch. There was 21 windows in it. They had three beds that was suspended by cables in the ceiling. On hot summer nights, my brother and I would go up there and sleep. If we bind our body up just right, we could touch the ball with our feet, so we could make the bed spin until we fell asleep. Well, I don't know what on earth—we must've been telling ghost stories or something—but we swear that house was haunted.

We actually felt a presence come in the room, look at us, lay on the other bed, and go to sleep. [*Audio cuts out 25:28*]. Then we had the same situation downstairs. Because we had boarders living up in the bedrooms—not the—that porch where we—but other rooms—we had to use the library as our bedroom. I remember waking up and seeing this, thinking, "I'm seeing this woman in white, standing there looking down upon me," and I'm freaking out and waking up my mother.

My mom was like, "Don't be afraid. If you see them again, just invite them to come in for coffee." She was very comforting—very, very comforting. We would have thunder storms [*distorted audio 26:15*] listen for the thunder and point out the lightning [*distorted audio 26:20*] beautiful. It was [*distorted audio 26:23*] as mothers do. It was a very—and I was a busy—mentally busy child my entire life.

I remember things like we had another front porch with the hammock on it. Back then, the hammocks had these big zippers. I fell and cut my head on the zipper and had to go to the

hospital. I remember my mom shoveling the snow and hitting me in the eye [*unintelligible 26:57*]. I remember my mom ironing. We used to have this big ironing press down in the basement, a big, huge roller—two rollers—that would roll simultaneously.

She would lay the clothing on it, the sheets on it—everything on it—and run it through to heat it up, take the wrinkles out, so she could fold it up. I remember being down [*distorted audio 27:24*], leaning against the washing machine with the—of course it's an old wringer washing machine and the vibration of it would put me to sleep, it was pretty funny. [*Distorted audio 27:39*] funny things. [*Unintelligible 27:43*].

We had a basement bathroom, and we had an upstairs bathroom. Because the boarders lived upstairs, my parents always had everybody use the basement bathroom. The basement was unfinished and was a very scary, spooky place. I remember my grandmother coming up from the stairs—my mother not realizing it—and—back then, they didn't have disposable diapers. They had cloth ones. My mom would just reach her hand around the door frame and toss diapers down.

Well, she hit my grandmother in the face. I remember distinctly hearing my grandmother going, "Oh!" [*Laughter*] It was so funny. These are bringing up some amazing memories, Cole, [*audio cuts out 28:33*]. The neighborhood was packed, kids everywhere. We thought the neighborhood was haunted. The neighborhood started getting rough. My little brother kept getting in trouble because he was—he was a brilliant man, but he was really too smart for school. He was bored and so, what did he do but cause drama?

My parents had to get us out of the neighborhood before he completely fell apart. I remember we were playing on an empty lot—that was probably first grade—and the cops came and chased us out, said, "Go on, you kids! Get out of here!" One of the neighborhood kids pointed at me and said, "She's a burglar!" I started crying. I thought, "I am not a burglar! I'm Berglin! I'm not a bad guy!" Very distinctive memories.

As I went to Catholic school, the nuns lived in a convent across the street. Whenever the teacher needed somebody [*distorted audio 29:43*], I would raise my hand. I always wanted to go over there. I loved going over there to see the nuns. It was such a place of peace to me. There was never any chaos, never any drama. The nuns were all so healthy and so kind. That made me want to become a nun.

I think that's why, even after my folks were kicked out of the church or walked away from the church, that's why I went back. That's why I went to the cathedral in high school. I was still thinking I wanted to be a nun. Of course, I never did. Then, 10 years old through high school, we

lived in Roseville. Once again, we still have a lot of *[distorted audio 30:33]*, but we would have, what, 10, 12 kids at the house.

Lake Owasso was just—oh, not too far. They would shovel out skating rinks for us. All of the kids in the neighborhood, we would all grab our skates and go down there and spend the afternoon skating and coming home in tears because we were so cold and couldn't function. That was another one of our joyful things to do. We had sleepovers every single weekend with anybody who wanted to sleep over.

My parents got divorced when we lived in Roseville, and life changed dramatically. Thank you, Jesus, for my grandfather. He helped pay the bills, so we could function as a family. We could still eat. Back then, they didn't have things like food stamps or support for utilities. He was very kind and did all of that. Every Saturday morning, for example, my mom was a clean freak. I'm sure she had OCD, undiagnosed.

Every Saturday morning, we would have to scrub the entire house *[unintelligible 31:49]*. We had to open up all of the bedroom windows, winter or summer. In winter, we would tuck towels under the doors to have—the cold would not seep throughout the house. Only then could we go to the Goodwill to go shopping for new clothes. That's just what we did. Of course, at that point we were realizing that we were poor, 'cause our friends were going to Target, which had the best—the first Target store was in Roseville.

Our friends were going there to buy their clothes. We were going to the Goodwill. I think that's when we finally realized that we were poor. I was probably 13, 14 at that point. I had to make my own prom dresses if I wanted to go to the prom. I was very shy, reserved. Teachers at school would always tell my mother, "You need to talk to her. You need to make her become more aware of what's going on. You need to make her vocal."

My mom worked very, very hard at trying to help me become more outgoing 'cause I was very much an introvert. She would force me to sit at the dining room table and practice my handwriting because it was so bad. Before my dad got—before my folks got *[audio cuts out 33:14]*, my dad and I would sit—every Saturday night, we would sit at the dining room table and play gin rummy.

It was so special to me, but I did not realize—I didn't learn 'til later—that my dad would do that because he wanted to piss my mom off, because she didn't like him having fun with us kids, so he would do it intentionally. "Let's gin rummy." We'd play for hours. I loved the game. I still love the game. I still have very good memories of it. I also had nightmares about it.

**CS:** Next, I would like to learn about the values shared by your family and your neighbors. Values are principles or standards that help guide behavior. What memories come to mind to demonstrate what these values were for your family and your neighbors?

**CS:** Like I say, we were very religious. Religion translated into the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were our values. If it was one of the Ten Commandments, that was our value. My parents were very, very strict. Like I mentioned, we were—all of the neighbor kids, we all went to religion classes. We all had rules and regulations. We all got punished for the same things, such as being late getting home.

"Come out and play." "Well, I can't. I'm grounded for two weeks," 'cause we didn't get home 'til 10 after 9 last night, and the deadline was 9:00. There was no swearing; there was no fighting; there was no hitting. We were all required to behave and behave very, very well at all times. My grandpa used to love to do magic tricks for us. I don't even remember were the magic tricks any good. I have no idea. I don't recall them [*unintelligible 35:16*].

He was pretty cool at that. He insisted that I have golf lessons. He thought I should be a golfer. My other grandfather wanted me to be a musician. He had me take accordion lessons. I didn't end up doing either one. It was just not good. I didn't enjoy it. All of the parents wanted us to take lessons to do everything. We were taught that we could do anything we wanted to do. We were taught to keep our chin up. We were taught not to let kids bully us.

We were taught that we are better than that, that we could turn the other cheek and walk away from any kind of situation that we are [*distorted audio 36:08*]. We were never taught about pedophilia. We were never taught about traveling overseas. None of us were sat down at the dinner table with our parents talking about world affairs. We just didn't do that kind of stuff. We lived in our own little bubble, our own little community. We were all the same—same religion, same rules, same values, same everything, which was be good.

**CS:** Okay. Now I'm going to ask you all about leisure time. Describe some of the ways in which you, your family, and your neighbors engaged in leisure time when you were growing up.

**JP:** We would [*audio cuts out 36:55*] the beach all summer [*audio cuts out 36:58*], but my parents did not wanna [*distorted audio 37:02*] beach because that's where all the hoods hung out. That's what [*audio cuts out 37:07*]. They had the baldies and the greasers back in high school, back in the day. All of the greasers hung out at Lake Owasso, so our parents would take us to Snail Lake, which was a very private little beach where most of the families all had little, tiny toddlers.

We couldn't go to do what we wanted to do with—we wanna go to the beaches where we might see some friends from high school. We were not allowed. We were not allowed to go to the roller rink for the same reason because the greasers hung out at the roller rink, and the baldies stayed home and was behaved. That's how we were raised. It was just anything we could do for free; the beach, the state fair, I mentioned; the drive-in theater, I mentioned.

We would all have to wear our pajamas. That's how our parents guaranteed we would stay in the car and not wander off. Nobody's parents drank, at least not in front of the children. It turns out, of course, they did, but it was kept private from all of the kids. Nobody swore. We would have a lot of picnics—lots and lots of picnics—and everybody would contribute. We would have family and friends coming over. It was all the free stuff; ice skating down at the lake; loading up in the trunk, so we could go and do something.

**CS:** Okay. Next, let's discuss your experiences with schooling. Please describe what it was like going to school as a child.

**JP:** Well, when I was in third or fourth grade, we were taught by the nuns. Some were kind and some were scary. In first grade, they had a nun who was just so young and sweet and kind. She made us all want to learn how to read. The second-grade nun was the—wicked, wicked, wicked. She was the one that would hit us with the yardstick in church. I remember when she was passing out our report cards at the end of the year.

She stared at you, and she said, "Four of you are not moving on to third grade. Four of you are going to be in my class again next year." She would watch and hand the first child the report card. The kid would look at it, and they would either sob, or they would—said nothing. I was so afraid that I would be one of those four kids. It was just a terrible, terrible time. Then, of course, moving to a public school, in fourth grade, when I had only known the Catholic, I was frightened.

I was very frightened. I didn't know what it was going to be like. I didn't know what to expect. I didn't have any [*distorted audio 40:20*]. All I had was moccasins. After I had adjusted to school, it was so cute. There was two different Brownie troops. Girls in each of the Brownie troops would say, "I want you to join us." "No, I want you to join us." We did all of that cool, fun stuff.

I loved school—loved it all the way through high school. I hated some of [*crosstalk 40:49*] 'cause I couldn't go to school. My mom, like I say, pushed me—forced me to become more of an extravert. I would participate in the school plays, cheerleading. She wanted me to be recognized as a leader. That was very hard for me, but she pushed me into it, and I did it. I loved school—loved it, loved it. My grades were decent. I was a real solid B student.

I remember one time in middle school I was waiting for my dad to pick me up from something. I'm sitting here looking—I'm sitting at the front door looking at the fire alarm, and I just—for some reason, Cole, I just walked up [ *distorted audio 41:44*]. I was so scared that I was going to [ *unintelligible 41:50*]. [ *Laughter*] I was so certain I was.

When I was in middle school—or—well, it was junior high—oh, wait—yeah, junior high back then. We had junior high and high school. I would work at the school store during lunch hours selling pencils and notebooks and whatever. Because we were so poor, I guess I became a little bit of a thief. Every day I worked at the store I'd take a quarter—every day. Then my parents made me become a candy striper.

As a candy striper, I would either work in the children's ward [ *distorted audio 42:37*] them, or I would work in the gift shop. Every time I worked, I took a Reese's candy bar—every time. I didn't have any guilty feelings about it. I think it was just my way of saying to the world, "Fuck you, I'm poor." I don't know.

**CS:** Okay. For our final topic, I'm going to ask you to reflect on local and global issues such as war, poverty, discrimination, social unrest, *et cetera*. In your opinion, what were some of the biggest local or global issues affecting the people in your neighborhood when you were growing up?

**JP:** Well, in high school, my graduating class—we had 350 [ *distorted audio 43:27*]. We only had one black girl—one—that's it. Discrimination, we didn't know there was [ *distorted audio 43:36*]. We didn't. We weren't aware of—well, we were aware of the racial unrest that was going on around 1963. My dad would load us up in the car and bring us up to the Dale-Selby area because there was a lot of civil unrest going on around there because of discrimination.

We didn't understand it and our parents did not explain it. We just knew that there was fighting and the National Guard and scary stuff goin' on. I wish my parents would've done a better job teaching and helping us understand. I think when President Kennedy was shot, that was a very huge thing at school that day, but it was never spoken of after that; not at home, not over dinner, not in class, not in social study, nothing.

It was the same with the civil unrest, nobody spoke about it. I don't know if they intentionally raised us to be so sheltered, or if—I don't know. I still talk to kids from high school now, and they all feel the same way. We were all so sheltered from what was going on in the world. That was really when the Vietnam War started to drop, that we all started becoming really more aware of what was going on, what was going to happen to our friends.

Allen, a classmate, went to Vietnam. He came back without any arms and legs. I think that was really [ *distorted audio 45:22*]. We all started going to college after high school and—the civil

unrest, the Vietnam War—most of us ended up becoming hippies and protesting the war— being in the marchings, being in the sit-ins—because we thought we had to do something even though we didn't fully understand, or grasp, what was going on.

I was born only five years after World War II. Nobody ever even talked about World War II. I know I'd find both of my grandfather's draft cards, but I don't recall either one of them actually going to war. I don't think my father ever did. Like I say, it was just not—until we grew up and learned to talk about it as high schoolers.

**CS:** Okay. Is there anything else you can think of that you want to expand on?

**JP:** Let's see. I was writing some notes. I never moved away from the Twin Cities my entire life. I stayed there. My daughter was born in 1976. I always tell her, "If you are going to move away, move before you have children, 'cause once you have kids, you're not going anywhere unless you're takin' everybody with you." Through the years, I ended up adopting three kids, not because I couldn't have any more—I only had the one—but because there were kids in need.

Yeah, I think, "I'm 71 years old, and I've got a 7-year-old. What was I thinking?" I know. The courts even let me adopt her. I'm starting to see the world through her eyes, and I'm finding that I'm starting to keep her in a little bubble just like I was. When the George Floyd murder happened and all of those protests, I knew women who had children the same age. They were hauling the kids down there saying, "They've gotta learn about this stuff."

I said, "Listen, these kids are only four years old. No, they don't. Let them be children." I was highly criticized. I stand my ground. I protect her. She's Hmong, and she's Black and during Black History month, she was so bullied. She goes to a little STEM school down in Faribault. She was so bullied that I went to the school. I said, "You guys, we need to do something. Either you need to stop teaching Black History month, or you need to protect little kids like her."

I'm fighting to protect her from knowing anything about the world just like my parents did to me. At one point am I going to say, "This is the world, the big world,"? I don't know. I find I'm mimicking what my parents did.

**CS:** Okay. This is the end of our interview. Your responses are invaluable, and we really appreciate that you took the time to do this today. Thank you so much for participating.