Memories of Chester, Herman Radamacher Series, the Pullman Mansion Video Transcription

Herman: This is the Pullman Mansion because the guy who made the Pullman Railroad Car lived there. And this, in later years became … I can't think of the man who lived there.

Anyhow, when it was sold, one winter day, we had a big storm and the building caught fire. We got up there and fought the fire. We thought we were gaining; I was a fireman at the time, so I think it would be in the '60s. We took all the appliances out of the kitchen where the fire hadn't gone because the fire was mostly on the other side of the building. Well the fire kept getting more and more intense and Rubin Thompson and myself took a two inch fire hose, and we were fighting the fire. We kept going in, and if we put the hose up in the air, we could get the fire to go down, but if we put the fire hose down, the fire got bigger. For the longest time, we kept squirting this water and we could not figure out why we weren't putting this fire out.

We found out hours later, there was a baby grand piano in the living room and the floor had burned away under it, and the piano was standing up on edge. As it was standing up on edge if we squirted the water straight in we hit the piano and the water would fly, so we never got to where the fire was. If we aimed up high the water would bounce up and come down. It took me until the fire was out to find out why we couldn't put the fire out there. Also they almost lost a fire truck because there was a truck in front of the building, and the wind was so great that wind was blowing the fire straight out. I think the story was that they actually cut one of the hoses so they could move the fire truck fast enough to get it out from there.

A bunch of us firemen had to spend the night in the firehouse and slept there to be sure the fire was out. They went back and made sure that everything was out because there were a lot of big buildings around it. Very interesting about that. But apparently, he [the owner] was quite a member of the town for a period of time.

Debra: Where was the house located?

Herman: Where the development is located on top of the hill as you come up… If you go by Main Street and you turn and go up to the top of the hill, Grove Street. It was on top of that, the very, very top. That development that's all there was all part of his estate. I know his name as good as … Big, tall man. He was the principal for Madison High School who bought the house. Guerin! Harvey Guerin bought the house, and it was while he was there that it burned down. The funny part of it is, there was a little apartment that was in this building. The people that lived there … And the year that it burned down, which I could find out if I went through my own family history… My mother and father were in Mexico vacationing, and we had an apartment in a building that we had on Main Street and the people had moved out. I said to the people who were living there [in the burned apartment], "If you want a place to live you can live in our apartment." So they lived in the apartment 'til … and they finally decided to stay there. They stayed there for 3 or 4 years before they moved on. Anyway that's the story of the Pullman Mansion.