

I accept and agree to the above statement:

Signature Craig T. Mason

Date August 21, 2018

Printed Name CRAIG T. MASON

Morton History Questions:

1. What year were you born (Required)? 1958
2. Where were you born? City/State/Country. Were you born in a hospital?
At home? Elsewhere? Methodist Hospital, Peoria, Ill.
3. Tell us a little bit about yourself? I'm a lifelong resident of Morton with a strong interest in U.S. history and an increasing interest in Morton history.
4. How many generations of your family have lived in Morton? Two
5. What is your ethnic background? From what countries did your family originate? "White"; Germany (?), United Kingdom (?), perhaps others
6. How did your family find/come to Morton? What brought them here? My father came to Morton (with my mother and my brother), in 1949, to establish his law practice
7. How long have you lived in Morton? Did you ever leave? For what reason? Except for my years in college and graduate school, I have essentially lived in Morton for my entire life
8. If you did leave, what brought you back to Morton?
9. What is your earliest memory of the Village?
I don't know whether it is a particularly early memory, but the annual Crestwood St. picnic (often held in the street itself) was a summer highlight
10. What did you want to be when you grew up?

(we lived at
221 E.
Crestwood St.,
formerly
Stetsler St.,
(I believe))

11. How has the Village changed over the years? *Increased opportunities for the arts and public gatherings; I was pleased to be able to donate funds*

12. What was it like when you grew up here/first moved here? *for construction of Bertha Frank Performing Arts Center, Idlewood Park Arts Pavilion, and Memorial Plaza*

13. What do you miss about the way it used to be?

14. Who are some of the local town "characters" or legends from here? For what were they known? *Willis Elliott, pastor of Community Church (now Community United Church of Christ) from 1950 to 1960 and almost certainly the most remarkable and learned pastor (he had two earned doctorates) in*

15. Any other great stories or legends to share about our town? *See Donald and Ruth Roth's book, Morton: A Pictorial History; see also my answers for #42 below*

16. Any family members or family member accomplishments you'd like remembered? Why? *See attached obituary of my father, Ramon Mason (which you may keep), perhaps Morton's 1st lawyer and a member of*

17. What were your favorite things to do as a kid? *the Senior Illinoisans Hall*

One favorite activity was watching the local children's show hosted by "Captain Jack" of Fame (the only Morton member, as far as I know) as well as "Salty Sam" on WEEK-TV. I once appeared on the show in the mid-1960s.

18. What stores did you frequent that are no longer here? What were they like? What did they sell? Where were they located? What did you like to purchase there? *B-Line (corner of Main and Jackson) = ice-cream cones; "the dime store" (Main St. - where law office + Marshall medical practice now*

19. What other memorable aspects of the community are no longer here?

20. Where was the public library? What would you do there? What services did it provide Morton residents? *Library was on Main St., across from Dairy Queen*

21. Where was the grade school located? The High School? *When I was young, the grade schools (except Lettie Brown, built in the late 1970s) were in their current locations, as were the junior high and high schools*

22. What grocery store did you patronize? Drugstore? Hardware store? Barber shop? Beauty shop? Clothing store? How did you travel to these places? Where were they located? What made them great? *later Morton Village Pharmacy*

23. Did your mom and dad work? Where? *Stumpf and Daniel barber shop, on W. Adams;*

Father as lawyer (three Morton locations over the years), mother as

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homemaker and church volunteer

Marty Miller's beauty shop (for my mother)

Benn Franklin (are) = candy etc.;

Korsmeyer grocery =

"Mr. K's" (where MCB now is);

Thompson grocery

(where Great American Bread now

is; Thompson's

- later called

Sullivan's -

subsequently moved to the current car lot of Murphy Ford)

Kroger had been there earlier

24. Who were the major employers in the area? Where were they located?
 What did they make/manufacture? *Caterpillar, Morton Buildings, Morton Metalcraft*

25. Were there community music or theater groups? Where did they perform? What did a ticket cost? What shows do you remember seeing?

I performed in Morton Community Band (led by Rudolph Jungst — another Morton legend) in summer (Idlewood Park); two productions of the famous play Our Town

26. Where were the favorite spots to gather? Where did you typically see your friends and neighbors most regularly? *Dairy Queen and Church (Community United Church of Christ)*

27. Was there a neighborhood bar or restaurant where people gathered? Was it a place for gossip or political discussion? *(in at least one of which my father acted);*

28. What were the troubled spots in town? What places had a reputation and why?

29. What did you do on a Saturday Night? How about on a Sunday afternoon? Where did you go for these activities?

I played in band for

30. What were the most popular local sports? *Basketball and football*

Morton Community Chorus

31. Did you follow any professional teams? Which ones?

"Kidney Show" (to benefit kidney-disease research),

32. Where did you go on vacation with your family? *Places included Washington, D.C.; Florida; California; and Oak Brook,*

33. How did you celebrate the holidays? *With family, though not usually in Morton Ill.*

34. How did the community celebrate Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day? *Parade (?) and gathering for Memorial Day (I played "Taps" on my cornet at American Legion)*

a show now performed annually at

35. What newspapers did you read? *Morton's newspapers (Tazewell County News, later under other names), Peoria Journal Star, Peoria Daily Times*

Bradley University

36. Did you rely on the radio for national news? What radio stations did you listen to? *WMBD and perhaps WIRL*

37. What was the first national or world news event you remember hearing about? How did you hear about it? *The assassination of President Kennedy, in 1963; the story is that I (not quite five years old) was*

the first of those at home to hear the news — and that when I told the adults at home, they at first thought I was mistaken or was making up a tale

38. What was the best source of news during World War II?

I'm old - but not old enough to remember WWII

39. What were your favorite radio programs?

40. When did you get a television set? And from where did you get it? Family probably got first TV in the mid-1950s (before I was born); we got our first color TV in 1968 - perhaps from Brimm

41. What was the first news event you remember seeing on the television?

Coverage of the assassination of President Kennedy, in 1963

42. Anything else to add? Anything you'd like others to remember about the community?

Some miscellaneous notes:

(A) David Lilienthal, a former top official of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the first chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, was born in Morton (1899?).

(B) Pumpkin: The Curious History of an American Icon, by Cindy Ott, has several pages on Morton.

(C) Community United Church of Christ may be Morton's oldest continuous congregation (founded 1832) and was responsible for the founding of the Morton Public Library; We Care, Inc.; and Project Daybreak (a pioneering effort in adult day care).

(D) McBurger, in the Field Shopping Center (Morton's first real shopping center, which opened in the mid-1960s), may have been Morton's first McDonald's-style fast-food restaurant - and the Mustard Seed, on Main St., may have been Morton's first "tea room."

(E) Other now-gone Morton restaurants include the Peppermill, the Blue Max (a World War I-themed restaurant with a plane

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suspended from the ceiling, as I recall), ~~and~~ the Redbud Tree,

and Vince's Pizza - perhaps Morton's first real pizza place (opened around 1969 and owned and run by an Italian immigrant).

OVER

Electric, in Morton

Ⓕ Other things I recall: the addition to Morton High School in 1976; the annual PTA Carnival at the high school; groundbreaking for (or the opening of?) Freedom Hall, for which I played in the Morton High School Jazz Band; Pok's Diner (corner of Main and Jefferson, where the Butler law office now is); the Western Auto ^{store}, run by "Whitey" Rugaard (N. Main); Otto Baum construction company (First Street, near the Morton Roller Rink); swimming at Kennel Lake and the new Morton Pool ^{in the 1960s + 1970s.}

Ⓖ Worthy of mention is the Morton chapter of the American Field Service (AFS) and the foreign students it brought to Morton High School for a school year; my family, in 1962-63, hosted Morton's first foreign-exchange student (Fritz Mathejat, from Germany). ^{I also recall delivering valedictorian's speech at MHS graduation, in 1977.}

Ⓗ Other Morton "legends" include Ray Kimney, high-school teacher of English, Latin, and German; Fern Smith, longtime teacher; Rudolph (Rudy) Jungst, junior-high and high-school band director; Burdell Hall, high-school social-studies teacher and (with his wife) expert on Morton's potteries; Don and Ruth (King Roth); and physicians such as Cody Cox, ~~and~~ Theofan Trifonoff (an immigrant to the U.S.), and Joseph Aronoff (ditto).

Ⓘ Other items of note include the former Carus-run movie theater on Main St., the ^{February} 1966 (?) downtown-Morton fire, and the Reuling-run Morton State Bank (later First National Bank of Morton, now PNC Bank). Also, many members of the MHS Band played at a rally for presidential candidate/nominee Jimmy Carter, in 1976.

Ⓙ I can identify for you my father's three law offices (one or more of them might be appropriate for your Historical Walking Map, videos, etc.). Please let me know if you want this information.
— CRAIG T. MASON