

#5, ~~6A~~ C.2

Final Copy of the taped interview with Dr. Charles Hely

INTERVIEW OF DR. CHARLES HELY

by William Gordon

Mr. Gordon: A short preface is helpful to this conversation because Dr. Hely and I had so much in common in our childhood in Westfield. Charlie was born on the outskirts of Westfield out on Central Avenue near where the Lehigh Valley tracks cross. He had two sisters, Mary and Eloise. His father was born in Rahway, his mother came from Plainfield and his grandparents had come here originally from Ireland. That story is fascinating in itself and I expect Charlie will be telling you something about that.

My own family were also Rahway people. My Grand-dad was a locomotive engineer on the Amboy railroad and took the train down to Amboy where his brother was the captain of the ferry boat carrying the passengers to Staten Island.

I was born in Paterson in 1911 and came here when my Dad opened a haberdashery store on Elm Street about where Wally's Sport Shop is today.

My early years were spent on Edgewood Avenue and I distinguish only for this interview by the fact that I attended the old Prospect School and went to kindergarten with a Miss Terry as my teacher. She was loved in our family because she corrected a bad speech problem I had when I was considered to be tongue-tied.

In 1917 we moved to the house I still live in on Washington Street. At this time I entered first grade at the old Lincoln School on Academy Place. Dr. Hely also attended the old Lincoln School. It was a large red brick building that has since been torn down for the Masonic Temple and in 1974 the Masonic Temple was torn down to make way for residential construction.

Although Charlie and I were not particularly close when we were children, because of where we lived, a number of blocks apart, our parents, our mothers became very close in the old Lincoln School PTA.

In 1946, both married, Charlie and I then got better acquainted and have been swapping reminiscences ever since and I expect that the conversation as it ensues will cover a lot of those reminiscences.

There was a little railroad station there at the Lehigh Valley tracks and this being in the Picton section was called the Picton Station. There were four trains a day that were passenger trains and they -- steam trains, of course -- they stopped here at the station and took a handful of commuters in towards Roselle, Hillside, Newark, and Jersey City.

My Dad had a foundry in Newark, an electrotyping foundry, so he commuted to Newark every day on this little railroad commuting train out of the Picton Station.

But there were few electric lights along Central Avenue, street lights in those days, but our means for illumination were gas lights and we had open gas light in the kitchen and one up on the second floor. Electricity didn't come into homes in that lower end of Central Avenue for several years later; probably up around 1920.

But our nearest stores, our nearest "bright lights" as we used to call it, were about a mile north on Central Avenue above Grove Street. Grove Street really was the last street in Westfield at that time.

10:00
MINUTES

Any time we needed provisions we'd have to go all the way a mile or so up Central Avenue. The next street north of Grove Street going up Central Avenue towards the nearest store was a little one-block long street, Myrtle Avenue to the right of Central Avenue and then Washington Street was a little further up towards town up the hill and Washington Street ran right on through to Rahway Avenue from Central Avenue. The next street north was Park Street. Park Street also ran from Central Avenue through to Rahway Avenue. To the right of Park Street was a little two-block long street called North Street. North Street later was changed and named Cacchiola Place after one of the local boys who gave the supreme sacrifice for his country during World War I.

On the corner of Cacchiola Place and Central Avenue was a little butcher store and that was run by Nick Conosella and his wife Margaret. There was no refrigeration in those days and the sides of beef, hogs, lamb and fowl were hanging on the wall in the butcher store and Nick and his wife Margaret would cut the chops and the roast right off the wall for those people that needed meat in their grocery order.

Across on the other side of Cacchiola Place was a little cigar and candy store and that was run by Mrs. Catone.

South on Central Avenue from Nick's butcher market was a little shoemaker-cobbler shop and that was run by Dominick Greco and he actually made shoes there besides repairing old shoes.

Now, next to Dominick's cobbler shop was the first neighborhood Atlantic and Pacific, A & P, if you will, Store in town. It was a small store about the size of a one-car garage but it had the

red front and it had the hand-grinding coffee machine and it had all the groceries and things necessary. Such things as sugar and flour were all weighed out on the scale in paper bags by a scoop and butter cut from the big bulk butter tub and weighed on the same scale. Mr. Otto Beyer was the first manager of that A & P Store.

Next to the A & P Store was LaPia's Macaroni Store and LaPia's made most of their macaroni. Some of the city bought macaroni came in big boxes and the macaroni was dry and brittle and came in sticks, oh, maybe as much as two feet long. You bought your macaroni by the pound or by the handful, any way Mrs. LaPia decided she'd sell it.

Most of the people that owned or managed these stores lived in rooms behind the stores or up above the stores. Now, where Central Avenue crossed Grove Street there was no road between Central and Garwood, but the trolley car line ran there and that was the Union Trolley Car Line and that trolley car came all the way out from Newark. One of the junctions or car barns was ^{15:00} right one block east of Central Avenue where Boynton Avenue is ^{MINUTES} now, but even Boynton Avenue wasn't there in those days. It was at this site, presently the site of the Girl Scout Headquarters, that the trolley car that runs to Rahway connected with the Union car so the people coming from Newark or from Plainfield could get off the trolley at this junction, get on the Rahway trolley and go south down through the fields; the trolley ran all the way down through the fields through the south side of Westfield, across Lehigh Valley tracks at a trestle, over the tracks right there by where the Central Railroad crossing is today. And, of course, the Central Railroad crossing at the Lehigh Valley tracks at that time was a grade crossing guarded by gates. Jim Hess was the gate-tender. Jim Hess didn't have any legs; he probably lost those in a train accident along the way. He was an employee of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. That Rahway trolley car, incidentally, went on down through Clark, through Rahway, through Woodbridge, Seawaren and on into Perth Amboy. People that took this route could find the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks to Philadelphia, Trenton and points west or go on further south to Woodbridge and pick up the Reading Railroad or go on further south to Perth Amboy and pick up the ferry over to Staten Island or the shore branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad that ran down towards Red Bank through Perth Amboy.

Q: Charlie, while you're on the subject of trolley cars, you told me once that you went to school every day on the trolley car. Would you talk about this and then let me remind you about the fellow with the felt boots who had that special job.

A: That was a very interesting phase of my early life. When it came time to go to school, we probably had to go about two miles into town to the old Lincoln School which was up on Academy Place as mentioned before. We didn't have any automobile in those days and

so our choice was either to walk the two miles or go by trolley car. The trolley car ran up through the fields, as I said, parallel to Central Avenue on what is now known as Boynton Avenue. The trolley car just stopped when anybody was standing along the track and waiting to get on, so my sisters and the neighbor children and I would go and stand along the track and wait for the trolley car to come. We'd board this Toonerville-like trolley car and ride together up to the junction at Grove Street, change trolley cars, get on the Union trolley car and the Union car going west went along Grove Street, turned north and went up Summit Avenue and, of course, stopped at the old Lincoln School.

Q: Taking the car every day, Charlie, you must have gotten to know the conductor and the motor men and some of those passengers pretty well. Can you tell us something about that?

A: _____ tell about that, Bill, because the same motor man ran that trolley car for as many years as I can remember and after that trolley car was phased out he continued to run the buses along Central Avenue and his name was Mr. --- can't think of it right this second. Also on the trolley car were Shirley Wright, Lois Wright, Helen Fox, Edward Massef, my sister Eloise, of course, and myself. Those names and faces changed gradually over the years but we all rode that same trolley car day after day. The return from school was the same route in reverse. *20:00 MINUTES*

Those trolley cars in those days, of course, besides having a motor man also had a conductor and it was the conductor's job besides keeping the pot stove burning in the wintertime to keep the trolley warm, he also collected the school tickets which were issued free in those days. But in my particular case he always had to finish buttoning my shirt and tying my shoes because all of my sisters would be over there in plenty of time for the car as would the neighbor girls. I'd come pell mell through the fields with the coattails flying and the shirt unbuttoned and dragging my socks or skates over my shoulder and it was up to the poor conductor to get me ready to face the nice people uptown who were properly dressed, but he seemed to take great pride in this but also tightening my tie and making sure my hair was combed and so on. Well, we'd get off the Rahway trolley at the junction and then we'd get on a real nice trolley, this was the Union trolley but instead of this being a four-wheel trolley, this trolley had two four-wheel trucks and it was long and it had real nice seats in it. It was also heated by a stove but the stove was never out and it never had to be shaken; nobody ever had to empty the ashes, this was a real nice stove on this trolley.

Well, we'd get on this trolley; she'd come down Grove Street and just when she got to Summit Avenue she'd make a sharp right-hand turn there and those trolley wheels as they ground around that turn would make a screeching, howling noise and so this noise wouldn't disturb the peaceful sleepers during the night when the trolley went by, these tracks had to be kept greased and there was one young man, he seemed like a small man to me in those days, he had rubber-bottomed felt boots and he'd carry a big aluminum grease can and a stick and he'd keep greasing those wheels at all the

places where the trolley turned so the wheels wouldn't make that squeaking noise. That man took care of that job along that trolley line from Newark to Plainfield and his name was Mr. Sisco and his son Joseph Sisco, around town to this day one of the brains in the pharmaceutical drugstore trade here in town.

Well, we'd go on up and get off the trolley at Academy Place and Summit Avenue and go in to Lincoln School which was the only school on the south side of town at that time. It wasn't til about 1922 that the new Lincoln School was built down on Westfield Avenue just north of Grove Street. Now, keep in mind that this area of town was really very openly and sparsely populated. There were not many houses. There were no houses south of Grove Street and there were many open fields and this big field where Lincoln School was built was probably one of the largest fields in the area. Behind this school area was Rahway Avenue, but even those days Rahway Avenue was so narrow that it wasn't even paved. At that time most of the people in town burned coal and everybody had ashes and the men would come around and collect ashes of people's backyard, load the ashes into these regular ash wagons pulled by horses and one of the places where they dumped the ashes was along Rahway Avenue going south below Grove Street and also in the swampy area along between where Westfield, where Carleton Road and Central Avenue are now just north of Grove Street.

25:00 MINUTES

Well, about the time we got up to second grade, I think it was probably by now around 1922, the new Lincoln School was built and we moved down to Lincoln School.

- Q: Charlie, do you remember how that move was accomplished?
- A: Bill, oh yeah, that was one of the most enjoyable things in my early life. Each one was told to bring his coaster wagon to school and each one if he'd bring his coaster wagon could move his desk and his books and the desks of one of the girls and her books from the old Lincoln School on Academy Place down to new Lincoln School on Westfield Avenue. Well, in those days we didn't have coaster wagons because there were no sidewalks or anything anywhere down Central Avenue where we lived but my father took the wheels off a baby carriage and took a great big wooden soap box and made me a wagon the night before we were supposed to move and I was the proudest guy coming up Central Avenue, walked for two miles pulling that wagon behind me that my father made out of the baby carriage wheels and the wooden box and I got to move my own desk and the desk of Virginia Tipson from the old Lincoln School to the new Lincoln School and I was the proudest guy in town.
- Q: Charlie, tell us something about the properties that existed on the south side. There were some pretty extensive places there. The Talcotts had the woods over on Rahway Avenue. Some of them joined up with Ash Swamp but I'm sure you know more about this than I can recall.
- A: Yes, besides going to school I guess I was sort of a self-appointed Huckleberry Finn down in that area and I did because my parents and so-on liked the outdoors. I enjoyed trapping and hunting and even

fishing. There were acres, acres and acres of ground, open fields and woods down there in that particular area below Grove Street. There was nothing below where Clifton Street is. There were a couple of houses along Rahway Avenue below Grove Street but all this acreage -- some was unattended land, some was well-farmed, some was poorly farmed and some didn't amount to anything but just scrub oak trees. It was great country for hunting and trapping and raccoons, possums, muskrat abounded in all those little cricks which have since been, of course, closed in by huge pipes. All these cricks emptied down into Robinson's Branch of the Rahway River which is really the reservoir down there in Clark now and that was all fed by streams coming down through from Scotch Plains and this was called the Ash Swamp area.

Down Rahway Avenue almost to where the Lehigh Valley tracks cross Rahway Avenue there were several nice farms. One was owned by Frank Faulkner and Frank probably had 100 acres or so back there and next door to him in that old house that still stands just below Faulkner Frive, two maiden ladies lived--Rachel and Josie Folson. Their sister evidently was married to President Cleveland and their claim to fame is because their sister was married to Grover Cleveland.

30:00
MINUTES

Well, anyway, in those days because of the times and so on you'd get up and set your traps or you'd go out and set your traps along the swamps and the brooks and under old barns and haystacks towards evening and then you'd go out and look at your traps in the morning. We had sort of a trap line, we called it, and maybe you'd come home with two or three muskrats, a possum or two and maybe even a raccoon. These animals were skinned and we'd stretch and dry the furs and you sent the furs to either Montgomery Ward or Sears and Roebuck, or, of all places, to some furrier in New York called I.J. Fox. You sent them by parcel post and maybe they'd send you back a dollar and a half, two dollars or so for every skin. But, you'd get up at the crack of dawn and go check on your traps before you'd go to school and this was kind of an enjoyable life but by the time you're probably ten years old you had your first rifle or your first shotgun and so along the way if you happened to kick up an English ring-necked pheasant or a frisky rabbit, he might find his way into the stewpot by evening time.

Also, it seems now--maybe they weren't-- but that the winters were very harsh in those days. We'd have to go through, to pick up our traps, through snow that seemed like it was up to our waist but I suppose it was only a foot or two but we did have rubber boots and other winter equipment, mackinaws and earmuffs and so on. Those were happy memories but even more happy when the cricks and the Clark Reservoir froze over because we'd take our ice skates along after school and go ice skating and we'd get up some little hockey games, of course, with the neighbors and the youngsters from school.

One particular place of interest at that time, was off Willow Grove Road. There was a place over there called the Westfield Sewer Farm and they had all these big settling ponds over there so that the sewage from Westfield could be treated and these ponds were probably, oh, maybe 35, 50 yards square and the nice part about these ponds was because of the solid matter therein, they'd freeze before any of the other ponds around and so we'd get to play ice hockey over there long before anybody else in the area were able to go skating because these ponds would freeze a little sooner. Of course, when they weren't too well frozen we'd play sort of a tickly bender sort of a game and see who would keep from falling through the ice but when we ever did fall through the ice, to say the least, we were probably not the most desirable smelling boys in town.

Now, along with these ice skating episodes at the Sewer Farm, I'd like to mention that there was a fine custodian of the Sewer Farm. A Mr. James Bird. Mr. Bird was a nice man. He'd see where we'd fallen through the ice and gotten wet and cold and he'd take us into his shack at the wood fire there and dry us all out and he didn't care how bad we smelled 'cause he smelled worse than we did 'cause he was working this area all day long. He lived along Grove Street and as years went on his boy came on and graduated from college as Dr. James Bird and practiced here in town as a dentist for many years.

Q: Speaking of trapping and hunting, Charlie, you told me a story once about during the Depression when things were really difficult in the Hely homestead and how your mother showed up the entire family with her ability to get food on the table. Tell us that story.

35:00
MINUTES

A: Yeah, that is a funny one, Bill. As years went on, along came the Depression and things were pretty tough. Actually, we always had enough to eat because we had our own garden and we had a few chickens and we had eggs and so on. Incidentally, those storekeepers I mentioned up on Central Avenue -- if you ever went up there for half a pound of chopped meat and Margaret knew that half a pound of chopped meat wouldn't feed the whole family and she'd say, "Well, your mother only wants a half a pound, I'm putting a whole pound in here, tell your mother to pay me when she can." And this was the way that neighboring storekeepers were. One day my mother said, "Son, go out and see if you can shoot a rabbit. I got three shells here, don't use the third shell. If you can bring home a rabbit, that'd be fine, but if you miss a rabbit, you keep the third shell and come back and show me where the rabbit is." So, sure enough, I hadn't gone very far before I jumped a nice rabbit and missed him but I saw where he went--I just had a single-barrel shotgun in those days-- and I was able to jump the rabbit again and I missed him again. Well, I was ashamed and so I had to go back and tell my mother I missed the rabbit but here is the one shell left. Well, my mother wasn't much of a hunter but she

put my father's rubber boots on and she went down to where I'd last seen this rabbit and she started walking in a circle and walking in a circle, bigger and bigger circle. Pretty soon, up jumps a rabbit, my mother pulls up the gun, bang, the rabbit dropped dead. Well, my mother couldn't face the rabbit so she said, "Here, take the gun, you go pick up the rabbit, I'll be up the house, you bring the rabbit home when you get him cleaned." So there wasn't anything I could do but go and pick up the rabbit, skin him and take him home and I daresay that was the best rabbit we ever ate. My mother made stew before at nightfall and we all ate a hearty, warm supper and enjoyed every mouthful of it.

There were some other little interesting trapping anecdotes. Along with other things when we'd be setting our trap lines, we might get a couple of muskrats and a couple of raccoons and maybe a possum or two but always a skunk would wind up in the trap. Now, the trick when you got a skunk in the trap was to try and not get sprayed by the skunk but the inevitable would often happen but we didn't seem to worry too much about getting sprayed by the skunk because we could air our clothes pretty well. We always wore old clothes on the trap lines just because of this happenstance. But one time we decided let's take one of these skunk perfume sacs to school and see what we could do with it there. Well, when we got up to the high school which was then on Elm Street on the other side of town, we got a little bit nervous about what we were going to do with this skunk perfume so for the want of something better we threw it up into one of the ventilators. Well, this happened to be the intake ventilator and the odor from the skunk scent was sucked into the ventilating system and discharged into each room of the school with such obnoxious odors that they had to close the school down for a day or two. This is folklore legend as years have gone on. This tomfoolery has been exaggerated to great heights but I must say it was one of my claims to infamy in the early thirties.

Q: While we're talking about highjinks, Charlie, this leads sort of into the subject of circuses in Westfield out on Central Avenue were the old circus grounds. I know you worked for them for awhile. Tell us a little bit about the background of that.

A: I will indeed because I was always an authority on circuses but you have to remember that this was a different day and age and the circuses would come in on railroad flatcars and the circuses would be unloaded from the flatcars and pulled by beautiful teams of dapple-grey horses. Westfield, because of the trolley line being nearby and other reasons, was always a great circus town and people would come from miles around for the circuses here. The circus grounds were right there on Central Avenue just south of Grove Street, a little south of where Green Street is now and that was--the Duncan Hill Apartments are located there now--but that was a reasonably flat area and the circuses would come and set up there and sometimes stay for two days. They drew big name circuses like _____, Clark's Circus. The 101 Ranch was all a Wild West show. They let school out when the circuses came to town. But one of the stipulations was that the circuses had to have a parade and all the youngsters would go and help set up the seats for the circuses and go on the job of the so-called "watering the elephants" but

that never was much of a problem because they just hooked big tanks up to the fire hydrants and let the elephants drink all they wanted and nobody actually had to carry water to the elephants. When it came time for the circus parade to commence, they needed people to ride in wagons and raise flags. * Besides being part of the circus parade--I can remember riding on the big wagons and feeling as proud as a peacock to be part of this great circus organization--but then we'd go back to the circus grounds and we'd get to sit in the stands at the circus for free and some of the happiest moments of my life were spent at times like this. There were probably two or three circuses that came to town every year to add to the merriment of the coming of spring.

Which reminds me, though, along around I suppose it was 1928, when Al Smith ran for President of the United States the Ku Klux Klan was a very active group and I can well remember my Dad taking me to a Ku Klux Klan rally where the circus grounds were. The members there actually were hooded in their sheeted Ku Klux Klan costumes and this, of course, was long before public address systems and so on, but I can remember the speakers in typical fire and brimstone fashion telling about the terrible things that were going to happen to this country if Al Smith were to ever get elected. But it was in the dark of the night and there were no floodlights, just lights of headlights on cars and lanterns were all that was used to illuminate the area, but there were a few torchlight lanterns up on the rostrum where the speakers were. Across the street from the circus grounds was a great big hill higher than you would ever believe would be there along Central Avenue -- I suppose it was 75 feet high -- and it sloped down towards the east towards where Boynton Avenue is now. And lo, and behold, right in the middle of the Ku Klux Klan meeting, Ku Klux Klan conclave, a great cross up on top of Ripley Hill -- the Hill was called Ripley Hill -- and the cross was touched off in fire on the top of this hill and it could, of course, be seen for miles around and it was a very eerie sight and little did I realize that here in this nice town of Westfield I was right deep in the midst of bigotry.

I'd like to go on though, and tell about that Ripley Hill. That Ripley Hill was a great hill for sleighriding and we all had sleds and at the first half-inch of snow we'd all head for Ripley Hill and have great hours and days of fun, weekends of fun sleighriding on Ripley Hill and we'd go down almost as far as the trolley junction to Grove Street or go down the other way to where the area that is now Willow Grove Swimming pool and picnic area. But some great times were had at Ripley Hill and although I don't mean to sound boastful, at one time I had the record of going the longest distance on my sled and so I got to be known as "King of the Hill" and that nickname really stuck with me for many years thereafter. "King Hely".

Q: Charlie, you can't reminisce about things out in your neck of the woods without telling us something about the Frazee boys. Did they call them that? John Frazee is the one that I'm thinking of. Tell us about that.

A: Oh, yes, Mr. John Frazee, although he lived about a half a mile ⁴⁰⁰⁰ MINUTES

from us, he was our nearest next-door neighbor and he was the only one that had a telephone for miles around, so he was the only one in that particular area that had contact with the outside world. But John Frazee was pretty comfortable in his own right. Besides being a shrewd and profitable farmer, he also was an excellent stone and plaster mason and some of the finest stone and plaster work around town were the product of his skillful hand. But one of the tragedies I can remember in my early life was his wife caught fire and came running out on the porch with her clothes all on fire and we were able to snuff the fire out and they put her in the town dump truck and took her to Muhlenberg Hospital where she finally met her demise. John Frazee had that big old house and hundreds of acres of property to the west of Central Avenue just before the Lehigh Valley tracks and his property extended all the way over to Rahway Avenue.

Now, across the street from John Frazee's house is old Noah Woodruff's house. Now, Noah Woodruff had been a judge in the Elizabeth-Roselle area for many years and he had a big piece of property across the street from John Frazee and he actually happened to be John Frazee's uncle, as I recall. He had hundreds of acres that set back, if you will, to the east of Central Avenue back through the woods almost to Lexington Avenue in Cranford. I'd like to take a minute to dwell on that Noah Woodruff house. That was a house that was supposed to have been made by slaves immediately after the Civil War. All the stones in the house were big stones that were probably as much as two feet thick and three feet square and the house was all put together with these big stone squares. And there was not only a cellar in the house, but a sub-cellar which was probably used to hide slaves during the Underground Railroad trip of the slaves from the South up into Canada to get away from slavery. These _____ carried on even after the Civil War. But that house was supposed to have been made by slave labor before the Civil War and the slaves that worked on that house, the legend goes, were set free after the house was completed to go and seek their fortune in the free North. That house was a thoroughly well constructed house--warm in the winter, cool in the summer entirely because of these heavy stones that were made to complete the frame and the roof of the house, of course, was slate. There was a big fireplace in every room including the kitchen. But it was the devil's own job when they decided to put the electricity through there because all the beams and the hand-hewn oak flooring took an awful lot of drilling to thread that electrical cable through the house and I can well remember that several electricians gave up on the job before it was finally completed.

Noah Woodruff was a distinguished gentleman and he, too, besides being a judge, had a very productive farm and he would go load his teams of horses with farm produce and go all the way to the Newark market before daylight to take his vegetables and other farm produce over for sale at the wholesale farmers' market in

45.00
MINUTES

Newark and then there were some other ones in the Elizabeth Court area. Many is the trip I took to the market helping Mr. Woodruff drive those teams of horses. Pat and Mike were the horses' names and they knew that route, the back road to Elizabeth so well they didn't take much driving, but they came home a lot faster than they went. Horses always knew when it was time to head for the barn.

Q: Charlie, earlier when you were talking about the trolley cars, there was a conductor whose name eluded you for the moment. Have you recalled this?

A: Yeah, I did, and it's a shame that I couldn't recall sooner. His name was Mr. Becker and Mr. Becker lived up on North Avenue right there where the railroad bridge goes across that comes out at North Avenue near Tuttle Parkway. Mr. Becker's oldest daughter married Charlie Wentlandt, one of the high school football greats, and his youngest daughter, he had a big family, but the youngest daughter married young Fred Miller. Fred Miller lives down there off Rahway Avenue. We've talked about his dad and how many years he was a trolley motorman and bus driver after the trolleys were off the line.

Which reminds me. Now, Rahway Avenue started at South Avenue there and it only went down about three or four blocks, long blocksthey were, and it suddenly was getting to the outskirts of town and pretty countrified area. Well, along there on Rahway Avenue opposite where the Armory is now there was a couple of old farmers and their name was Kelly and I think the father's name was Tim Kelly and his brother's name was John Kelly. For many years they had a peddler route around town and they were great big, rotund Irishmen and it was nothing to see them lift a barrel of potatoes on their shoulder and go and throw it up on the back of the wagon. They'd go around town selling produce from the back of their wagon. I can remember when I was a little boy, when he'd come in the neighborhood, he'd say, "Oh, Sonny, don't go near those horses. Those are real bad horses." So when Mr. Kelly wasn't looking, why we would hit the horses with sticks or throw stones at the horses and the horses would take off and Mr. Kelly would get all upset, he'd get on the wagon and throw potatoes at us and everything else and we'd just pick up the potatoes and take them home to our mothers so she'd have potatoes for the stew that evening.

But as the years went on Tim Kelly had two fine sons. One was named Tim and the other's name was Charlie. Well, Charlie was quite an athlete and a strong hulk of a youth and sometimes we'd indulge in wrestling and boxing and sometimes formally and sometimes otherwise, but he got to be pretty nimble on his feet and pretty good with his fists. Well, when the circus came to town, the circus usually had a so-called professional strong man and part of the circus act was to see if there was anybody in this

50:00
MINUTES

community that could stay in the ring, wrestling ring for five minutes with the Terrible Terror from Terre Haute, Indiana. Then there'd be a great pause in the audience and the announcer would say, "Well, I guess there's nobody in this town brave enough to stand in the ring with this Terrible Terror and up would step old Charlie Kelly. Charlie Kelly would flex his muscles and climb through the ropes of the ring and, of course, everybody in the stands at the circus would cheer and holler for old Charlie and then they'd introduce the Terrible Terror from Terre Haute and everybody'd boo and carry on something awful. Well, of course, you know just in the nick of time Charlie Kelly would throw the Terrible Terror to the mat and stamp on him and would walk off with the prize of \$25 which was a rather well-paid five minutes in his life. Every year it was the same act, every year Charlie Kelly would be there.

Frutcheys Charlie's brother Tim was a fine young fellow and also a physical culture enthusiast, but somewhere along in his youth accidentally Tim lost an eye and he only had half the vision in his other eye. Well, I can well remember Tim started out working as a clerk in Frutchey's Drug Store and in those times, those days the drug-stores had soda fountains in them and Tim could make up some big chocolate floats and all kinds of soda fountain goodies. But then when Mr. Darby opened up the drugstore on the south side of town, Tim came over and worked as soda clerk and handyman in Mr. Darby's drugstore and he got to be one of the pillars in the south side of town as far as knowing all the gossip, knowing who, what, where and when was going on good, bad or indifferent. A funny anecdote about poor Tim was though that when it came time for World War II to start, Tim was the first one to volunteer and Tim got turned down because he only had half the vision in one eye. Well, he tried for the Red Cross and he was in the Red Cross for awhile doing everything he could to help his country at war and then they had to get up some more troops and so they opened up the draft and the first one from town that was picked for the draft was Tim Kelly even though he only had half an eye and he was the happiest man in town walking down the street to go to the first boot camp as a United States soldier.

Q: Charlie, it's a good thing you mentioned Frutchey's. Frutchey's corner was a meeting place for everybody of high school age, college age, on up into the late twenties. If you wanted to make a date for the evening, why, you always said, "I'll meet you at Frutchey's at such and such an hour and we'll figure out what we're going to do for the evening when we get down there." So the mainstays at Frutchey's were Tim Kelly mixing sodas behind the bar, excuse me, behind the counter. But with him was a Negro names Bert and Bert was light-skinned and very attractive personality and was a favorite with everybody and as much a fixture there as Mr. Frutchey himself.

You left us off on Rahway Avenue with the older Kellys. Down the road on Rahway Avenue where Washington Street came in and before that big circle down there called--Oh, I forget the current name--there were some big barns and those were Willoughby's Barns and the Willoughby family and the Willoughby enterprises were a very familiar scene around the streets of Westfield for many, many years. Charlie, you knew about those barns. I can remember finding some dead, some skeletons of mules back in there and Willoughby's mules were famous but would you tell us something about those barns and about the activities of the Willoughbys with their various animals.

55:00
MINUTES

A: Oh, yeah, Bill, Rahway Avenue came down. The Kellys lived on the part where the high school is now and between Rahway Avenue and at that time it was called--well, what's now Trinity Place--was a big field and there were gardens and the Kellys raised stuff there. But if you came down Rahway Avenue to what's now West Brook Road, there were these great big storage barns that were owned by the Willoughby Brothers. Now, the Willoughbys had a moving, storage and moving organization and besides moving with horses and teams they also had one of the first Bulldog Mack Trucks. On the side of their wagon they always had a sign "Ice, Wood and Coal" and that was also one of their side businesses but we always liked that name Ice, Wood and Coal.

You see, in those days the ice was cut from the ponds around by saws and were stored in the ice houses packed in straw and when the ice man would come around, people had to use the ice to put in the refrigerators, when the ice man would come around, he'd chip the ice with an ice pick and take a piece out which he thought was a 25¢ piece size and he'd go around to the scale on the back of the wagon and he'd dust off--he had a regular whisk broom--and he'd dust off the straw and the sawdust that this ice was packed in and all the youngsters would stand around and any of the ice chips that fell to the side we'd pick them up and enjoy them and they were the most tasty pieces that ever crossed one's lips.

But to get back to Willoughby's Barns, they really weren't, they were more warehouses than they were barns and anybody that had furniture stored and furniture that they couldn't use, everything seemed to wind up in Willoughby's Barn. It was kind of a pass-time, there were some younger Willoughbys, I remember one young Willoughby was Sam Willoughby and another one we called Bubbles--I think his name was Bill--but we'd go and we'd play in these barns and they had all kinds of cartons and stuff in there and I can well remember one of the cartons had--oh, it was a great big carton full of clay pipes that had been imported from Ireland or England or someplace and each one of us would see to it that we had one of those clay pipes in our pocket as we left the barn and head for the nearest cornfield and stuff the pipes full of cornsilk and sort of got ourselves off to the terrible habit of smoking cornsilk in the clay pipes.

And then Willoughby's property and acreage backed up to Talcott Farm. Now, Talcott Farm was a big farm that ran all the way from Rahway Avenue back through to Lambers Mill Road. It was a well-kept farm and they had quite some fine livestock back there and some real good horses. One of the things that we used to like to do is go through their orchards, go through from Willoughbys through into the Talcott Farm because they were sort of restricted and off limits and swipe apples and pears and they had the greatest fruit orchards of any place around this side of town and one wouldn't have to go through Talcott's orchards and come out hungry, I can tell you that, if the season was right.

But those barns of Willoughbys were of wooden construction and they always had them pretty well kept up and painted nicely and so on but they were sort of landmarks here on the south side of town before the Lincoln School was put up.

Q: Charlie, to wind up this tape on a happy note let's talk about May Day and what a tremendous activity this was in all the schools around town when we were those ages really, I guess from second grade, first and second grade on up to sixth grade. The way we all prepared for these weeks in advance and then go over to Washington School on that beautiful May Day and carry on those activities.

A: Oh, yes, they are some fond memories, Bill, but do you remember that everybody didn't go to those May Day activities as participants? First you had to qualify as a runner or a jumper on first grade or second grade level or third grade level and each class would pick the champion from each school and here on the south side those who were outstanding in running or jumping or whatever from Lincoln School, each would represent his class in the school and then the final late in the spring would be held at the schoolyard close to Elm Street right close to where the Elm Street School is now, between Orchard Street. But this big school ground was between Walnut Street and Orchard Street and the school was nice and green, the lawn was green and beautiful and across the street was Dr. Egel's office and he kept his place beautiful-- white frame, well-painted building, office and home together. But besides the sporting event the big thing in those days was winding the Maypole and as soon as it was warm enough to be out for recess or out at lunchtime in the schoolyard, the Maypoles would be up and we'd have to wind the Maypole. The boys would go one way and the girls would go the other way and then they'd take the best group of Maypolers, Maypole winding from each school and they'd go over to the final event on the last days of school and they'd go over to the final event on the last days of school in the Washington School yard and there'd be maybe seven or eight Maypoles there and they'd be playing music and each would go over and under and winding around to wind these sashes that hang from the top of these poles in different colors, wind them up tight. And it was rather a spectacular thing and, of course, all the parents would be there.

60:00
MINUTES

One of the things that I can well remember along with these - spring May Day celebrations at Washington School grounds was that occasionally somebody would get sick and maybe one of the little girls would faint but it wasn't any big problem because right there on the corner of Walnut Street and Elm Street was a little spring and water constantly ran there and one of the local masons had fixed it so you could just step down a couple of steps into this little spring house foundation and get all the nice cool water that you wanted and rinse off any spots that you had on your clothes or anything but about this time one of the popular things to wear on your feet were tennis shoes. They were just like canvas shoes and, of course, that's what sneakers are now, but besides being dressed in your best starched linens and cottons for the Maypole-winding event you had to have fancy new white tennis shoes to match your clothes. This was a sure sign of spring.

I wonder whatever happened to that little spring that was there, Bill. I said it bubbled through a spring house. Actually, it just bubbled out of a rusty iron pipe there but, some of the nice masons in town just kind of made little cavity - little hollow parts filled in with cement and stone so you could get water out of there without getting all mucked up with mud. What do you suppose ever happened to that spring?

Q: Well, I never really knew when they re-leveled the property there for Washington School -- I think this was at the time they took down the school, but I'm not sure about that -- that spring disappeared and if you want my guess, I think it got diverted into a culvert. Originally that spring went over, I think, to what is now Mindowaskin Pond which was originally Baker's Swamp where Bakers had their tannery long before my time. *65' 100 MINUTE*

By that time, in the 1917, 1920, '22 time there were still in existence running from behind the Carberry place on Westfield Avenue -- but these were on Summit Avenue -- ran from there on down the slope towards the station oh, to maybe two or three houses from South Avenue. They were composed of ten-inch planks about ten-foot long, I would think, two or three to a width with spaces between the planks where the grass would grow up and were laid flat upon the turf. They had a nice spring to walk on but probably would be a little rough on bare feet. Most of the sidewalks on Summit Avenue and indeed on Westfield Avenue, too, were flagstone made of Tennessee bluestone perhaps two feet by three feet. Many of them are still in existence today, but unfortunately each year sees some of them pulled out and replaced with concrete sidewalk.

The Carberry house, there were two Carberrys on Westfield Avenue but the main house was the huge mansard-roofed white clapboard house with the big hemlocks in front lived in by the Carberry sisters. Aunt Sarah is the name of one and I forget the other one but it was a familiar sight in the summertime particularly to see Aunt Sarah who was, oh, probably six foot two or three maybe and six foot four inches tall, broad, gaunt shoulders and walk straight up and down stiff as a ramrod with a big swinging stride. She would wear a shirtwaist, a white shirtwaist and long

black skirt with a straw boater set atop her head as if it were put on with a T-square and she would always go down every evening after her pint of ice cream from the Candy Kitchen.

Q: Charlie, a while back we talked about Frutchey's Corner also known just as Frutchey's or the corner or the Drugstore, and it needs a bit of elaboration.

A: On the northeast corner of Broad and Elm Streets, Frutchey's Drugstore was the hangout, the meeting place, the hotel Astor of Westfield for all the high school kids, the college kids, and even bachelors on up into their 20's, or even their late 20's. It was, in other words, the meeting spot, the clock at the Astor Hotel, the location for guys to get together of an evening and decide where they would go and what they would do. Frutchey's was a drugstore but common to many drugstores, it had a long soda fountain presided over by Tim Kelly with Bert the light skinned West Indian as his chief assistant. /Doc Mader ran the prescription counter and the place was kept very clean with its mosaic tile floor and the center of the store was open and access to and from the fountain was easy. Frutchey's was where all the action of a given evening would get started. If no action took place there was always girl watching and jokes swapping to pass the time. This went on winter and summer. Cokes were a nickel, sodas, floats or milkshakes were 15 and 20¢ and a banana split was a quarter for those who were well heeled. There were two or three phone booths and they were always filled with guys attempting to line up dates or calling friends to get together. Later on Schades supplanted Frutchey's. Schades was down on Broad Street past the Trust Company, as a teenage hangout. Prior to Schades, Mitchell and Vagello's ran as the Candy Kitchen and it was the pre-eminent refreshment spot for adults as well as for others. Folks used to come in for a sundae or for ice cream and candy to take out. The Candy Kitchen's meadowbrook sundaes, a ball of ice cream covered with marshmallow whip and heavily coated with a mixture of cocoa and malt and topped with a maraschino cherry was one of the local specialties.

The Candy Kitchen had white mosaic tile floors also, and on the ceiling some six or eight tropical fans with 6 ft. blades would turn and keep the air moving during the summer. There were round tables for four with the wire ice cream chairs for the patrons. Candy Kitchen was known for the best ice cream in town which was packed in the square wedged type cartons and packed extra hard with a bulging mound of ice cream overflowing the top. The Candy Kitchen also hand dipped their chocolates and a trip through their kitchens back behind the Weekly Standard Press was an interesting treat for both old and young. Later the Candy Kitchen vied with Schades and Louis Cagnassola's delicatessen for the high school lunch trade. At one time the main lunch place in town for the business man and for school boys, not for girls, was the dog wagon

which later on were known as lunch wagons or diners. A dog wagon that was behind the Trust Company on the southwest corner of Broad and Elm Street. Access to the wagon was through sidewalks that fanned down either side of the wedge shaped Trust Company building, one coming in by Broad Street and another sidewalk coming in from Elm Street. It really was a wagon with steel rimmed wood wheels which later on were blocked up and the foundation installed. / Here a large bowl of homemade soup was 15¢ with three thick slices of bread and butter. Hamburgers with or without onions were a dime and a dime would also buy a wedge of Mrs. Wagner's well publicized but less than satisfactory pies. 75:00 MIN

To return to Frutchey's Corner Drugstore, the soda fountain always seemed crowded. Especially when school was over. But it was not cluttered. It was clean and orderly and the boys, some of whom perhaps were class characters, but many of whom were local athletes or class leaders of one kind or another, were well behaved. They could be boisterous on occasion but they were usually courteous and friendly, a hang over no doubt of the boy scout upbringing still at work.

Public booze spots in the early 1920's were unknown. The speakeasy did not come into local evidence until the mid or late 20's. So soda fountains and candy kitchens were well patronized both for on the spot or take out consumption.

Of the speakeasies, Dankers was the far the best known. Situated on Radley Road near the corner of West Broad Street it was the center of social activity for college age boys, girls and even parents for many years. Opened by Gus Daner, the huge Admiration cigar faced man around 1931, or 1932 in the cellar of a clapboard, 1900-1910 residence. Booths and tables lined the walls before the mahogany bar. An adjoining room was crowded with more booths and tables. The very illegality of drinking created additional allure for dating couples and other unattached young men. It's heyday lasted through the years, long after Prohibition was repealed. With Repeal, the several slot machines disappeared. In it's time Dankers would be crowded 4 and 5 deep with the gayest and noisiest and prettiest girls and the ablest, most attractive guys on the local scene. A shell of draft beer at 10¢ was the routine order but for the well-heeled guy trying to impress his date, cocktails and highballs at 40¢ and 50¢ were available.

Because access to swimming spots in the summer was difficult, the church excursions run by the Methodist Church were a big event in the lives of many of us. They were advertised well in advance and tickets were purchased. There was great concern and preparation for the excursion. The concern being for the weather. The preparation would start the night before, of course, with the making of the picnic lunch with getting the shoe boxes from the local haberdashery and the sandwiches, boiled eggs and salads. The excursions gathered up Central Railroad Station on the morning in question

and the destination was always Asbury Park, Ocean Grove. The platform would be crowded with many, many children all loaded down with their boxes and their bathing togs. Distinguishing the excursion train with a matter of great interest was pretty easy. It had two white flags flying on either side of the locomotives and could be spotted well down the track and always caused alot of shouting and calling back and forth and worrying by anxious mothers that their children weren't in the path of the oncoming train. There would be as many as twelve or thirteen cars to a train and this was always a matter of much conversation as people crowded aboard trying to arrange seats near friends. When the train got to Elizabethport, there was considerable worry, could it make that sharp bend and again, much to do and leaning out of windows so that you could spot the rear end of the train at the same time that you were sitting up at the front end as it made that bend. The train then wound down through the Amboys on down to Long Branch and then along in back of all the big homes in Long Branch and Deal and Allenhurst and coming into the Asbury Park-Ocean Grove Station. At this stage rickety automobiles, jitneys, gathered up the oncoming passengers and carted them the six or eight blocks to the boardwalk and the beach front. 80:00 MIN

Typically a morning would spent on the beachfront having changed from clothes to bathing suits in one of the several bath houses and then lunch on the sands or if the day were rainy, perhaps under the boardwalk or perhaps in one of the pavilions along the shore fronts. But the afternoon was given over to mostly going either to the steeple chase, a fascinating place, or to playing the games of chance or riding the merry-go-round or the dodge-em's.

Between times, the stops at the root beer stand with all the good root beer you could drink for a dime was a common activity. As the sun began to set over what I think was called Sunset Lake between Asbury Park and Ocean Grove the picnic group would wend their way towards the station, stopping perhaps to take one last ride on the huge, four story high Ferris Wheel at the lake side and finally to board the train again and take the hour and a half, two hour ride home. Tired, sun-burned, but happy and eagerly awaiting the next excursion. There'd usually be 3 or 4 excursions each summer, run by the Church and these went on from 1916 on into the mid or late 1920's at which time perhaps the automobile became much more available so the economics of the excursion were perhaps distorted and went by the wayside.

I can remember cutting lawns and doing chores and saving up my money (quarters and dimes) so that I would have \$2.00 in my pocket to spend in Asbury Part at the excursion. And this was ordinarily all that I would need. The steeple chase, I recall, was perhaps 50¢ to enter and spend the afternoon in, the bathhouse was another 50¢ and the games of chance or the rides were a nickel or 10¢ a piece depending on the ride. 85:00 MIN

Q: Charlie, thanks very much for this session. I think we better call it a day for this taping, recording session. 85:41