

Oral History of STEPHEN J. POLLAK
First Interview-April 8, 2002

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of the Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewee is Stephen J. Pollak, and the interviewer is Katia Garrett. The interview took place at the Shea & Gardner law firm at 1800 Massachusetts Avenue, in the District of Columbia on Monday, April 8, 2002, at 10:00 a.m. This is the first interview.

Ms. Garrett: Let's just jump right in, Steve, to talking about you and where it all started. When you were born, where you grew up, your family and the like. Tell me about your parents.

Mr. Pollak: Well, I was born March 22, 1928. My parents lived on the South Side of Chicago, close to their parents. I was the first child. My parents were married in August 1926, and I was born in 1928.

Ms. Garrett: What were your parents' names?

Mr. Pollak: Maurice August Pollak and Laura Kramer Pollak. My father was 13 years older than my mother. He was a head taller or more than my mother. My mother was almost immediately out of Smith College (class of June 1926) and my father had gone two years to the University of Chicago. His father had died when he was quite young. His mother never remarried. When he was going to the University some friend of the family counseled him that he should get on with the business of life and leave college and get a job, which he did, probably greatly to his regret. He had held a number of different jobs, none of which I am really familiar with when he married my mother. My mother has told me that my father lost the job he had while they were on their honeymoon. He then went into the real estate business that my mother's father and another man had begun in 1893, Draper & Kramer. He spent a lifetime in that business. My father loved that business. He

worked five and a half days a week. When I can begin remembering anything, I was then living in a suburb of Chicago. My family moved north of the city to a village called Highland Park on Lake Michigan and rented a house in a little division of Highland Park called Ravinia. It was on the Northwestern Railroad line between Chicago and Milwaukee. My father took the “8:10” in the morning to work and the “5:10” home. The train left from Highland Park and went non-stop into the city. One memory that I have is that each Sunday evening, or Sunday, we would drive into the city to visit the grandparents.

Ms. Garrett: Were all four of the grandparents living during your childhood?

Mr. Pollak: No. My father’s father had died when he was a young boy, and I didn’t ever know him. My mother’s parents were living at 53rd and University Avenue on the South Side of Chicago. My father’s mother and his sister, who didn’t ever marry, and a brother of his mother, were also living on the South Side, ultimately at 51st and University. We would visit them Sunday -- my memory is of visiting each family. I don’t think that those visits saw the grandparents getting together. We would visit one set and then the other.

Ms. Garrett: What was that neighborhood like? 53rd and University, 51st and University?

Mr. Pollak: Well, it was, to my recollection a very benign, probably totally white neighborhood. It was five, ten blocks north of the University of Chicago campus. I remember that milk was delivered -- the families purchased their milk from the Wanzer Dairy that delivered milk to the homes in a horse-drawn wagon. I can remember hearing the clop-clop of the horse on the pavement. There was a small

drugstore on the corner of 51st and University, and I can remember going in there and getting candy or something like that with one or another of the family of my father. My grandfather raised English Bulldogs that he had brought over from London, England, to the United States, and showed them in the shows of the American Kennel Club. I remember my parents telling me that he was the first Jewish member of the American Kennel Club. He had in his back yard in the city a run and dog houses for a number of these English bulls. One of the show names of one of the best dogs was “Glorious Sobriquet.” In any event, the grandparents, like grandparents everywhere, doted on us children. I had one sibling, a sister, who is two years younger than I am. It was a sizeable trip from Highland Park to the South Side of Chicago. When we would go home on Sunday evenings, we would drive along the waterfront east of the Loop in Chicago, and there were these neon signs on the top of the buildings. I remember one of them was for Glidden Paint. And it showed someone pouring paint over the world. We would be driving home in the dark and we would get to that place on the trip and my father would always point out these neon signs and my mother would say, “Oh, Maurice you’re waking up the children.” I think in a way that may tell something about my parents. My father enjoyed making us children happy about whatever was available and my mother was thinking about what was good for us, like getting enough sleep or making the trip go along without incident. The town in which we lived was just a benign existence. The family next door named Armstrong had a son my age, Mason. I was friendly with him and we would go

overnight to each other's house and his parents were just like my own parents. They accepted us running around doing whatever we did. I had a friend across the street, named Buzz Laurie who became an artist and is a painter living in Taos, New Mexico. We called ourselves the "Three Musketeers" and played all around the home area. Down the street, I had another friend named Bobby Jones, who now lives in Durango, Colorado. Those were my earliest friends. Mason died relatively young. Young meaning probably 35 or 40.

Ms. Garrett: Are you still in touch with them?

Mr. Pollak: I am at the holidays, and I have purchased paintings of Buzz Laurie. I was just in touch with him because I offered to purchase one of his paintings for my daughter who lives in Boulder, Colorado. He paints Southwest United States scenes. Buzz sent me a bunch of his transparencies to look at. Yes. And I'm in touch with Bob Jones at the year end. Durango is a hard place to get to, and I haven't seen him in many, many years, but we were friends and remain so. My friendships arose based upon the capability to meet without automobiles and those boys lived very close. I had to cross one street to get to the Laurie household and the Jones household. A little further away (meaning three blocks), there was a family with twins my age named Hotchkiss. I went all through school with Gene and Jim and both twins are still good friends of mine. Jim is an investment counselor and has provided that kind of help for my family and my parents and my wife Ruth's parents. Gene became a college president and we are still close. So, those are four people that I've known for 65 or 70 years, pretty stable acquaintances.

We all attended public school right from kindergarten through the end of high school. Bob Jones went away to high school. He had very accomplished sisters and one brother, and I think the pressures on him academically were heavy. He wasn't doing as well as they had done, although I think he was very capable. The twins were separated after the first or second year of high school.

Ms. Garrett: They were sent to different schools?

Mr. Pollak: Gene continued at the public school and Jimmy went to Vermont Academy, for no reason, I think, other than to foster their independent development. Then they went to the same college and I went to that college, too, Dartmouth. They and I joined the Navy when we arrived at college, and I went through the Navy with them, so I've spent a lot of time with the Hotchkisses. They are probably my longest close friends from childhood.

Ms. Garrett: Before we get into school, I want to hear a little bit more about your parents. Your mom, you said she went to Smith. What did she major in and what did she do when she returned to Chicago?

Mr. Pollak: My mother went away to Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. Interestingly enough, my mother was called Polly during her youth and then she married Maurice Pollak and that fit with her new last name. She was a good student. I don't know what her major was. It surprises me that I don't. She spent her junior year at the University of Chicago. She told me recently that she had met my father and that led her to transfer to the University of Chicago. I don't believe she prepared herself for a career. I think that those were not life paths that

were recognized as available then. I think my mother was very capable and in today's world would have charted out a career. She actually followed a career of voluntary work.

Ms. Garrett: What kind of volunteer work did she do?

Mr. Pollak: Her major activity that I remember during my childhood was the League of Women Voters. She was very active in the League and during my young years was President of the Illinois State League and served on the National Board. Given my propensity for horrible puns and not-so-funny jokes, I would often say my mother was active in the "National League," meaning the baseball league, although, of course, it was the National League of Women Voters. She knew, I think, the founder of the League, Anna Lord Strauss, and other women leaders. She was active in the League with Emily Taft Douglas, who was married to Paul Douglas, later Senator from Illinois. Emily Taft, as she was often referred to, was for a term or two a congresswoman from Illinois. My mother also was active, as was her brother Ferdinand Kramer, who with my father, ran the real estate business after my grandfather died in 1944, in the Chicago Planning and Housing Council. The Council has had a material effect on the development of the City of Chicago. That was a volunteer activity. Later, perhaps during the 1950s, maybe later, my mother was a member of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission which was a seven-person authority with power over planning of public works in northeastern Illinois, including the City of Chicago. That was a public body to which she was named by the Governor.

When I was little, I remember that many of the people living in Highland Park would call my mother when elections came around to find out how they should vote. She was up on politics and interested herself in it. I don't remember either my mother or my father actively involving themselves in political campaigns. My mother was working for good government. I harbored the view then that my mother was a Democrat, or supported the Democratic candidates mostly, certainly Franklin D. Roosevelt. I recall my father as being more business oriented and possibly leaning a little toward the Republicans, but I'm not sure that he did. Later, I don't think that he did at all.

Ms. Garrett: Was politics or public affairs something that was discussed in your household a lot?

Mr. Pollak: I think it was. I remember in grammar school, called "Ravinia School," my father for a period of time served on the School Board for the District 108 which consisted of four or five grammar schools. In 1936, my school had a mock election for president. My memory is that there was a large number of students for Alf Landon from Kansas. I was one of four voting for Franklin D. Roosevelt. The mock election could have been in 1940 when Willkie was the Candidate.

Ms. Garrett: A distinct minority in the town were Democrats?

Mr. Pollak: That's true, but I don't have the feeling that Highland Park was an archly conservative area. I think it elected Republicans in Lake County, and that continues to this day. Concern with public affairs, concern for good government, these were concerns of our household. From almost the earliest that I can

remember I was interested in civics, probably coming a good bit from my mother. I remember my mother having an interest in those concerns stemming from and driving her involvement with the League. My father was supportive, but I don't think that he exhibited, at least at a verbal level, the same interest. My father liked to play golf and the family was a member of a Jewish country club located in Ravinia called Northmoor. My father played golf each Sunday in the temperate part of the year. Sometimes as I grew older he would come out early from the city on Wednesday or Friday or Saturday and I'd play nine holes with him. He taught me to play golf and I have very fond memories of doing that with him. He liked athletics and was very supportive of my interest in athletics. My parents were big on volunteering. One responsibility my father took on, possibly connected to his service on the School Board, was to be the citizen responsible for supervision of the public ice skating rink. Winters were cold, and starting in November, the playfield at the grammar school was flooded as an ice skating rink. We kids went skating every night there. There was one employee who would flood or spray the skating rink each evening and my father supervised that and probably other matters relating to the rink as well. We were very active ice skaters, my parents, my sister, and I.

When I was very young, our family would go with the very earliest kinds of skis and ski on the golf course which had a few very little hills.

Ms. Garrett: I imagine hills were hard to come by in that area.

Mr. Pollak: Very. As we got a little more accomplished, we went into southern Wisconsin and skied at a place called Wilmot. We also skied further north at La Crosse, Wisconsin, and Ishpeming, Michigan. My parents' closest friends were Bernard and Ruth Nath. They lived in Highland Park and had two daughters. Their daughter my age was named Marjorie. She was my earliest girlfriend. We went all through public school together. She is still a close friend of mine. One year we went skiing at Lacrosse over Christmas. When we were going home, it was very cold and we were at the railroad station waiting for the train. One would travel back and forth by train. I had been in a play or been reading a play, and went out on the platform and came back in to the station house and said to the group, "It is bleak without and I am but thinly clad." My mother has always remembered that, as have I. It was from Shakespeare. On cold days, my mother would repeat the saying with a twinkle in her eyes.

One of the lovable things about my mother, something that she has willed to me, is that she loves the almost musical sound of persons' last names. Highland Park was blessed by the fact that at the northern end, the whole town probably was maybe four miles from north to south, bordering on Lake Michigan, was Fort Sheridan, an army base. The community around Fort Sheridan was called Highwood and it had a large immigrant population of Italians and Swedes. That meant that the high school was more diversified than just suburbanite families. A lot of the Highwood families serviced in one way or another the needs of the military base and its personnel. In any event, in my high school class there were

many students with these melodic Italian names like Tagliapetria, Pignataria, Almadeo Minerini, Passuello. My mother used to like to roll these names off her tongue. The children from these Italian and Swedish families contributed a great deal to my learning experiences coming from different backgrounds.

My memory is that all through my 13 years of public school in Highland Park, kindergarten through eighth grade at Ravinia School and four years at Highland Park High School -- my graduating class in 1946 had 242 students -- is that there was one black family named Brown. There were two children in that family, the daughter was the younger of the two and may have been in my class. The son, whose name was Shelby Brown, was a year or two older than I was. It was a very white community that I grew up in. It was diversified by ethnicity somewhat, but not by race. My memory of diversity also includes diversities of religious background. The predominant religion was Christian among the people that lived in the community, but there was a significant Jewish presence. My memory, a kind of a subliminal awareness, was that being Jewish was not only being part of a minority, but I had this vague feeling that it was a disfavored minority.

Ms. Garrett: Did you have any experiences directly where you were disfavored?

Mr. Pollak: The only experience I can point to as a memory is some kind of playground incident where an older boy called me a "kike." I'm not sure I quite knew what it was, but I knew it wasn't a term for a favored person. I never had anybody fight me over being Jewish. There were undoubtedly a lot of Jewish children in my

school. I felt no minority status in grammar school. I played football, swimming and tennis in high school. I never felt any minority status there. There was a Jewish country club and one or more gentile country clubs in my home town. Among my boyhood friends, the Laurie family was Catholic, and the Jones and Armstrong families were perhaps Presbyterian. The Jones and Armstrong families belonged to the gentile country club, Exmoor. I felt those clubs were exclusionary.

My father was tall and was a good basketball player. In high school he had had three or four or five close friends. They all played on the basketball team, and then he and they went to the University of Chicago and played on the basketball team, incidentally for Amos Alonzo Stagg, who was the great stand-out football coach for the University of Chicago, which then was a powerhouse in football. Stagg coached the basketball team as well. All of my father's friends then joined a gentile fraternity and he was excluded. I think that was a life-affecting experience for my father. He didn't really count gentiles as reliable friends until very late in life because his close friends had parted from him at the beginning of college because he was Jewish. And so I think that seeped into my awareness. But how early and how much this awareness became influenced by difficulties and worse experienced by the Jews in Germany, I'm not able to distinguish now. I can remember an awareness in the family that we were Jewish and that we were different in that respect. I think that the pride that Jewish people now have in their Jewishness was less in my youth. Families still saw

assimilation as a major goal, and assimilation was perfectly fine on the part of a community in this country. There has developed feelings that people can be a hundred percent a part of the American experience and still have their lesser communities. That's a positive thing for people's self worth. There was less of that for me in my youth. I don't think I wanted to be different. I don't recall that those considerations made a difference to the people with whom I spent my time. I don't think that the Jewish-gentile difference made much of a difference in fact but it made some difference in my head.

Ms. Garrett: Was your family at all religious? Did you go to temple or services on holidays?

Mr. Pollak: My family was not very religious or at least that's the way it seemed to me. My mother felt that we should go to Sunday school, as it was called, at the North Shore Congregation Israel, which was in Glencoe, the next suburb to the south. My sister and I did for many years. The rabbi was named Shulman. I don't recall what age I began, but we would attend the regular Sunday service and then go to our classroom. I was resistant. My memory is that I was resistant because my father worked 5 1/2 days, so, to the extent that he was home and I was going to Sunday school, then I wouldn't have time with him. But that is at odds with the fact that each Sunday morning he played golf. It may be that my resistance was that there were perhaps Saturday classes or maybe Hebrew classes. I connect my resistance to wanting to be with my father who, I recall, was supportive of my desire to avoid going to Sunday school. I didn't open myself to the joys of religion. I found the classes boring. Neither of us, my sister Louise and I, was

confirmed or bar mitzvahed or bat mitzvahed. Later, my sister, who had a first marriage to Ray Marks, divorced, and married Chuck Salzman. Chuck is religious, and Louise is now quite religious. Her daughter -- she has three children -- her daughter Susan is ordained as a rabbi. I think that Louise has gotten a lot out of her religion.

My family always had a Christmas tree. Christmas was a big thing. I never saw anything out of the ordinary about celebrating Christmas until I married my wife, Ruth. Ruth is a granddaughter of the head orthodox rabbi of the State of Wisconsin. Her parents thought that a Jewish family that had a Christmas tree had made a terrible error. In our early years, when we had children, we had a Christmas tree, but in time, Ruth got me to give it up and I'm quite satisfied with that. I look back and think that I had confusions about who I was and what my relationship to Judaism was. I was resistant to it, probably taking a page from the assimilationists' book.

Ms. Garrett: Did there come a point when that resolved itself?

Mr. Pollak: Some time later. I went to Dartmouth College. Many influences led me there. One of them was that I harbored the view that fraternities played a lesser role there than at some other places. As a macro matter that may be true, but they played a major role at Dartmouth. I can remember before going to college talking over the dinner table with my parents about college fraternities and how they were discriminatory. That keys in with the experience of my father at the University of Chicago. I did not join a fraternity at Dartmouth. I never wanted to. This, I

concluded later, was a coming-of-age experience. Somewhat after I'd made this choice, I realized that I hadn't really made that choice myself. I felt I had made the choice I thought my parents would make or expected me to make. When this more adult, more independent thinking broke over me, I realized with some disappointment that it was perfectly fine not to join a fraternity, but it would have been better not to have joined for my own reasons, rather than my parents'. I was never sorry about it. It was just that it would have been better to have come to terms with my own thinking to say, "That isn't something I want to do. Those are not necessarily the people that I want to be with." In fact, many of my friends on the swimming team were fraternity members as were my close friends, the Hotchkisses. I was troubled by the idea of joining a segregated Jewish fraternity and I was also troubled by the idea of being a token Jewish member of an otherwise gentile fraternity. I didn't like either alternative, so the swimming team was my fraternity.

Ms. Garrett: You were growing up in some interesting times, I think, globally and domestically. I wanted to talk to you a little bit about what impact some of those events -- events of World War I, World War II, had on you and on your family and if the fate, the plight of the Jews in Europe, was something that was discussed or known, or if you understood much.

Mr. Pollak: I was 11 or 10 when Hitler began moving against the Sudetenland and then Czechoslovakia and later France. That was a matter of constant concern in our family. My family was committed from an early time to the idea that the

United States had to be involved in opposing the Nazis. There were hatemongers on the radio, Father Coughlin and Gerald L.K. Smith, who had to be Nazi sympathizers and spouted anti-Semitism on the radio. We were aware of those conditions. I followed all of that very closely. I was committed to the entry of the United States into the war. The United States' future was on the line.

Ms. Garrett: Where were you when you learned about Pearl Harbor? Do you remember that?

Mr. Pollak: I don't remember where I was. I think I was just at home on a Sunday afternoon. I remember where I was when I learned President Kennedy had been killed, but I don't remember where I was that Pearl Harbor day.

I remember the conditions in the United States in the Depression and the concerns that my family felt for people who didn't have work. Our household had a strong concern for public assistance and for government doing the right thing, driven by the ethic of the League of Women Voters with which my mother was active. These views must have been reinforced in my grammar school, although I don't recall much about that. As I got to seventh grade, I had a civics teacher – we had a home room teacher and I think my home room teacher was the same as my civics teacher – Lorraine Sinkler. She was very much concerned with good government and international cooperation and she had a large influence on me as did my mother.

Ms. Garrett: Were there any other teachers who filled that role in the early days?

Mr. Pollak: Well, I had important male teachers in high school. A lot of good solid teachers, all the way along. I think my public school education was a good education. The

public schooling was a good community to be a part of. I did very well as a student, but never thought of myself as a brilliant student. My three earliest friends often referred to me as “prof,” short for professor, although looking back on it I don’t really know why. I wasn’t really an intellectual youngster. I wasn’t reading deep books.

Ms. Garrett: What kind of books did you read? What did you enjoy?

Mr. Pollak: I remember enjoying the Hornblower books by C. S. Forester about the sea. My father had been in the Navy in World War I, and I had seen his picture in uniform. I always harbored the view as a youngster that I wanted to go into the Navy and I ultimately did. One of the great books that I read as a young person was Somerset Maugham’s *Of Human Bondage*. An influential reading for me was Dostoyevski’s *Crime and Punishment*, which I must have read later. I remember reading a book by Marcia Davenport, about coal mining in Britain, *How Green Was my Valley*. I read the Neville Shute books about South Africa. I liked reading novels. My memory of my education is that I did not draw as much out of a lot of it as I think was available, on history, on literature. I was doing a lot of different things, as well as growing up.

Ms. Garrett: What were your goals? What did you want to be when you grew up and had a career?

Mr. Pollak: From an early time I wanted to be in government. I thought that the government was a force for good, and that I wanted to be a part of it. I had a plan to go to college and to go to public administration school thereafter, Littauer at Harvard or

Maxwell at Syracuse or Woodrow Wilson at Princeton. The Navy sent me to college in something called the Holloway Plan and that obligated me to serve 15 months to two years after graduation on active duty. While I was in the Navy, President Truman, because of the Korean War, extended my term to three years. I applied to those three public administration schools, and then I applied to Yale Law School and entered the Law School. I didn't know any lawyers except for Bernard Nath, my parents' friend. I didn't know what he did as a lawyer. When I went to law school, I had no role models at all. I was confused in my first semester by all the terms for what to me seemed the same thing – petitioner, plaintiff, respondent, appellant, appellee, defendant. It was hard for me to get the case reports straight because I knew so little about the fabric of the law, which should have been otherwise because I had taken Constitutional Law at Dartmouth from Professor Robert Carr. I did not leave Dartmouth with the idea that I would become a lawyer.

I was active at Dartmouth in the National Student Association. I remember attending, possibly in the winter of '48-'49, one of the early convocations of the National Student Association at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. I became friendly there with a young woman from Mount Holyoke College named Charlotte Huston and later dated her. After college, she married Otto Reischer who was an immigrant from Austria. Otto was an economist working for the Labor Department in 1951-52. Otto and Charlotte were living in Washington. I was beginning my third year in the Navy. Ruth and I came to Washington to visit

Charlotte. Over lunch at a hotel at the corner of Pennsylvania and 18th Street, Otto asked me what I was planning to do when I got out of the Navy. I said, "I'm going to go to public administration school. I want to be in government." McCarthyism was then the bane of people in government. He said to me, "Well, that's a bad idea. If you go into the government and you are trained in public administration and somebody takes out after you for your views, they'll let you go, you won't have anywhere to go. Government is your only skill." He said a much better avenue to public service would be to become a lawyer. "Then," he said, "you can go in the government and if McCarthy or someone takes after you, you can just thumb your nose and get out of government and practice law."

Ms. Garrett: And that was the impetus for applying to law school?

Mr. Pollak: Yes. I had this feeling that Yale Law-trained lawyers were interested in public service. I applied only to Yale. That lunch really made a difference in my life. Otto didn't even know me. I'm still friendly with Charlotte. I served as Otto's lawyer. Otto died relatively young. Charlotte then, years later, married a wonderful MIT astrophysicist named George Clark. Law was almost an accident for me but it's been a very good calling.

Ms. Garrett: Was your family involved in any wartime activities during World War II?

Mr. Pollak: A cousin of my mother, Dr. Stanton Freidberg, an ear, nose and throat specialist, was in the Army during World War II and served in the Pacific. He sent me a little cap of a Japanese soldier. I remember taking it out of the wrapping and

recoiling from it, which must reflect the feelings I had as a youngster about the “enemy.”

Ms. Garrett: Did you have any awareness of the Japanese internment?

Mr. Pollak: I regret to say that if I did, I imagine I supported it. I thought then that the risks that the President spoke about warranted what was done. I don't think that anymore. At the same time, there were no Asians that I knew. I was aware of the internment. My memory is that I took seriously the idea of Japanese-Americans directing planes over America, so I thought there was a real threat. Now, it seems terrible to have accepted that. It was only years later that I became aware of underlying injustices of all sorts, including loss of land and businesses which non-Asian Americans took over. As far as I can recall, I am not distinguished by having had the independence of mind to condemn the internment at the time. As a general matter, I grew up supporting the rights that the Bill of Rights guarantees. I was conscious of those rights, and thought they were an important strength of our society. There was little conflict in my youth and I didn't see much suffering close up. When I saw it, as I felt there was suffering in Europe, I was supportive of doing something about it.

Ms. Garrett: At the end of World War II, where were you when you heard about it?

Mr. Pollak: I was a competitive swimmer. In the summers of 1943, '44 and '45, I went to a wonderful North Ontario, Canada, camp, run by the nation's outstanding swimming coach, Michigan University's Matt Mann, an immigrant from Britain. He ran a boys camp and his wife and daughter ran a companion girls camp on a

lake near Magnetawan in Ontario Province. I was first a camper and then a counselor at that camp, Camp Chikopi. I was at that camp in August 1945 when the war against Japan ended. The news came through. There was an aide to Matt, a woman, not as young as I was, maybe three or four years older, whose husband was in the military. I was conscious of her joy at his being able to come back. I had no contemporaneous knowledge of all of the celebrations photographed in Life Magazine. My memories of the wartime include sacrifices people were called upon to make. My father went to the 8:10 a.m. train in a car pool so that they would use little gas which was rationed. I remember using food stamps and gasoline stamps, shortages, saving tin cans and knitting squares for blankets. I remember earning money and saving it to buy war bonds. I was fully committed to going into the military as soon as I was of age, although I could have joined the Navy when I turned 17 in March of 1945 and I didn't. I projected going into the military after high school, and then the war ended. I remember members of the class two years ahead of me going in. There was a young woman named Kackie Watson. She was an "item," we would say today, with a young man who went away to the war and was killed in Europe. It brought the war home to me. He was here and then he was gone. The war was an overpowering presence during all those years. Every morning, one read the paper. When the Allies landed at Normandy, every day we would look at the paper to see how the battle lines moved. My recollection is that my education just proceeded along. The war probably didn't make that much difference in the way my life was going. The

social engineering that Roosevelt was pursuing had the full support of my household.

Ms. Garrett: Including your dad, who was engaged in business?

Mr. Pollak: There were tensions, but mother carried him along, I believe.

Ms. Garrett: It sounds like she was a strong personality.

Mr. Pollak: She was a strong personality. So was my father. My uncle Ferd Kramer went away to Washington, so my father ran the family business, Draper & Kramer.

Ms. Garrett: What was he doing there?

Mr. Pollak: He was part of the National Housing Administration and War Housing Administration. He brought his knowledge of that industry to Washington. During the Depression my father was an executive at Draper & Kramer, a real estate company begun in 1893 by my mother's father. The executives didn't take any salary at all. They worked for a time with no income. My family was limited economically then. My father was more realistic about making the private economy go. He would have dialog with my mother who was seeing what the social needs were that had to be met. Both points of view were entitled to credit. So there was some clash there. My father would say sometimes to my mother, "Laura you're not being realistic." At least that's the way I would put it. I was greatly influenced by my mother, but both parents had a work ethic that I inherited. My mother's work was in the home and volunteer work "downtown." In my little town, going downtown meant going down to Chicago. My mother's

mother came out to our house on Thursdays, allowing my mother to go out and do things or go downtown. My grandmother would take care of us.

Ms. Garrett: I think we are at a point we can stop. We have been going about an hour and a half or so. Next time, I'd like to pick up at college, the next jump. And then from there to your naval service and law school

Mr. Pollak: It might be interesting to put on the record the careers of people that I grew up with or went to college with. There were 242 of us who graduated from Highland Park High School in 1946. I have probably been more involved in public life than any of my class from that relatively affluent community. Among the women, there are a number who, like my mother, devoted themselves to volunteer work or became teachers. Most of the women from my generation did the traditional thing, raise their families. My wife Ruth says she was trained to go to college and get married, and she did. We married following her graduation from Sarah Lawrence, a few weeks after my return from Korea.