



City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



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Interviewer: *Unknown*

Transcriber: *Unknown*

Abstract: John Ticer, known as Jack, was born in 1923 in his family's house in Alexandria, and never lived farther than seven blocks from there. Both of his parents also grew up in Alexandria, and while Jack was growing up here, his father was on the City Council, served as mayor, and had a long career with the railroad. Jack attended the old Washington School, now the Campagna Center, the old Jefferson School which has been torn down, George Washington High School, and graduated from the University of Virginia. He worked as a soda jerk at Nicklin's Drugstore, served as an enlisted man in World War II, and worked for Westinghouse Electric and Atlantic Research Corporation. He and his wife Patsy both served on the City Council, and Mrs. Ticer is now a senator in the Virginia General Assembly. Jack continued to have an active interest in Alexandria's history until his death in 2007.

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Background	
Interviewer:	I think we are live here. So you were talking about your family background as far as ...
John Ticer:	I was born in the house, my family lived there, down in the 200 block South Fairfax Street, which is only four blocks from where we are now. And I've never lived further than seven blocks, permanently lived, further than seven blocks from the house I was born in. If my mother was (sic) living now, she would be about 110. She died at 101. And she was born in the 500 block South Fairfax St., in Alexandria. And my father was born on Patrick St., which is up on the other side of town, Route 1 north now. When he was a little child they moved around on King St. I had three older brothers and older sister. My sister is the oldest; I'm the youngest. She'll be 90 in May, and she's still quite alert. She lives in Williamsburg. So, let me see - I went to the old Washington School, and in the third grade I went to what was called the Alexandria Academy, the building that George Washington gave money to for the disadvantaged in the olden days. It's a brick building that's now being renovated, restored. It's not been used as a school for a long time. I went at six; I'm seventy-five years old. I went to the first through the fifth grade at the old Washington School, and third grade in that building, because they had to use it for overflow.
Interviewer:	Where is that located?
John Ticer:	Located at the corner of Wolfe and Washington St. It's now the headquarters for the Campagna Center, which is a charitable organization.
Interviewer:	And the building is under renovation did you say?
John Ticer:	The old building, the historic building that Washington contributed to, is being restored now. It sits on the back end of the lot where this Washington School building is that the Campagna Center has their headquarters in. I went there through the fifth grade and then, at that time, all the sixth and seventh grade students went to a school that has now been torn down called the Jefferson School, which was at Queen St. dead end at Jefferson School on West St., just up on the other side of town, I'd say about ten blocks from here.
Interviewer:	And what stands there now? Do you know?
John Ticer:	Well, the thing was torn down and I think a new school was built in the corner, an elementary school called the Jefferson Houston School, which is a one level school. The Jefferson School was a typical school design of those days, a two story brick in a, in a sort of a neo-colonial design, some copy of the design that they built, typical school buildings of 50 years ago.
Interviewer:	And your brothers and sisters? They all went to school here within the town?
John Ticer:	Oh yes, they all went to public school.
Interviewer:	Were you ever in school together? Not in the same grade, but

	physically in the same school together?
John Ticer:	Well, it is interesting. From the Jefferson School, I went to the George Washington High School, which is now a middle school. And we didn't have an eighth grade in those days. We went from the seventh grade to the first year of high school. That was 1936. George Washington High School was a new school; it was just opened in '36. I was in the first freshman class. And I had an older brother who was in the first graduating class. And while I was there - I'm not so sure when he was there - when I was there, my sister was teaching there.
Interviewer:	So there is quite a difference in age?
John Ticer:	Yes, she's fourteen years older than I am. It will be fifteen when she has her birthday in May, and it will be fourteen when I have mine in June.
Interviewer:	So there is almost exactly, almost 15 years?
John Ticer:	Yes. She was teaching school. I took a year of post-graduate high school, because my mother thought I was too young to go to college. All of the boys in our family went to the University of Virginia, but there were only two of us that completed. One of them bombed out for playing around, and another one only went for one semester. He didn't take to it either. He was the one next older than I. But the middle boy and I graduated. And my sister went to William and Mary; she graduated from William and Mary. So that's what the family did.
Earliest Memories	
Interviewer:	As far as your early memories of Alexandria living with your family, what did you do for entertainment, say in the summertime?
John Ticer:	It was kind of, in my day we wasn't (sic) all that free ranging that the kids have today. We lived there on Fairfax St. and when I was coming along, at least when I went to, well, beyond the first grade, maybe 'til the fifth grade, that we didn't stray too far from home. And there was a lot about three, two, two and a half blocks away - now it's got houses on it - but it was an abandoned yard, abandoned lumber yard, used to grow up in trash trees in summertime. One part of it was cleared over for a softball lot; kids used to play all the day under bushes and have clubhouses and stuff like, which we did. And, go to the movies, go to the movies and watch westerns every Saturday for a dime.
Interviewer:	And what were the big movie theaters in town at the time?
John Ticer:	They weren't what you called big. One called the Ingomar, which is where the westerns were held, and that was right over here across the street from where now the Hallmark store is, on the other side of the street. And the next one is called the Richmond, which is above, just above, and still in business. It's now called the Old Town Theater. It has two screens and they have some fairly first run movies up there. They're not so sure they'll be able to survive the competition in these multi-screens now. The same building is there and it was called the Richmond. And later on there was one built up near the, toward the Masonic Temple, called the Reed. That property is now in the process of a having a whole bunch of new buildings built on it right there by the

	<p>Metro station. So those were the three. And then later on, they built one called the Virginia. I can't remember when that was. That was later, which is over where the Old Colony or Holiday Inn is located now. It's on that property. There was another one that I didn't know too well down lower King St. It's really closer to here. I either wasn't allowed ... I don't think I was allowed to go there because I think they had the kind of shows that my family didn't think I should watch. I don't remember the name of that one. That building was a theater, then the Salvation Army had their headquarters in there for a while and served a lot of uses, but it's been torn down urban renewal now. So it's not ... So the only one of those theaters still existing is this Richmond that I was telling you about.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>I know from the research and looking into it from what I've seen as far as photographs and stuff, a lot of those movie theaters advertised one of the big things is that they were air-conditioned? Do you ever recall that that was a big thing, or big deal to go to since it was air-conditioned?</p>
John Ticer:	<p>No, I don't remember the transition. I doubt that they were originally. I doubt that that Ingomar I went to was air-conditioned. I used to go there, I guess, when I was about ten, or around about that age.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>So maybe these were too small time to be air-conditioned actually?</p>
John Ticer:	<p>Well, the newer ones were, I'm pretty sure. I think the Reed and Virginia were air-conditioned; I doubt if the Richmond was, until later years. It is now of course. I'm sure that the Ingomar wasn't.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>That was (sic) a lot of the recollections you had for summertime. Was (sic) there any wintertime activities that you did?</p>
John Ticer:	<p>Not a whole lot. At one time there was a roller rink here in town, and then there was an ice skating rink in Washington. That's when I was getting to be high school age, and stuff like that. And we'd do that. But I can't remember a whole lot of wintertime activities. If we had snow on the ground, we sledged, you know, on the little hills in the neighborhood over there. And some other parts of town, kids would sled, and still do, up there by the Masonic Temple, on that property. We used to do it in the streets, right over there near where we lived.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>Am I assuming correctly that the river never froze over good enough to ice skate on?</p>
John Ticer:	<p>No, it didn't when I was. I heard my mother, my mother told stories, and father, about it being iced all the way over. And they talked about ice skating on it, not over.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>I know some of those storms in the '20's were pretty severe, pretty cold.</p>
John Ticer:	<p>Yes. I was born in '23. And my mother was too busy taking care of children then, because I was the fifth one of five.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>I am the first one of five. So I know what you are talking about, I can relate to that, as far as your mother being busy. That's for sure.</p>
John Ticer:	<p>So I, but I remember hearing her talk about skating on the river. I can't remember her talking about going across.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>No, I would imagine it would be on the shoreline.</p>

John Ticer:	We used to ice skate a little bit down. There was a pond by the Belle Haven Country Club. I think it's just kind of marshy now. Then there used to be one at Episcopal High School. But they filled that one in because it was attracting too big a crowd of people out there. So they filled the pond in at Episcopal High School. But we used to ice skate both those places.
Work Experience	
Interviewer:	Moving on to after you left school, what was the first job, first paying position that you recall having?
John Ticer:	First paying position I had while I was still in high school, I dispensed sodas at a drug store up here on the corner. It's now up there now, but while I was in high school.
Interviewer:	And what was the name of that drugstore?
John Ticer:	Nicklin's, Nicklin's Drugstore. N-I-C-K-L-I-N-S.
Interviewer:	And that was around before, I assume, even before you were around?
John Ticer:	Oh yes. The whole drugstore story is another story in Alexandria. We had one on our corner, Prince and Fairfax. And then there was one at Royal and King, Pitt and King, and Washington and King. And further up there was one around, between Patrick and Henry on King St. And later on there was another drug store up by this, where this Virginia, where the Reed Theater was, over near Metro. So we had a lot of drug stores. All of those were operating when I was coming along. The historic drugstore, the Leadbeater, Stabler-Leadbeater drugstore down here is now a museum, an apothecary museum, went out of business in '33. We had a big George Washington birthday celebration in Alexandria, bicentennial of his birth in 1932. My father was mayor at the time, and he'd been on Council for about twelve years before that. I think he was on it for sixteen years altogether before '32.
Interviewer:	And through what year?
John Ticer:	He went off in '34.
Interviewer:	He went off in '34.
John Ticer:	Yes, and he was mayor during the time of the big, and that was a big celebration. That was the year they dedicated the Masonic Temple and opened the highway (inaudible) and had big parades and all that sort of ... I was ten at the time and that was the year that the apothecary went out of business. That just sort of sat there for a number of years with all its stuff still there. And then some preservation group got a hold of it, and it's now quite a thriving museum type operation.
Interviewer:	There is also, what is this one up here? Timberman's?
John Ticer:	Timberman's. Yes, that was originally on the corner. And Dr. Timberman lived across the street from where we lived down on Fairfax Street, and he served on the City Council with my father.
Interviewer:	And when did they move it down the block here?
John Ticer:	Well, it was after he was gone. It was whoever inherited it. He didn't have any children. And he left to a fellow that worked with him by the

	name of Nugent. I don't believe he had any children either. But at some point in time, they got an offer. Also there was, I'm not so sure he owned the building. He owned it in partnership with a man by the name of Allen, a single man, who lived over the top of the original store. And Mr. Allen's estate may have been persuaded to sell it. And it was torn down and they moved it back.
Interviewer:	So that's not the original site then?
John Ticer:	No, no it was right next to, adjacent to ...
Interviewer:	Right on the corner.
John Ticer:	Yes.
Interviewer:	As far as your job there at the drugstore, you worked what? After school, afternoons and evenings, a couple days a week?
John Ticer:	Weekends and evenings, yes.
Interviewer:	You delivered? Sodas?
John Ticer:	No, not too much. I just worked the fountain and served as a clerk sometimes in the other part of the store. And that was while I was in high school. I finished high school, and of course, I went to college.
Digression about World War II	
John Ticer:	But that was interrupted in '43 by the Second War. I was in the service for three years. Then I went back to college and finished in '48. So I guess you can say I was working while I was in the army. They did have a stipend they gave you to be in the army.
Interviewer:	Were you stationed overseas, or stateside?
John Ticer:	Yes, I was overseas for a year and a half. In Europe.
Interviewer:	Was this in Europe?
John Ticer:	Yes.
Interviewer:	OK. And what was that experience like?
John Ticer:	It was rather interesting. I was an enlisted man in what they called the combat engineers. So they were in the business sort of, somewhat danger zones, building bridges and roads, restoring roads that had been bombed out. Things like that.
Interviewer:	Did you work in conjunction with, what is it, the Seabees, or whatever?
John Ticer:	No, they were navy. Yes, they were navy. We were on land. The last major event that occurred while I was over there is that I was with an outfit that met up with the Russians. The Elbe River was the dividing line and the eighty-second airborne division was designated to make the crossing. But they didn't jump. They went on land. And there was what they called a bridge company that specialized in building pontoons, pontoons bridges. And we were there to support the bridge company, to give them assistance when they put the bridge up. That was a fascinating situation. As a matter of fact, the eighty-second airborne went across and all the Germans wanted, did not want to surrender to the Russians. So they were headed towards this bridge which was a one-way bridge against them and they were [inaudible] spot right there at the shore of the Elbe, east bank. It was really quite an interesting

	sight because the only vehicles they had to ride on were fire engines. I guess they had saved a lot of fuel oil. [inaudible] A lot of them were walking. But a lot of them climbed all over fire engines. And the Hungarians were there. The Hungarians had been an ally of the Germans, but they sort of gave up early, or something like that. They had a beautiful cavalry - beautiful horses. So the Americans used the Hungarians to round up the Germans and put them in the stockades. Then they took the horses away from the Hungarians and put them in the stockade too.
Interviewer:	Did you ever get a chance to actually mingle with the Russians? I know the reaction was quite odd to America, the western ways.
John Ticer:	Just in a way. They ...
Interviewer:	And vice versa, I guess, it must be true too.
John Ticer:	The Americans, you know, were inclined to be a lot more sanitary than most of the other people in the world. And one of the things we had in our organization was an outfit that put up portable showers, and boilers to heat the water, and all that kind of stuff. We never slept on the ground but once or twice the whole time I was in Europe. We always commandeered buildings. Actually we weren't the ones that commandeered. We were behind others; they had been used by others before we go there. But we were always sheltered except on one occasion as I remember. We set up the showers and gave some of the Russians the opportunity to use our shower. And in response they sent one of their USO troops in to entertain us.
Interviewer:	Oh is that right?
John Ticer:	Yes.
Interviewer:	And was it second rate at the least?
John Ticer:	Yes. I forget what they used for a theater, probably a tavern or something that had been a tavern. So that was about the only intercourse that I personally had with the Russians over there. A lot of those outfits did kind of like a yearbook of their experiences. [inaudible] show some pictures of some of our guys and the Russian guys. But I was not among them.
The 1920s	
Interviewer:	Actually we jumped ahead a tad. I wanted to actually talk about, not personally maybe your recollections, but maybe your parents' recollections of the '20's. Did they ever talk to you about the '20's and what they were like?
John Ticer:	Well, I was born in '23. I can't really remember anything distinctive. My sister being older than I am, I can remember the social events they had. There was, there is an Old Dominion Boat Club there at the foot of, on the river right now. And the Belle Haven Country Club. And they were quite social centers in those days. They had dances every week, both of them.
Interviewer:	And these were what, big bands? These weren't ...

<p>John Ticer:</p>	<p>Well, they had local bands. Sometimes, some of the charitable people would get a big band in town to raise money, like Sammy Kaye and some others like that. My father-in-law, who is as old as my sister, (he's dead now), lived in Washington. And he said he used to come to Alexandria on the streetcar and go to the dances at the Boat Club. My sister, living here, and the crowd that she ran around with, I think they went to both. In those days the clubs were exclusive in membership but they didn't exclude people coming; you could pay and go to their dances. When I was coming along, I used to go to dances Belle Haven Country Club with a group of people, when they had them. I don't know if they had them every week. I can't recall. I can remember my parents talking about way back when they would go. There was a ... the streetcar was very handy in Alexandria. The streetcar went all the way to Mount Vernon. And it went to Washington the other way. They used ... I heard my mother talk, they would go down to Collingwood, which is half way to Mount Vernon, where apparently there was some kind of a tea garden or something like that. There was a section, or a place down here just at the, on Franklin St., Franklin and Royal, which has all been built up now, there was a place there that was called Yates Garden. As a matter of fact, they developed the housing development was called Yates Garden. But that was all open space. And they had what was, I remember her saying, that sort of an ice cream parlor type operation down there they would go to. When I was small there was a fellow had a, had what you might call a truck farm - had a beautiful house, it's now torn down; it's up on Washington St. where Talbot's is now. He farmed all the way down to Royal St. He had what you might call a truck garden, or something like that. It was from Washington and Royal, be four blocks, I guess. Washington, two, Pitt to Royal. It was about two blocks wide. And he was from a family that several members of the family had a lot of property around south of Alexandria. Name was Pullman. I remember walking down there with my father on a Sunday afternoon visiting with the Pullmans and stuff like that. I imagine that would be in the early 1900's when they were doing that because he was, they were married, I believe, in 1909. Yes, I'm pretty sure they were married in 1909. So that is the sort of thing they did. He was a mason and so he went to Masonic Lodge. Mother was in Eastern Star, which was the auxiliary of the Masons. They were both active at St. Paul's Church which we have been active in too. So that was sort of their social life.</p>
<p>The Depression</p>	
<p>Interviewer:</p>	<p>Moving on to the Depression, from what you mentioned about your family background, I assume that you may not have been affected as greatly as some of the other families in Alexandria?</p>
<p>John Ticer:</p>	<p>Well, we were in a way. My father, fortunately or unfortunately, worked for the railroad. And so never got laid off. He worked for the railroad for 52 years. Southern Railway here in Alexandria. And things</p>

	were very tight. I can remember getting (inaudible) presents at Christmastime. [inaudible] I remember my brother wanted a bicycle and he got a used one that one of his cousins had had, that painted up of something for a Christmas present. So things were very tight during the Depression. During the First World War there was property, a building lot, two building lots, adjacent to my parents house, and they had a victory garden in there. I remember talking about that because that was before I was born. Grew potatoes and all kinds of different stuff in there. During the Second War.
Interviewer:	I would imagine that probably went through the depression as well.
John Ticer:	Well, at one point ... No, it didn't. Later on the lot on the corner from there was built on. The house on it now, the farthest house and side lot is still there. It's under different ownership now. But I remember talking about that; of course I wasn't around in the First War. And then ... he was with the railroad for 52 years. He was a freight agent. And they had a big, what they called a freight transfer operation down at Fairfax and Princess Street. Went sort of for about a block wide and the tracks all came in there and they took boxcars down the waterfront and up into there. And they would take the stuff out of the cars and put them in ones going to more local places around in Virginia, smaller stops, called freight transfer. And that was ... the railroad sort of slowed that down, and they transferred him out to Henry and Duke Street which was a roundhouse. Now you got all kinds of houses being built out there. As a matter of fact, while he was still freight agent, they made him also what they called the yardmaster. And they had an office out on the other side of town where he was in charge of these trains bringing this stuff down and back, and going to Potomac Yards to pick them up, and all that kind of stuff. So he had both of those responsibilities. Then they combined them when they closed this one down and he moved out there for a permanent office where the roundhouse was. And that's where he was working when he retired.
Interviewer:	Were those, I imagine those were, union positions, weren't they? Union jobs at the time?
John Ticer:	Yes, the railroad ... he was management so he wasn't in the union. As a matter of fact, had a strike. I can't remember whether it was the John L. Lewis strike, which was of course a mine worker. Had a strike and one time the management had to run the trains and stuff. He did that. He was authorized to carry a gun for some reason. I guess it was anticipating some violence. Didn't have any that I know of. He stayed with the railroad the whole time.
Interviewer:	Where do you think, or how do you think he developed a like for politics? Was it in the fact that he was in a supervisory position, and he was with a [inaudible] mix of people?
John Ticer:	No, it was really a little more personal. It was a friendship type thing. He ... people who were on the City Council then in the early days and people with business around, bankers and Fannon, Mr. Fannon, the

	<p>funeral people going back several generations ... The Council ... when he went on they had a bicameral form of government. Had a Common Council and a Board of Alderman. And he went on the Common Council. It was by ward. They were selected by ward. And I don't exactly know ... I think there was a vacancy that he may in some way or another have been appointed to fill out the first term I guess. Then he ran successfully for re-election. And then the Alexandria city government changed in 1922 to a city manager form of government. And they completely wiped out the old form of government and came up with just a five man City Council. City manager form of government. And he was one of the five; and they just had five. That lasted for quite a while. It was still like that when he went off in '34. I can't remember when it got expanded. Now it's only seven. When it came down to the five, let me see, I'm trying to think; there was a banker, and I really don't recall right now who the five were. Anyway, he just ... the railroad was a big industry in Alexandria, and I think he was sort of looked at as a representative of that particular business interest in town. He was active in the church though. In those days, the political people were active in their churches. And so it was just a matter of the people you rubbed shoulders with, in the masonry, and the railroad, and in the business community. He was a member of the Chamber of Commerce for a number of years. And that was another area where the political interests, of course, arose. So that's sort of, I guess, how he got involved. Had an uncle who was on the City Council one term I think at same time he was, who was an automobile dealer. So he may have influenced too. I just don't know what his early influences were.</p>
<p>The 1940s and World War II</p>	
<p>Interviewer:</p>	<p>As far as, going back to the war years, World War II, was (sic) there any other relatives in your family that were actually drafted and served?</p>
<p>John Ticer:</p>	<p>They weren't drafted. Technically, I was in the enlisted reserve. The reason was my father was a member of the local draft board and we didn't want to have any embarrassment or conflict of interest problems. I was at college at the time, so I signed up in Charlottesville, enlisted reserve. So I was called up in reserve. Brother next to me went in the Navy. He was in the Navy for about three years, I guess ... in the Pacific. And he got to be a lieutenant I guess or something like that. And the older ones ... the next brother was deaf, but I think he was too old anyway. My father was excluded from service in the First War because he worked, as we discussed, because he worked for the railroad. Apparently that was an exempt business in those days.</p>
<p>After World War II</p>	
<p>Interviewer:</p>	<p>When you came back after the war to the City of Alexandria did you notice any drastic changes, as far as the community was concerned?</p>
<p>John Ticer:</p>	<p>Well it was '46. Kind of interesting in a way. First thing I did when I came back, for some reason I got on a bicycle and rode around the edge</p>

	of town.
Interviewer:	Maybe it was your way to see if it was still around and things were still here.
John Ticer:	Yes, I guess so. I didn't notice anything. Of course the Torpedo Factory had been active. That was active when I was a child. And there were people around who had come here then. There was a doctor in particular, had been here as a military physician who settled and ran a practice here in town. Another one married a prominent lady and stayed in town, in practice, a surgeon. But, I guess, I was twenty-one. I guess I didn't notice a whole lot. I didn't feel like there was any change that had happened.
Interviewer:	If there wasn't any change that you noticed in the city itself, how did people react to you, by the fact that you were overseas and came back? Did they consider you a hero?
John Ticer:	Oh no, just picked up old friendships. I got back in March of '46 and June, July I went back to college to pick up, make up time that I'd lost. And stayed there until I finished in '48. And I had the same social friends. They had all been off and came back. I just sort of picked up ... I guess we picked up where we left off.
Interviewer:	I would imagine in that sense everybody was pretty lucky in a bad situation that things ran that smoothly, that came out that smoothly?
John Ticer:	Yes, some got lost but not a whole lot.
Interviewer:	I know 1949 there was the bicentennial of the City of Alexandria. Did you have any interest in that, or do you recall...?
John Ticer:	I was just out of college and I went to work for Westinghouse Electric Corporation in Pittsburgh. I was on what they called Student Training Program. I went out there almost as soon as I got out of college, I guess. I went out in maybe July of '48. And I was going to different Westinghouse operations on a training program. I stayed on that training program for two years. And I ended up in Philadelphia, and then from Philadelphia I came to Washington, where I stayed with Westinghouse Electric. All of that bicentennial business happened while I was away. Not permanently.
Interviewer:	Unfortunately, that was one of the questions I had for you since we have the 250th anniversary coming up. I thought that would be a pertinent question to ask.
John Ticer:	My residence was always here.
Interviewer:	Do you recall anybody ever talking about the festivities going on?
John Ticer:	I read about the special musical program they had down there, Alexandria? Sons? or something like that. An Alexandria fellow was the principal ... he's dead now ... Richard Bales, who was Director of the National Gallery Orchestra for a number of years, local musician, had to do with staging that. I just remember hearing about that. I didn't see any of it; it was going on while I was away somewhere. Of course they have always had big parades. So I don't recall anything special about it except for that musical event that they had.

Interviewer:	Were you able to take advantage of the GI bill?
John Ticer:	Oh yes, yes.
Interviewer:	What did you do with that? How did you use it?
John Ticer:	Well I was at the University of Virginia finishing up my last two years in college. I used it there.
Interviewer:	Was (sic) there a lot of returning veterans at the time?
John Ticer:	Oh yes, tremendous number, tremendous number.
Interviewer:	And they were all looking to get back into mainstream society and making better for themselves? Taking advantage...?
John Ticer:	Yes. A lot of them were returning like I did. They just had an interruption. They went back. A lot of them went back afterward, like I did.
The 1950s	
Interviewer:	Moving on to the period of time of the 1950's, I know that was a great time of prospering economies. Did that reflect in the city of Alexandria do you think? Was (sic) a lot of businesses thriving and was (sic) times generally good?
John Ticer:	Well, there was, you know, more development beginning. We had this big urban renewal program in the '60's. So we were getting ready for that in the '50's; we were taking advantage of ... The Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, which runs the low cost housing, was in business, oh, I guess they got started while the war was going on. Because my father was a member. And they came out to Chicago for a meeting and I was [inaudible] Wisconsin. I came down and met him. That's before I went overseas. I guess I was twenty at the time, so that was 1943. And then in '44 I guess I had just gotten into the service. This urban renewal, this low cost housing up on the north end of Fairfax Street was a federal demonstration project. It was one of the first in the country. Father was a member of that Authority. And so that happened in the '40's. But then more normal development was picking up in the '50's. I think the last annexation from Fairfax County was in '53. That was before I went on, just before I went on the City Council myself, which gave more land for development to the city. We took it out to the current border with Fairfax because they had earlier taken the Del Ray area from Arlington. And Arlington got special legislation in Richmond saying that Alexandria wouldn't take any more land from them. And then Fairfax did the same thing after what we took from there.
Interviewer:	And which area was that now? I'm trying to picture it.
John Ticer:	It goes out across 495 to ... It comes in, the line comes in on the other side just ... there's a shopping center on the other side where there's a wine, Total Beverage, wine store. You have any idea, any reason to know where that is?
Interviewer:	Yes.
John Ticer:	The city line comes ... when you go out of the gate there in that

	shopping area by Total, the city line comes right into that little crotch. Take it over (inaudible) the city and come back down; take it over the other way and you come to Route 7. Yes, Route 7. Seminary Road really cuts across there, just the other side of the Shirley Highway. It was, it was, did stop at Quaker Lane, which is where Episcopal High School is, and Seminary, and a lot of other things. So they picked up quite a bit of area from Fairfax. That was in the '50's.
Interviewer:	With this development, did you see a big increase or a big influx of traffic and people that necessarily didn't live in town, but worked in town? Was that change occurring?
John Ticer:	For quite a while Alexandria was what you called a bedroom community. The railroads were falling off; the truck business was picking up. And in the early days, a lot of the people were with the federal government. Of course, during the Second War that happened too. That's when Park Fairfax was built. It was built by, with the support of the federal government and by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company as housing for people that were coming to Washington to work in the government. And it is now of course a very desirable, relatively close low cost area to live in. It's condominium now; it was rental then. And that was started up in the first part of the Second War also. And so there was just a gradual residential development. But that again was bedroom for the government. There wasn't a lot of local industry. Railroad was the big thing for a number of years. As a matter of fact what you might call a local industry has really just developed in recent years with the influx of all the associations and office building occupants in Alexandria. Of course, that's been going on now for maybe fifteen, twenty years. I guess you might call that the major industry of the city - consultants and association headquarters.
Interviewer:	So the influx of greater numbers of people didn't occur with the urban renewal then is what you are saying? It didn't occur until more recently?
John Ticer:	I would say so. The urban renewal, when it was done, was occupied by existing businesses. The Holiday Inn over here - they take up a whole block - they came in. The City, of course, they put the square there by City Hall in urban renewal. And the building next to it was built by, as I recall, a local contractor. The Holiday Inn was built by local contractors too. So the local people that developed that did the urban renewal development. It didn't attract anything to the city that would bring an influx of new workers. Bank occupies part of one and lawyer's offices ... That may have opened up to some more reasonably priced office space that people could get from Washington ... the associations got interested in.
Interviewer:	What about a lot of the renovations that were done on a lot of the historic homes here? Was that done in the same period of time?
John Ticer:	That was done in the '30's.
Interviewer:	In the '30's? Oh is that right?

<p>John Ticer:</p>	<p>The Old Town preservation people came here in, with the Roosevelt administration. The Franklin Roosevelt administration attracted more people in the government and made appointments down at a lower level than just secretaries. And they attracted a lot of, that administration attracted a lot of people to this area, Washington area. And some of those people were people who took a look at the 100 block of Prince Street. That's where it started. This is Prince, right down the river, where they were derelict houses down the corner where there is a Christmas shop down there now, next to the Union St. Pub, used to be a junk shop. I used to sell old newspapers to the building right there on the corner of Union and Prince. And most all those houses were somewhat derelict. They were poorer people that lived in some of them. But these people came in and bought that property, and preservationists then restored it and we have what we have today. You came up Prince to the next block where they're more handsome, larger historic buildings. One of the leaders in that movement was a lady by the name of Gay Montague Moore. She was married to a colonel from Texas, Colonel Moore. But her father had been governor of Virginia, Governor Montague, so she was a Virginia person. He was [inaudible] during that time. So she restored several houses in town. The one she did for herself is now occupied by her nephew, Bob Montague, who is a lawyer here in town. Handsome house there in the 200 block of Prince. And then it sort of spread one way or another. There was a woman came to town that had some money from somewhere. I think she was an artist, but she had some money. She bought up a lot of them and just held them, the old houses. She didn't have - put money in them and then she resold them.</p>
<p>Interviewer:</p>	<p>This was the '30's or '40's?</p>
<p>John Ticer:</p>	<p>This was in the '40's. Yes, in the '40's. Well it was before the war, before the Second War. But there were other people like that, that came in and speculated - successfully. They'd buy them, fix them up, sell them, go to another one, and do the same thing, all downtown. As a matter of fact a lot of the Old Town Alexandrians resented the people coming in and doing it in the '30's. They refer to them as the "foreign legion." It happened in the Roosevelt administration. My father was still in council and one of them, Miss Moore, gave my father credit for being one of the few in city government that encouraged them to do the things they were doing, the renovation and restoration.</p>
<p>Interviewer:</p>	<p>Why do you think they were against it? Because they wanted to do it themselves? They didn't want outside people?</p>
<p>John Ticer:</p>	<p>No, they were intruding, intruding in their little cocoon. I think that was the motivation. Then it continued. We have been in this house, we've been here for 37 years I think. I can't say there was any restoration, but we did some renovation. This part of the house was built in 1784, from that wall to that wall. I don't think it had had any real work done 'til we bought it. It had been chopped up into kind of a rooming house; there</p>

	were hot plates, and stuff like that. But the fellow that, the people that owned it, were people who were in the business of restoration and renovation. A Minnesota firm was buying up houses around town, but they went bankrupt. I bought this from the refereeing[?] bankruptcy. I bought this house from the court. Anyway that was 37 years ago, which was in the '50's, '60's really, that we did this house. Anyway, it's continued. But, it started in the '30's, I always say, with the Roosevelt administration.
Interviewer:	You corrected me on that because I thought it was the '50's.
John Ticer:	Not initially. I don't know whether Gay, I mean [inaudible] Cox's book says when it started or not. I'm trying to see if I can put my hands on that. I'm not sure I can.
Interviewer:	Pause it.
John Ticer:	Looks like a book. I can't put my hands on it right now. Got some of those other ... It's like, "Alexandria, Block by Block" or something like that. I forgot what she called it. She did the history ...
Interviewer:	Oh was that ... Mike Miller did a book like that.
John Ticer:	Oh sure, that's it.
Interviewer:	He's pretty much a walking encyclopedia.
John Ticer:	Yes, Mike gives me a lot of help. Whenever he runs across my family name, he gives me [inaudible]. I've never, not done any formal family research but I keep picking at it from time to time.
Career of Mrs. Ticer	
Interviewer:	I don't want to totally disregard your wife because I know she is an important figure here too. If you'd like to talk about her, as far as how she got started in politics?
John Ticer:	I went off of the City Council in '70. And she went on in '82, which was twelve years difference. And so it wasn't really any influence of mine, but the then current mayor, a fellow by the name of Chuck Beatley, encouraged her to run for the City Council.
Interviewer:	And how did he know her?
John Ticer:	I had been on the Council with him. I'd been involved and of course, because of my involvement, she was exposed to the public. Of course she was busy raising those four children. The oldest one is now 32. She was active in real estate; she was a real estate agent. And several charitable organizations. She was president ... she got to be president of some of the charitable organizations. So she was pretty active in the community, anyway. And in church, she had been a senior warden at the church, and then with the vestry. So she had all those tickets on her own. And when Chuck encouraged her to run, she did. She ... I'm trying to remember the history ... she got to be vice mayor. Of course she got to ... [inaudible] the second, the one that gets the most votes, is usually gets to be vice mayor, because mayor won second. And she ran second. And that person resigned for some reason. So she moved up to vice mayor. In the next election, she got the most votes. So, she became vice

	<p>mayor in her own right. And then when Jim Moran decided to run for Congress, she became mayor, because she was vice mayor. That was a short time before election. Then, when she ran, she was elected mayor. Then she was re-elected mayor after that. Then, while she was mayor, she decided to run for state senate, which created a vacancy that Kerry Donley moved into. Then she got elected mayor. So that was that evolution. Now she has just completed her, completing her first term in the state senate; it's a four year term. She was mayor for five years before that. So that's her political history. But she's been very active in various organizations around town, straight along. Right straight along. PTA ...</p>
Interviewer:	<p>Does she plan on staying politically active? Is there an end in sight for her?</p>
John Ticer:	<p>PTA's. She plans to run for re-election. I don't think she has any greater goals to run, to shoot for. She ... We have kind of been ... The whole family has kind of been involved. My sister's husband was a lawyer in town. He had his own practice, but he was what they called a United States Commissioner in the old days. He was appointed by the court. Now called magistrate. [inaudible] big time magistrate. It was a part time job then. He heard traffic cases at the Pentagon. If they had problems at Fort Belvoir, he'd have to tend to that. But he also had his own practice, and he was also a lawyer for the Redevelopment Housing Authority when the urban renewal business was coming along. So he was publicly involved in a professional way. And my ... his ... and my sister's had two children, and his son is the current governor of Maine. My nephew is the governor of Maine, Angus King. Ran one of two independent governors in the country.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>Independent? Who is the other one? Do you know?</p>
John Ticer:	<p>Well, this fellow, this wrestler in Minnesota. I guess he's supposed to be ...</p>
Interviewer:	<p>Is he independent?</p>
John Ticer:	<p>Well, Reform Party. [inaudible] Practically independent. The Republicans and Democrats lost to him.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>Makes him valuable enough, right?</p>
John Ticer:	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Family History</p>	
Interviewer:	<p>Are you staying active as far as ...</p>
John Ticer:	<p>No, I'm not active at all.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>So what do you do with your time?</p>
John Ticer:	<p>Just kill time.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>Kill time!</p>
John Ticer:	<p>I do this little family business. And you can see I'm starting to work on my income taxes. [inaudible] But I don't do anything ...I don't do anything productive. I've been retired now for three years.</p>
Interviewer:	<p>You don't want to pursue that family history?</p>

John Ticer:	Oh yes, but I'm doing that on a very low level.
Interviewer:	What do you know of the history that goes beyond what you've told me here?
John Ticer:	I have two grandparents buried in cemeteries out here [inaudible] born in 1814. They weren't born here. And Mike has done a little research for me. Interestingly enough, I guess the middle 1800's, the City Council appointed what they call night watchmen. And both of my great-grandfathers were appointed night watchmen by the City Council at that time. Mike ran that down for me. And, and I had a ...
Interviewer:	Were they younger men at the time? In their 20's or '30's?
John Ticer:	I think they were probably in their '30's, but it was, I think it was a second job. I don't think it was, I don't think it was a basic job. I'm working on some of that now. One of them, I think, was a barrel maker, cooper. I don't know what the other one ... I haven't figured out what the other one was. My grandfather on my father's side was a locomotive engineer during the Civil War.
Interviewer:	Oh, is that right?
John Ticer:	And, I don't know where he went.
Interviewer:	So what side of the tracks was he on?
John Ticer:	Well I think he was on the southern side, but I don't know. Alexandria was blockaded. Of course it was quite a railroad center. And I really don't know where he went because the southern forces did have some railroads operating on their own. But I just haven't pinned that kind of thing down. Mike ran into a thing the other day on my mother's side. Somebody apparently was enlisted in one of the confederate troops but he was discharged after a month because of a physical problem of some sort. And there again, Mike and I, or he wrote me a note, we don't know what he did when he got discharged. We're assuming he stayed here in the city, did something, lived off the Union troops in some way.
Interviewer:	That's quite possible. Those (sic) kind of times make you very innovative to make a living and survive.
John Ticer:	My father had an uncle that was big in the police department in the late 1800's. I've got a thing over here, an invitation to the Policemen's Ball. He was on the committee, and it's very interesting in a way.
Interviewer:	This was a lady's invitation?
John Ticer:	Yes.
Interviewer:	They had separate, I assume, didn't come ...
John Ticer:	They say the omnibus will pick up the ladies at a certain hour. The men had to get there on their own.
Interviewer:	Oh yes, I see, the omnibus. That was like a stage, or something? An omnibus?
John Ticer:	No, it was a streetcar pulled by a horse. I mean a streetcar shaped vehicle pulled by horses.
Interviewer:	That's interesting. It sounds to me like you should pursue some of that family background. There's a lot of it there to pursue, it sounds like.

John Ticer:	Well, I say we've got a little snips and snatches. Mike has provided me with most of it. Again in the 1800's, late 1800's, there was a fellow that had a confectioner's shop on the ground floor of a four and a half, three and a half story building down here on Fairfax. It's there now. I think there is a Christmas shop or something's in it. Had a daughter and she was getting ready to go out on a Saturday night. She was getting dressed on the third floor. Her mother, her grandmother was helping her get dressed. She had a candle, must have been. She went from one room to another and her dress caught fire. She ran down the steps, and, of course, that fanned the fire. She got to the bottom. There was an uncle down there, or somebody, and he put his coat around her to put the fire out. She died the next day. Well, the fellow she had the date with lived up at the corner, just a half a block from where this was, and he was at her bedside when she died. And he was distraught. His father was running a tavern up there, which they called Wise's Tavern. It's now offices in there. And he called up a buddy of his, called a buddy of his. I can't say "called up." And said he'd like to take a little walk. And they walked down to Lee St., and came up an alley behind a bunch of stores on King Street. This other fellow's family ran a liquor store. The guy who was the boyfriend said he'd like to have a drink. The guy said, "You wait here by the back door and I'll go round the front door and come in, and we'll go and have a drink." Which they did. He gave the guy a glass of whatever it was. The guy drank it. The guy handed the glass back. When the fellow turned around to put the glass down, the guy shot himself, killed himself. This was the boyfriend. And he was, he was the son of a guy that ran the tavern. He was a cousin of my mother's. Had the same name as mother. Tenneson was her maiden name. I've got a couple of horror stories.
Interviewer:	So he took the blame probably for her death, maybe, for whatever reason. It wasn't really rational reason. I guess maybe he figured well if I didn't ask her out on a date that night, she wouldn't have been in that situation. It's hard to tell.
John Ticer:	Yes, it is. Apparently the story goes on further, that a fellow went down to ... a friend went down to witness, before they moved the body, [inaudible] and he fainted so they thought that he had committed suicide. But anyway, another horror story, on my father's side, a guy was working on a riverboat. It was going up from Alexandria up to Georgetown to pick up an English ship that was disabled. Ran back down for repair, and off of what is now, I guess, Potomac Park, or something like that, he fell down in the machinery and was crushed in the machinery. Mike comes up with these little gems.
Interviewer:	It's all part of history. It doesn't have to be necessarily pleasant, unfortunately.
John Ticer:	Yes, it's very interesting. But I haven't tied all these people together too well yet.
Interviewer:	So how far back do you go, as far as being in town here?

John Ticer:	I've been here all my life.
Interviewer:	No, I mean your great-grandparents - they were here from what?
John Ticer:	My grandparents were here. And my great-grandparents on my mother's side, her great-grandmother is buried out here. Her name is Downs, D-O-W-N-S. And she was born in 1814. My father's grandfather, Lewis Ticer, is born, is buried out there. And he was born in 1814.
Interviewer:	And where did they come from? Do you know?
John Ticer:	Well, I think my father's ... I'm working on this ... I'm pretty sure my father's people came from down on Northern Neck. As a matter of fact, I've got a copy of a letter he wrote somebody said they were from around Reedville which is down in ... I forget the names of those counties down there now. [inaudible] Northumberland I believe. Northumberland. It's not going to come to me right now. But anyway he says, "On the tombstone out here that he was born in such and such a county in 1814", so it pins it down, Then there's a whole bunch of Ticers down there, but I haven't made the direct connection. They had a big reunion down there several years ago which we only accidentally found out about, because Patsy, my wife, was at a meeting in Hampton. She got into the wrong hotel and was registering. The hotel said "Your husband is already registered." Well, her husband wasn't there! So she found out who this Ticer was, plus the fact that she was at the wrong hotel. She met up with the guy. That's who it was, the people down there on the Northern Neck. It was on my father's side.
Interviewer:	Very interesting, how things happen by accident.
John Ticer:	Yes. My mother's name was Tenneson, which they spelled T-E-N-N-E-S-S-O-N. Some parts of the family throw the "Y" in, but from what research I've done, we're not descended from the poet laureate.
Interviewer:	Is it spelled the same way?
John Ticer:	No, the poet laureate is spelled with a "Y." But I say some elements of my mother's family threw the "Y" in. But I think I've got them fairly well traced back to Maryland, early Maryland. As a matter of fact, Mike took me over to the DAR Library one time, and a woman was proving her pedigree in the DAR. She was from Tennessee, but she had that name. It was spelled a little differently yet, T-E-N-I-S-O-N. It's the same crowd. But they were over there in St. Mary's county I think. That's where they came through to England. Actually from her thing, somebody said they originated in Sweden I think, and came into England, and settled there for a while, then worked there way over to the United States.
Interviewer:	The name must have changed somewhere along the line there, if they were from Sweden. I bet that happened quite often.
Career Highlights John Ticer and Final Thoughts	
Interviewer:	Do you have any final thoughts or anything that I didn't cover that you would like to, I mean that is on your mind that you want to get down here, documented, that I didn't cover. I know there is a lot of material I

	probably I didn't cover, but you know, we could sit here for weeks too.
John Ticer:	No, I can't think of anything. I went off the City Council in '70 and I was working for Atlantic Research Corporation at the time. Those are the people who ran the rocket business. They're up in Gainesville now, but they were down at Edsall Road. I left them, and in 1971, I went to work for the United States Senate Armed Services Committee as the chief clerk, which is the chief administrator officer, not the chief professional. And I was there for ten years. That was when Senator John Stennis of Mississippi was the chairman, very well renowned and respected senator. And then when the Senate went from Democrat to Republican in '81, I went to the Pentagon, worked for the Air Force briefly, and then I retired from the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense in early part of '96. So that's sort of my work history.
Interviewer:	Pretty active life there! That's why you wanted to sit back and relax!
John Ticer:	Well I ... when the weather gets better, I'll be fooling around in the backyard, and there's a men's informal group of men that I meet with once a week for lunch. It's not like I'm hibernating at all. Of course, where I live, everything I need to do I can walk to really. I don't walk to the grocery store, which I could, but I usually buy more than I can carry and walk. But everything else - drugstore, bank, post office, church. I do have to get in the car to go to the doctor. Most everything I do on a day to day basis, I walk to, right here.
Interviewer:	I'll say that we'll wrap things up here, and I want to thank you on behalf of myself, and the Lyceum, and the City of Alexandria. I think that is actually number one. We have to give them top billing actually.
John Ticer:	I've recommended several people they ought to be doing oral histories with.
Interviewer:	Oh, is that right. Maybe you could give me their names and I'll write them down. That's how I get leads.
John Ticer:	They are people who are my sister's contemporaries, which means they are ninety now. Now this lady who has just had her 105th birthday ...
Interviewer:	Yes, I have read that article.
John Ticer:	... she was my mother's first cousin ...
Interviewer:	Oh, she was.
John Ticer:	... which makes her, the way Virginians talk about it, makes her my first cousin once removed.
Interviewer:	I didn't realize that connection there. She is supposedly quite something to talk to from what I have heard.
John Ticer:	I understand she did a history for St. Mary's church. She was very active down there. I've not seen that St. Mary's history. I'd like to see it sometime. There's a fellow, two men, and I think they are both now living at Goodwin House. One of them might be in the new Goodwin House, the Goodwin House in Alexandria. Another one is at Goodwin House West and the name is Martin, Jack Martin.

Interviewer:	Jack Martin.
John Ticer:	M-A-R-T-I-N. John T. I think is his official name. His father owned the service station next door one time, not when I lived here though. And the other one is William, we always called him Bus[?], William Bernard Knight, K-N-I-G-H-T who just in recent times has moved to Goodwin House. And I think he is probably in the tower, the new building they built at the original Goodwin House, I'm not sure. They are both contemporaries of my sister. They are both still very alert. Both of them married, as I remember. Jack Martin's wife was a librarian. Knight's wife was a school teacher at high school when I was there. She came here from down in the country somewhere, Virginia. He was a patent lawyer. He worked in the Patent Office all his life -- Bus[?] Knight did. Jack Martin was in the real estate business. But they are both very lucid. I don't know how long they're going to stay that way. And somebody ought to really be talking to them if they want some history.
Interviewer:	OK. I'll get their... Do you have their phone numbers?
John Ticer:	I can get them easy enough.
Interviewer:	Let me turn this off. [END]