THE HOBOKEN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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TAPE 1, SIDE 1

RC: Carol, could we start -- before we talk about your history with the Lipton Tea Company -- with some information about your family, which I know has been in Hoboken for a long time.

CW: I think it depends on which side of the family you talk about. My father's side of the family -- the Wilson side of the family -- was probably in Hoboken since about 1860.

RC: -- coming from?

CW: My grandfather came from Brooklyn when he was three years of age, because he was born here, and his

father was a Norwegian sea captain, and one of the largest Norwegian settlements in the United States, on the eastern seacoast, happens to be in Brooklyn, New York. They first settled out there, so that's where he was born. Then they relocated here in Hoboken.

RC: Was it because of the shipbuilding industry here, or no connection?

CW: I imagine it had a lot to do with the ports, because my great-grandfather would be going back and forth on voyages. Then he met my grandmother, who was a resident of Hoboken, and they married. So they came here and established roots, since she would be here with her family while he was out to sea.

RC: And your grandmother's side of the family had been here -- ?

CW: Her family probably dates back to the early 1800s, maybe the late 1700s. The family was there for a very, very long time, yes.

RC: Do you know anything about their history in Hoboken? What they did?

CW: Well, as I said, my great-great grandfather was a sea captain, so he would be sailing ships. His land of origin was Norway. His wife was French-English, and her family was probably here, I guess, settled somewhere in the early 1800s. On my mother's side, her family came from Ireland, and they came in the late 1880s-1890s, so we didn't come through Ellis Island. So I guess Castle Hill in New York City would have been where my grandfather came in, and met my grandmother. Although they both came from Ireland, they didn't meet until they came to the United States. That's when they met, then they married, and they settled in Hoboken.

RC: And they chose Hoboken because of her family connections?

CW: No, they just settled in Hoboken, because my Irish grandfather came with several brothers, all of whom were over 6'3" and had bright red hair, from County Kerry. They settled in New York but he settled here in Hoboken, and I really don't know why. Then he met my grandmother, and this

is where they set up home and he started a business. He started a business, a hospitality business I guess it would be, like a pub and tavern, and went into real estate, owned property and bought property. The paternal side was in the seafaring business, you know, and he was traveling until he died at sea. He literally died at sea, and my paternal grandmother was left a widow with three children, to run her husband's business -- which was, you know, connected with shipping and things along that line. Then she died shortly thereafter, and the children were left orphans. And the way Hoboken was constituted at that time, the three children -- the oldest of which was my -- My grandfather was the second oldest and he was only nine years of age. These three children kept the family together; kept the brothers and sisters together, with the help of neighbors. They went to work and earned their thing, and people in their neighborhood helped keep an eye on them. They raised themselves, didn't get into any trouble in school, and started a business.

RC: Independently, without -- ?

CW: My grandfather always talked about this wonderful woman in the neighborhood who had a family, an

Irish woman -- He said she was just a wonderful lady, and she literally and figuratively kept an eye on them. They took rooms somewhere and he went to work at nine years of age. His brother, I think, was about three or four years older than him, and earned the money to keep themselves and their younger sister. They did not want to split up, and they absolutely refused to go to an orphanage.

RC: No orphanage. I guess that's what Hoboken was like in those days.

CW: Absolutely. And he just said that was it. No one got into trouble. They wouldn't even presume to get into trouble, and he just always had this really warm feeling about Hoboken, with a sense of community, and I guess it's because they lived it.

My maternal grandparents put roots here, and then they had six children. They worked in business and held their business until there was the great bank failure in Hoboken; the Steneck Company went bankrupt and many, many family members, and many, many people in Hoboken, lost their savings; lost all of their money when that went out of business.

RC: When was that?

CW: That probably must have been, I imagine, sometime in the '20s or '30s, or even before that. I'm not quite sure. But I remember so many families talked about that; that when they had the great bank failure; when this bank, with all the people's deposits and all that, went out of business. Of course, there was no insurance at that time and they lost everything. So many, many companies and families were affected at that time, and I remember my maternal grandfather talked about it. He had a decision to make, and he decided that education was very important to him. One of the reasons he left Ireland was that the opportunity was not there; because in the area -- the country was still divided. There was a lot of persecution going on, and if you were Catholic Irish you did not have an educational opportunity there. He wanted his children to go to school, but he also felt it was more important that they had a good name. I remember, the story in our family is that he left the decision to the children; that he could not let all his workers go -- because he had all their money, their savings -- and what he literally did was he took his property, he sold it, paid every employee and made sure

everybody had severance pay. Because he said to them, "The one thing is, the schooling you can get on your own, if I encourage you, but the good name I can't take away with you. I'll leave no debt and I'll have no family lose bread from their table." That was the big thing: Never take from anyone's table. With his business he started all over again. He re-established himself, and went into another line of business after he took care of all those elements. But I always remember, when we were growing up it was very important that you report to him with your report card. He always wanted to see report cards, see that his grandchildren went to school. It was very, very important to him, because he felt that he had had to make that decision. And his children eventually went on to school, and found other ways of going there. But he was really concerned about that.

On the paternal side is an interesting story. They kept their roots here, then my grandfather and his brother, later, they went into business and were connecting with the sea, also, and worked along those lines. They continued with their business in that, then their sons grew up here. Then our generation came along with it.

RC: Can you tell me just a little bit more about your folks? Would you say, specifically, they were connected with the sea?

CW: My grandfather worked along with the ferry lines, during all of that transportation with the ferry lines, connecting from New York to New Jersey. As a matter of fact, the *Binghampton* -- that was his ferry boat. My grandfather existed in the ferry business and went up as far as he could go, but at that time, in order to advance, to get into the top echelon, you had to become a member of the Masons. And my grandfather, at eighteen years of age, became a convert to Catholicism, and the decision was, in the company, you had to become a Mason or give up your faith, and he chose to leave the company and start out in another business, because he said no. That was an understood thing that kind of went on. Masonry was very strong in certain kinds of business -- that and the railroad. People share a lot of stories like that, and he had to make that decision.

RC: About when would that have be, that he had to make a decision like that?

CW: He would have been eighteen. It would probably have been the late 1800s or around the turn of the century, because he was born around the Civil War. So it would be about '85 -- that last end of it -- and he became a convert to Catholicism on his own, at age eighteen. He just was a student and a reader, and he made this decision and stuck very firmly to it. It was subsequent to that, years later, that he met my grandmother, who, coincidentally, happened to be an Irish Catholic woman. I think, many times, people think conversion comes through marriage. He did it on his own, as an independent individual. His family was very upset about it, because they were very strong in their tradition. But the lines of communication, which I guess was very unusual for those days, stayed open. The family did not -- He was cut off from any inheritance as a result of it, but he just never looked back. Then he went into that business, and that was as far as he could go in that line of work. That was the decision. They called him in: "You have to start joining the Masons." He just could not do that, so he left that and went into other businesses and worked in that area.

RC: Has that had an impact on your family?

CW: In what way?

RC: I don't know, exactly. I'm wondering -- questions of religion, growing up in Hoboken, whether -- Is your family part Catholic, part Protestant?

CW: I don't think it's an issue. The traditions are there. One branch is this, one branch is that, but the one thing they always did maintain was they never cut the family tie. But inheritance, yes. You couldn't inherit, but that was the decision you made, and my grandfather was that kind of man. He never had a second thought about it. It was just, those were the things that were going on at the time. I think probably the impact it had on us was the fact that tolerance was taught. It was extremely important to be tolerant and eclectic, and let people make decisions according to their conscience.

Maybe that's where we went into a more democratic spirit. My grandfather used to tell a story. He said his family took that blow, then he met an Irish Catholic and he married an Irish girl. At that time, although they loved my grandmother -- she was a lovely lady -- but she was Irish and the family was not happy about that. Then he said the final

blow came when he voted Democratic, and the family said, "That's it." He said it was for Paddy Griffin, a gentleman who ran for Mayor in Hoboken. He cast a Democratic vote and the family said, "That's it. That's the end. Now he's gone completely over," because he voted Democratic. That was the final straw. They lived with number one. They lived with number two, but the third thing they just never -- And it's really true. One branch of the family is very strong Republican, and [inaudible] -- shake the hands of the side that's Democratic. When you get together, with people from different parts of the state, they just keep saying, "Oh, those Hudson ones, they're Democrats." That's what they have the hardest time with.

RC: I guess what I was thinking of was (this is not so much your family), was religion a major issue, that you can remember, growing up in Hoboken, as a factor. Because that's been one of the demographic changes, I know, that's occurred.

CW: The Hoboken that I experienced, growing up, was that there was a real form of collegiality. And because there was a very close-knit community, it was not unusual for

your circle of friends to be all different religions. What I found growing up was that we got to be very knowledgeable about each other's traditions and, literally and figuratively, we celebrated lots of things. Because your household was this, and if your friends incorporated into it, they participated in your activities and you participated in theirs. One of the interesting experiences I had growing up was that my friends were a real cross-section, and I can remember, when it came around the Christmas holidays, some of our friends were Jewish and their grandparents were Orthodox, and the parents were probably either Reform or Conservative. And when it would come to the Christmas holidays, the kids got their Christmas tree problem out of the way because they spent it over at our house. They would come and that's what it would be, and participate in those activities, and there would be presents for them under the tree, as extending from the family to them. We celebrated Passover. We were very, very familiar with that, and I can remember one friend at -- I think it's Purim -- she was selected to be Esther. This was a big celebration and we all went to that. I had my confirmation and the boy had his bar mitzvah. The families went back and forth, and it was quite common. Different kids had different churches that they went to. One went to Sunday school on

Saturday, because they were like a Jehovah's Witness. Another one would go on Sunday. Everybody kind of knew what everybody's requirements were, and everybody celebrated everybody else's events -- their confirmations, their communions -- and went to their different church activities. I think it was a really wonderful component.

I recently was at an event in Hoboken with one of the Protestant churches, and they were getting to a certain part of their ceremony where there's a very, very old-fashioned hymn and I was singing it from memory. The pastor came up to me and said, "I had no idea you were one of us." I said, "No, but I spent many a time down here. My best friend belonged to this particular church," and I explained who the pastor was at the time, and all the time I spent going on picnics and the strawberry festivals and the [inaudible] -- events. That went on from one part of the season to the other. In June you'd do the Episcopal churches; on Washington Street we'd have the strawberry festival and everybody would buy tickets and support that event. You knew the Reformed churches would have another event, which they would call a special fish fry, which they would have in the fall, around the Halloween holiday, and people would all buy tickets for that. People just

supported each other's event, and it was one of those interesting components.

One of the other memories I have is that we had some neighbors who brought relatives to this country, I guess, in the late '40s or early '50s, when I was very little, and I can remember my parents saying to me, "Always be sure you say hello to these people and be very kind to them." They would just say, "They were in the camps." I didn't quite grasp what they were talking about, but I remember the two people were very fragile, kind of, but people in the neighborhood taught, "Always be kind, greet them every day and see that everything's fine." I can remember when I was in Brownies or something, talking about we were going to have a day at camp, and I can remember thinking I didn't want to go to camp; I really was trying to get out of going on this little field trip. I remember saying to my parents I didn't want to go, and they couldn't understand, because I always wanted to go here and I always wanted to go there. I used to say, "Well, they're going to a camp," and those neighbors had all those problems with a camp, and I didn't want to go. So, how you make associations, and later on you find out what it was all about. But I remember these first families who came, there were people who took them in, and they were very, very careful about

them. The neighborhood was always, "Make sure that they feel welcome," and all these kinds of things. You make these associations in your mind, without understanding what it's all about.

So I think denominations or those kinds of persuasions, I don't think figured as a discriminatory thing in the Hoboken that I knew. Now I don't know if other people had a different experience, but my neighborhood wasn't like that. Then I can remember, in the fall, the Catholic churches always had this big parade -- the Holy Name Parade -- and people would all go and watch their fathers march, and your neighbors would come and watch also. There just seemed to be that kind of exchange going on. Now if something went on in the adult world I don't know, but it didn't filter down to my level or my experience level. I remember we always had a big celebration called Brotherhood Week, and it was not unusual, when you went to a church service -- and this would be in the '50s, when you had a minister from one of your local churches doing the sermon, or having one of the rabbis come in to your church, and be the guest speaker at one of the services.

So I saw a lot of this as being a very natural progression, and I guess later on, when things -- I can remember being away at college, in the mid-'60s, when

everybody was talking about this discovery of each other -- it was a shock to me to find out this wasn't going on everywhere; that this was the way it had been in Hoboken. I didn't remember discrimination on the basis of race, either, because the people came together in the schools.

By the high school level -- I think the advantage Hoboken had was that all the kids -- I happened to go to a parochial grade school, then I went away to private school, but I've often looked back and I think the advantage Hoboken had was that all the kids who went through the public system eventually came together in one high school. So everyone, all across the town, got to know each other, and I think outsiders sometimes -- I even know neighbors of mine (they're not new; they've been here thirty-forty years) will talk about how what they call the "born and raised" always seem to know each other. I said I think that's what happened. By your teen years, even when you went to private school, your activities -- our adolescent activities -- all came together, and it was a complete cross-section. Every part of the town got to know each other, in some aspect of it, so I think that's what made the bond. People connected.

RC: Do you have any sense of numbers? Meaning, were there a lot of kids your age, growing up?

CW: Oh, yes. Let me just say, I lived on Eleventh and Park, and in our neighborhood alone, with kids that grew up together, there was always twenty-four or twenty-five kids within a certain span of ages. So you always had someone to -- and that's not counting someone who lived around the corner. That was another group of kids. Then you had your group of kids at school, and you meet at Columbus Park. You'd go down there for activities. So all those kids from this area would get together.

But I had an interesting phenomena. There were four little girls in my neighborhood who were all within two months of each other's birthdays, and we're still friends to this day, even though we live in different parts of the United States. We're still in contact, and we were all born within two months of each other.

RC: And grew up together.

CW: And literally grew up together. People knew other people's relatives. Their Aunt Mary became your

Aunt Mary, because you never dared call anybody by their first name; it was either Mrs. or a title of permission, and whatever the title was -- so-and-so's Aunt Mary or Uncle Bill -- then you'd call them Aunt Mary or Uncle Bill, or you called them Grandmother or Tanta or Nana. And that was another tradition; that you called everyone's grandparents by the title of their ethnic culture, so that was another way you expanded. And, of course, the most proverbial way was through food. You just learned to have a very, very eclectic appetite. You knew which grandmother (it was mostly the grandmothers) cooked what, and all the little kids made sure that was the day they visited. We'd have lunch in each other's home, and you learn to become very accustomed to a lot of things.

I think I sort of benefited when I went away to school. There were a lot of people who, I guess, were getting acquainted with people of another culture. I probably had the least adjustment difficulty. There was a sense of familiarity I had with lots of groups and lots of nationalities, and it all came from the roots here in Hoboken.

RC: One of the things I've heard from people who grew up in Hoboken was that there was a very active --

street life isn't quite what I mean -- but kids could play in the street.

CW: Absolutely.

RC: That they would go from house to house.

CW: Well, they were very busy. There was nothing organized. When you talk about play groups and you talk about all these activities -- these after-school activities they talk about now -- you literally did not have to worry about that. I remember in Hoboken, growing up, that I was always very busy. I did belong to Brownies and I did belong to a few years of Girl Scouts. Then you get to that stage where you're not going to be a Girl Scout anymore. But other than that organized thing, everything was in the neighborhood.

RC: You say "everything," meaning --

CW: Your play activities were -- You always had something to do. Different families took different holidays to have parties. You knew this family always gave the Halloween party. This family gave the 4th of July. We even did

May walks, where one family would do the May walk, with the Maypole.

RC: Tell me more about May walk.

CW: There used to be -- You'd get the large Maypole. The little girls would dress up in long dresses made out of crepe paper and carry bouquets. The boys would have big bow-ties put on. Then you would have the Maypole dance, and the yards were large enough to do this. We would weave those things going in and out that little Maypole. Of course, the fellows now will die if anybody remembers they did this.

RC: How long did that go on?

CW: That went on all through the '50s. In my experience, that went on all through that time. But then, of course, I went to kindergarten and public school before I went off into private school, and we had ballroom dancing, so we would learn our manners and our social graces. So what can I tell you. Both the boys and the girls. This was part of the kindergarten curriculum, with the little sit-down dinner

parties so that we learned and reinforced our excellent table manners. I mean, this was the Hoboken that I knew.

So we did all these little intricate kinds of things. There were the Thanksgiving activities, with the Ragamuffin parade in the morning. The trick or treating that is now Halloween was done on Thanksgiving at that time, up until 1:00. Then from 1:00 it stopped, because everyone went home to their dinners, respective dinners. But they had a major ragamuffin parade on Washington Street, and everyone would dress up to look at poor as you possibly could, in all these kind of little hobo costumes. Then you would go around the neighborhoods and you would appear in front of your neighbor's home, to show what your costumes were and things along that line. We had the 4th of July party; some other family would have a Labor Day party. And each one kind of did an activity, so you kind of knew -- The families, then, always knew where you were, so there was always some kind of adult supervision. We had adult supervision, but in a very subtle way. They were there, because we were always in the neighborhood, and we always gathered near someone's home. You did a lot of game activities; a lot of street games. The boys would play certain kinds of stickball, and they would be out playing lots of other kinds of games that were organized. In

the afternoon kids would be in front of their houses, on the stoops, playing board games.

Then you had the Y. The YMCA in Hoboken was a central point, because everybody went there swimming.

RC: The one that's still in existence.

CW: Right. Again, every cross-section, from all the denominations, went to the Y. Because we only had one Y, and all the churches and synagogues supported it for the youth, because you knew where they would be. They had the different swimming hours, and for twenty-five cents the kids would go up and have an afternoon of swimming. They had swimming in the park, but a lot of us -- I know I was not allowed to swim in the park; go in there, wading. My mother would just not permit that. She always worried about polio, and you just couldn't go into those, but I could go to the Y. We could go to the Y.

And each age group had a certain time. The Y had this system that between 1:00 and 2:00 kids between these ages appeared, and they had the swimming hour. Then this age would be this -- It was very organized; everybody just kind of knew. You did that in the summer, so you were busy

doing that. Then you had the showers with the hoses, in people's backyards. Different families would take turns, and all the kids would appear in a bathing suit on a hot day. They would go under the hoses, or it would be set up out in front of the houses and everybody would get together. What I liked about that, also, was it made no difference what your economic background was, also, in the neighborhoods. Kids came from all different kinds of resources; the kids whose father worked on the docks, shaping up, was just as friendly with the kid whose father was professional. It just did not seem to be an issue. There was a commonality of neighborhood and belonging, and people weren't caught in the status situation. That didn't play a factor; there was this very universal component. Then those kids who had summer homes and that, you spent weekends visiting each other's homes. You'd go to their country homes in the summer. It would be down at the shore, or up at the lake. Then when you went away, you invited somebody from the neighborhood to come along with you. It was just one of those -- But I still wouldn't go to camp. I still refused to go to camp.

RC: Did that hold true for the teen years? What happened when kids hit eighteen, or went to work full time?

CW: I guess there was a subtle change when you got your working papers. It was like a big right of passage, to have a summer job. And everybody took summer jobs. It was really very interesting. There were lots of companies in Hoboken at that time, so there were a lot of ways kids could get jobs, and it was considered almost a requirement in your passage to adulthood, that you would get some kind of opportunity to work, and earn some money independently. Whether you were economically in need or whether you had resources, it would seem that it was an important thing. The young fellows from college would be home, delivering the mail during the Christmas holidays. It would be all the young people getting a job at the local post office, delivering the mail; going around with mail deliveries, because you would have mail delivery twice a day. These fellows would have these kinds of jobs, and the girls would be getting jobs. I guess they did a lot of babysitting jobs, or they worked the bakeries. That used to be a big thing. A lot of my friends would work in different bakeries, because then we had tons of them, and

they all have a story of how they learned a certain recipe. I never made it into the bakery. I never became the bakery lady. Though I aspired to it, I didn't make it.

Everybody had it. At sixteen you got your working papers, then that was considered -- You felt very, very grownup if you had a summer job. That was really very important. The fellows would work in the factories. There were always lots of jobs for them, with summertime vacations, they were working on, doing what we called lower-level jobs. I know in my house my father used to say, "Learn to respect how people have to earn a living, so you'll know the advantages you're getting by going to school. But you will learn that as long as it's honest work, that's the most important thing." My father felt very strongly that he didn't want us to be arrogant about having an opportunity, and ever think that we were better than anyone else. He used to say, "It's just that we were very fortunate that opportunity was given to you, but it doesn't make any less what someone else has to do, and you'll respect how people have to earn their living."

RC: Before the tape runs out -- When you talk about the boys especially, working in the factories -- what kind of factories? Manufacturing? Clothing?

CW: Well, you had food corporations -- the General Foods Corporation -- you had Lipton's. You had, down in the western section of the city, paper factories; you had box factories; venetian blind factories; pencils; what do you call it? Rattan furniture. Lots of companies like that, and all the kids went in with the expectation -- They became the office boys or they worked in the janitorial kind of components. Of course, the girls always had a little bit more refined position. They were always connected with an office in some way.

TAPE 1, SIDE 2

CW: There were a variety of positions like that, and we all thought that this was very important, that we got jobs. It usually happened at sixteen; usually between your sophomore and junior year, or your junior to senior year of high school. A summer job.

RC: Well, you had a fascinating --

CW: I really did. I really lucked in well.

RC: Would you talk about that?

CW: When I look back, it was probably the best job I ever had -- career wise and everything -- now that I think back on it. I guess at sixteen you were able to get your working papers. This was the big thing, and then you were going to get a job. Now there were certain restrictions you were going to have. You knew your parents weren't going to let you work anyplace at night, and I wasn't going to travel because I didn't drive. So it was going to be something within this mile-square window. You thought you were very independent but, basically, everybody knew everybody, and you really were in a protected environment.

So you would read the ads in the paper for summer help. We had two newspapers at that time and you could look at the ads. I remember taking the newspaper, with two of my friends, and we were going to go to the personnel departments and apply for positions.

RC: Now were these summer jobs? Not after-school?

CW: During the school year no, I did not work. Because that was studies. Studies and activities. No,

this was summer, and it would be from the time school closed until you went back, to just before Labor Day; or, until your family went on vacation. They also accommodated that. It was very interesting at the time. I went up to Lipton Tea. They had an ad they were running, a special project -- "Youth can apply, sixteen and above." So I went up to the personnel department with two of my friends. We went to apply.

RC: Where were they headquartered? Where did you go?

CW: They were located right here. I guess it would be equivalent to [inaudible] -- Where the apartments are now, that was the Lipton Tea Complex. They had a guard at the door, and you had your newspaper -- that you were going in to apply for that position -- and you met every friend you ever knew; all were applying for these summer positions. We went in and, first, they gave you a typing test. Well, I got through that one but I wasn't exactly a whiz, compared to some kids, who were taking commercial courses in high school. I was in academic, so I was learning Latin -- which really wasn't a marketable skill -- and at that point wasn't going to get me a summer job. And the typing I had was

personal typing, so I wasn't a whiz-bang at that. They also gave you another opportunity. They had this other kind of test, if you could taste things. You were blindfolded and they'd give you something, and could you taste what was in this? So I did that test, and I went through that one with flying colors. I liked this tasting test, and I kept saying, "Well, it can't be much of a job, for that."

So I went home a little disappointed, because I just didn't think I racked up as well as my friends did, because they certainly typed better than I did. Then I got a phone call to please report, and three of us went up, very excited. We were getting hired; we had to bring our working papers with us, and a note from my parents that we were able to work. You think back -- If you did any of these things now, and a note from your parents, giving permission to be able to work --

So up we went, and my friends got jobs as messengers in offices, and I didn't get a job as a messenger. I kept thinking to myself, "Oh, dear. I must have done so beautifully in this test." I was sent "upstairs," it was called. So up I go. I walk into this laboratory, and while I was there this gentleman came -- Mr. Kean, who was the supervisor -- and there were four people my age, two boys and another young

lady, and we were told we were going to be put on this very special project. They were getting ready to do packaged soups. They had Lipton soup out at that time. I think they had their chicken soup out, and I think they had a vegetable soup out, and they were working on this very secret project, where they were getting this third soup out, and I was going to work on this *secret* project. We were not to discuss this *secret* project, and we were all feeling very important. It turned out that the project we were working on was that they were developing a mushroom soup, and the big thing is that we were tasting the consistency of mushrooms, dehydrated mushrooms -- I kid you not -- and until the mushrooms could taste "properly," our job was to taste these things every half hour or so. They would work up a batch of recipes, and we would then have to taste these mushrooms, rate them for toughness, tenderness and flavor. I kid you not.

This was the job, and at that time they paid very, very good wages for this summer position, whatever the rates were at that time. It was like above minimum wage we were getting for the summer work.

RC: Do you have any memory of how much?

CW: I think at that time I was probably bringing home, I expect, $80 or $90 a week, for a summer job, which really was very good. Very good. It was like an unbelievable position I had. I think my friends who were messengers weren't bringing home the same amount of money. The four of us sat around this table, with all these chemists and home economists. We had to change into white uniforms, because we were in this kitchen setup, overlooking the Hudson -- getting the whole look of the Hudson horizon -- and we worked on this secret recipe they were doing on dehydrated mushrooms, to put them in this mushroom soup. Then, periodically, our job would be that when we came to work we were not to wear our uniforms, but we would get a list and we would have to go to the local supermarkets and buy competitors soup and bring it back, because they would taste it. So we were the spies. We felt this really was a great, great espionage job. Because at the time we had local A&Ps, and we had a Safeway. We had about five supermarkets, and we'd each have a section. We would go in and buy different soups. They'd give us different competitors' products that we would take off the shelf, bring them back in a bag and come back to the company. We'd report by 11:00 in the morning with our groceries, so they could see what the competitors' products

were, and the prices. We were the little town spies on soup. I was a big expert on soup.

Because of where we were located, Lipton Tea had a 10:00 in the morning tea break. Trolleys would come around, with women in uniforms, with freshly baked pastries and tea. And because we were with all the chemists and the engineering department, we were included in these tea breaks. Meanwhile, our friends downstairs, on the second and fourth floors, were running themselves ragged, racing back and forth, delivering mail (there must have been at least fourteen stories to that building), racing up and down the elevators and the stairs, delivering mail. And here we were having a tea break, with this freshly baked pastry. That would be in the morning, and you had a second tea break in the afternoon. In the afternoon it was between 2:30 and 3:00, when you had the afternoon tea break. And then we had privileges for lunch -- because once you were in the company you didn't leave, especially the young people. They didn't have you go out at lunch time. I guess they considered it a safety factor, and they could keep an eye on us. But I had privileges with the dining room that the engineers all went to, and here were these four kids -- we were literally kids next to them -- and we had these dining room privileges. Every day you were having lunch

looking out on the Hudson, watching the ships come back and forth. I mean, it was a wonderful summer job, let me tell you. The pay was great. It was unbelievable. I thought this was the way the working world was. I thought this was not bad. I figured the working world was really great. We'd all meet going home, because you'd go down and change out of your uniform, and you would change into your civilian clothes. And all your friends who were working up there, along with you, would meet. They'd be talking about their legs were tired from walking, and I really couldn't understand what was going on, because this was just the best job I ever had in my life. I thoroughly, thoroughly enjoyed it.

What happened was, when you got into these companies, if you were good they automatically called you back every summer, so you were guaranteed a job. Even when you went away to school they kept your name, and you went back every summer and this was it. You could almost budget out what you were going to be making. I worked on dehydrated mushrooms, Wishbone salad dressing -- They were putting out two new salad dressings and I used to have to taste-test salad. Two or three times a day they would work up recipes, then we would have to come up and rate what the salad dressings were, what flavors were. The big moment would come when the

tea taster came, and the whole place would be a big thing. The tea taster guy would come. He would pull up on the pier there (he would come in a yacht), he would come up, and the whole room was cleared. We were like little acolytes; we got to hold the beakers, to serve him the different blends of tea. He would make sure that the quality -- whatever way Lipton tea was supposed to taste, he would be the one who gave the final approval as to whether the batch --

RC: That wasn't part of your summer job -- to tea taste.

CW: No. I got to be the acolyte. I was allowed to be with the tea taster -- which was considered this great big privilege, you know. You would stand there, and then he would show you -- He had this long, plastic tube that had a loop in it; how they would just sip it. They had a basin (they would never swallow anything), and they would spit it out. It would be this great moment, everybody would be around, very tense. All the bosses would be there, until this tea taster made this great pronouncement. And I used to be told how fortunate I was to be able to be part of this great ceremony.

The offshoot of it was that, when I was finishing high school, my boss had called me, on my summer job, and they wanted to send me up to Cornell University, to major in home economics, or into one of these things. If I was interested in doing it they would pick up the whole bill, with the guarantee that when I finished, at the end of four years, I would have a career with the Lipton Tea Company. Of course, I was going off somewhere else, and I was going into a whole other line. I was going to be majoring in psychology -- which I later did -- so I didn't appreciate it. I look back and say, "I could have been Betty Crocker."

They gave you wonderful opportunities, and it was a whole line of work that you just didn't know anything about, and was a world unto its own. They had special tasting workshops and things, down at Rutgers University at that time, and even for wine. Because, I guess, Lipton Tea was just one part of a conglomerate that had all these different facets. If you were one of these people they selected, because you had these taste buds or something (I guess, evidently, you had to have this gift of tasting) -- All they used to worry about was, "Don't get a cold." All I know is they used to say, "Don't get a cold." And the four of us who were in this project were treated like two little princes and two little princesses, because we

could taste components, and everybody had an opportunity; that they were willing to move on and advance us into school. I think none of us took advantage of the opportunity.

Believe it or not, I'm still in contact with the first person I met, who was the other person who was selected. She came from New York, and would come over and commute every day, for her job.

RC: So all four of you weren't Hobokenites?

CW: No, I was the only one from Hoboken. The other one was from New York. The two fellas, one was from Long Island and the other was from another part of New Jersey. I guess they all converged for the summer job, but this tasting business -- However they selected them -- and then the four of us. As I said, I'm still in touch with the young gal I met there. We got along very well. It was a very, very nice job. We really had a warped perception of what the work world was like. I kidded, and said every job I had thereafter was a come-down.

RC: What did you do between the tastings? You said every half hour -- So you could study, read, whatever?

CW: We could read, study. The four of us being within a few years of each other, the girls flirted with the boys and the boys flirted with the girls -- all very chaperoned, though. It was very interesting. They were very, very protective of you. Toward the end of the season they would have overtime, because they would have special projects. Then you would get almost double money, and they felt if you were using this for school -- it was a way the company did it -- the young ladies, when we finished -- If we worked until 8:00 at night, which was considered very late for then, your supervisor escorted you home in a group. You got walked home. All the women working, the young kids working -- The fellas could go off, but they supervised the girls. They would walk in a group with their supervisor, and they were walked to the door of their home. Absolutely, positively. Because that was late hours, 8:00.

RC: What was your normal work day?

CW: I would have to be in there by 8:00, and I would be finished by 4:30. It really was not a stretch. I loved my summer jobs.

RC: How many summers did you spend there?

CW: I was with Lipton Tea from, I'd say, sixteen until the end of my freshman year in college, and they moved the laboratory, at that time, out to Englewood Cliffs, and I was not old enough to drive. I didn't have a car to drive. So what I did was I switched from Lipton Tea. They switched me over to General Foods Corporation, which was Maxwell House, and I worked in the laboratory there.

RC: For similar tests. Testing, or -- ?

CW: For that job I was in quality assurance, and the big emphasis in that laboratory was that every half hour we had to -- Every time they did a line of coffee or a shipment of coffee, you had to go out randomly and select it from the lines, and do it for quality assurance. There were six tests we had to give on every batch, and here you are, all of eighteen going on nineteen years of age, having this great

authority that if it didn't meet your standard, you could hold up the entire shipment. They would have the box cars outside, to be all put in and all be packed in order to be shipped out, and if you went out and waved this pink sheet of paper, you held up that shipment. They would have to come back, and you'd get all these supervisors from the line come running in, to find out what was wrong. Because, my goodness, the whole box car was not being done. Here I am, at nineteen, having all this power; saying, "Sorry, you didn't meet the standards."

RC: How often did you stop a shipment?

CW: You would if it came underweight, because it's a federal regulation; if there was something with a slick, they had to look and do a corrective measure. It was very interesting how they really did abide by it. There were many times that they pulled shipments off that just didn't hit the standards of what they wanted done at that moment. So at least five times a day you had to run through these tests. The supervisor would come, check your work and say, "Absolutely. This is it," and you would see these cars being unloaded, a batch being unloaded, and the supervisor on the line would be ready to kill you for having done it. Because they would have

to give an answer why; what would happen. But they caught a lot of errors.

It was really interesting what QA could be at that time. Of course, the big emphasis was on weight, because it was a violation of a federal regulation and interstate. There could be heavy fines on those kinds of components. That was the other job, and everybody in that laboratory who was working, everyone was going to college -- law school, medical school -- It was an interesting group that they had working in summer jobs, there. We were accepted because we were in school. The regular people knew we were not a threat to their positions, so they treated us very well. I understand that this didn't happen in a lot of other areas.

RC: I wonder about the youngsters who got other kinds of summer jobs, who weren't "special" as you all were, what happened? Did many of them end up going to work for Maxwell House or Lipton full time? Was that a kind of conduit for them?

CW: When I think of the laboratory, the groups that I worked with, they all went out and went into different kinds of careers; went into business, but it was not

in a connected line. Most of the ones I worked with went off into professions, and the interesting thing was that when you were finished, they had kinds of fellowships they offered that you could apply. I know I did graduate work in the area of economics, for General Foods. They picked up the tab for the graduate credits in that, and I know a lot of the other individuals, like one gentleman -- a young man who was there when I was there -- He was going into law school, and he worked there full time. He had a full-time job. His mother was a widow and there were six children in the family, so he worked there full time, and was going to school at night. They gave him tuition credits and helped pay his way through school, and that's how he was able to go through undergraduate and graduate. His supervisor was very good, and always made sure he had hours that coincided, that were flexible with his schedule.

There were just different formats that they did and, again, the cross-section was mixed. This was, again, before there were any regulations. I guess if you were just from the community, you applied, and you were the one that had that position, and this the way they worked. But if you worked out well, the key was you always had a job. So we literally worked ourselves through high school and through

college, and I could have stayed on for graduate school, too, if I were going there. They would gladly taken me on. I remember when I was in my senior year they were interested to find out, did I want to become part of the company full time? Personnel interviewed you, if you were interested, and they would welcome you into the company.

RC: At your senior high school or senior in college?

CW: Both. In senior in high school I had a friend who worked there before she went on to college, because she needed to earn tuition. Her family didn't have all the resources, so she needed full time employment, and then they encouraged it, for her to go on to school. She worked there for a few years, then went on to school. Then they took her back for summer help. So she also had a summer job. I know when I was finishing my undergraduate, doing my supervising, they recommended me down to personnel to interview for General Foods Corporation. They would be interested, if I wanted to pursue a career in the business world; that they would definitely give you a priority, and interview you for a position. It may not be local. You may be

going to another one of their corporations, and Lipton Tea was the same way. When I was getting ready for my senior year, that's when they approached me about would I be interested in going on in a career in home economics. Of course, I had a very limited view of what home economics were. Evidently, they had a special program with Cornell University and, very specifically, they were talking about sending me to Cornell, because I could be accepted by Cornell. I had all the things. They would have sent me to this program and picked up the entire tab.

I know I wasn't the only one who was provided with those opportunities, based on people I was working with in the summer jobs. Many of them were getting tuition assistance and things along that line.

RC: I'm smiling because I'm jealous. I wanted to go to Cornell, but I didn't get a scholarship so I couldn't go.

CW: Now, if you had been at Lipton you would have had a free ticket; if you had the taste buds you were set.

RC: Of your peer group, as it were -- the kids your age in Hoboken -- who went on to college, would you say most of them did, many of them? Do you have any sense --

CW: In my peer group everybody went on to something. They basically went on to something, and those who went into work maybe went to school at night, because there were those options, too, based on what were the resources of the family, what number of children in the family there were. Because we had a lot of people with very large families at that time, so one brother or sister helped another one through. In my particular group mostly everyone went on to something, and if they worked they eventually went back and moved on. Again, it could have just been what I was connected with, or what our geographical area was. But I do know that from the groups of friends we had, nobody really got into trouble over certain kinds of problems that you have. If it happened it happened in their adult years, post-twenty-one rather than before twenty-one. There weren't kids with juvenile problems. I can't say that drugs were not around. There were drugs around, but the pressure to be part of that culture was not the same. Everybody knew where it was going on if you wanted to be party to it, but no one was pressured

into it. I don't think it's like that today. I think there's a lot more peer pressure with it.

So I don't know. My friends all seem to have done well. I don't remember -- Well, I think the social mores were a little different, so maybe we got into big trouble for little things, so you never got to the big stuff. Then I went to parochial school, and I went to private high school, too, and I had --

RC: Both in Hoboken?

CW: No, I commuted to high school, and I had the Catholic sisters. I guess what we thought was really a terrible thing to do is probably laughable at this point, but it worked. Whatever psychology they used, it worked.

RC: You've stayed in Hoboken.

CW: Yes, I have.

RC: Did most of your friends? You mentioned your neighbors are all scattered.

CW: They are. I'm the primary contact people call when they come into this area, whom they call, because I'm the one who's still here. They're scattered in different states, they're in different parts of New Jersey. I think of my immediate circle maybe two or three are still here, put down roots here, but many of them are in different areas. I went away to school. I was out-of-state for a couple of years. Then when I came back to graduate school, Hoboken was an ideal location. I recognized what the yuppies later discovered. I got the best of both worlds. I was doing all my graduate work in New York City but had the convenience of living in Hoboken, without all the hassle, bother and danger of New York City. I did need a car.

RC: And you've been here ever since.

CW: Yes.

RC: Before we leave the topic, do you want to talk a little bit about what you're doing now? Because it's so different from tea tasting. Or soup tasting.

CW: Well, my latest career is in government. I'm the equivalent of what would be the Commissioner of Health & Human Services for the County of Hudson. We have a county executive form of government, and there are five directors; or, it would be the equivalent of five commissioners. People can understand it in that component. I'm one of the five. It's appointed. My position was appointed; I didn't have to go through the hassle and nonsense of the elective process. And I'm the only woman, which is kind of an interesting component.

RC: Do you think it's a plus or a minus?

CW: Well, I think they probably feel that it's appropriate to have a woman worrying about the social problems of the community, and the health problems of the community. But it's an extensive department; it's the largest department of government that I'm overseeing, because I have all the social service programs, welfare reform, the psychiatric hospital and the chest clinic -- the TB components, the AIDS programs, the drug and alcohol programs, mental health, youth services, juvenile justice -- so it's very, very extensive. Prior to that I was in education, and I was a psychologist by

training. I was overseeing and developing special education programs and setting up systems in different public school districts, so they could come into compliance with regulations providing an educational opportunity for kids who needed special handling or a special kind of programming. And I'm an adjunct faculty at St. Peter's College.

RC: And in your spare time?

CW: I decorate the Giving Tree at the Hoboken Public Library.

RC: Nothing to be taken lightly. You do a fabulous job. Since we're on an historical note: You were also involved in the beginning of the Friends [of the Hoboken Public Library].

CW: Yes.

RC: So you have a long history.

CW: And it was interesting, too, those connections and those contacts that were made. We're all still in contact with each other. That was another component.

RC: That was '85-'86.

CW: Eighty-five-'86, and it was a very interesting project because it brought the old and the new together. That's why I've always stayed with it, in some aspect, because I've met some really lovely new -- The new people who came into the community -- It was a wonderful opportunity to make the connection, and I think prior to that there may have been -- There was a period of time in Hoboken where I thought there were some barriers; where people born and raised were delineating and the new people were having some difficulty. New people were coming in and they felt they were being shoved out. I felt that the Friends group was a really nice group, where the old and the new came together, in a very productive way. I got to see the benefits of both sides of it, and, actually, it was my neighbor, Jeanne Becker who was one of the -- She's been in Hoboken for over twenty-five years but we call her one of the new people, on my side of the street, because a lot of the original families, are of third, fourth

generation -- She was the one who got me involved in the Friends of the Public Library, and this is how I met Ruth [Rejnis], you, Jane Zeff, and getting the whole thing together. I'm just thrilled to see how it's grown and developed, and has taken on a life of its own. You've got young mothers who are in there. They brought a special flavor, and I see the thing as a very, very productive, active group that is very civic minded, with no hidden agendas. I really do find the group apolitical, which is refreshing sometimes, in Hoboken, quite frankly. And that's what I've always liked about it. It just is the project and we all just love our library, and we all love books.

RC: Thank you for that part.

Do you, just because you mentioned the ebb and flow of newcomers and oldtimers -- Do you see that changing? From what I know, having been through some of the more, shall we say, tenser times, and you've been through them, as well; that things have settled down in that regard?

CW: Well, I think there's been a change. There has been a change in the flavor of the community. The neighborhoods, I think, are not the same in terms of the closeness. I think it's gotten a little more impersonal. I just

look at my area. When I was growing up on Eleventh and Park, I knew the name of everybody in every apartment in every house, and knew them all by recognition. So every little child knew 200 people, right off the bat. Now the moving vans are in every other week. There is somebody moving in and moving out, and I see that transition.

My neighborhood is interesting. On one side of the street it's basically stable. Even what we call the newcomers have been here at least a while. On the other side of the street, the transition is coming in and out, and you're never quite sure who they are. But I think we're singularly very lucky that the people who do seem to move in all seem to be very nice. People say hello and people are still basically friendly, and there is that kind of camaraderie. But I don't see as many children around, playing in the neighborhood, but I don't know whether that's the flavor of that transition, or is that just the new tenor of the times?

TAPE 2, SIDE 1

RC: During the tape change we started talking about the history of race riots in Hoboken, in the mid-'60s, that Carol was, not part of, but lived through. We were talking about that, and I will turn this back to Carol.

CW: I remember it occurred over the summer months. We still have, I think, after eighty-some odd years -- St. Ann's parish in Hoboken always had what they called "the Festival," in the month of July. It was an Italian-American feast. The tradition was brought from the area of Italy, and the groups got together and it was always a time of a lot of celebration and groups mixed. It was the Italian culture; their religious devotion to this particular patron saint that their parish was named after, and all the Italian foods in the stands and all that. This was a very much looked-forward-to time for the people in Hoboken, and it was always considered a real melting-pot time. Everybody went down to this feast, because it would run, I think, sometimes, a week or ten days, in that period of time. And my middle name happens to be Ann, so growing up I used to think it was like a birthday celebration -- birthday cake; that my actual birthday was anti-climactic to the way this festival used to be going on.

I can remember it was summer vacation. I was in college, and it was around the time, nationally, there was a lot of upheaval going on, with civil rights, and in Hoboken there was a transition that had occurred, where there had been a large Spanish population move here from Puerto Rico.

They were brought in by a company, and I don't think the company treated the people well. They took apartments, put them in cold-water flats, took people from a rural population and put them in an urban setting, and did not take good care of them.

RC: Do you mind mentioning their names?

CW: Well, to this day nobody in Hoboken will eat Tootsie Rolls. I was reading recently "a Fortune 500 Company," and the miraculous rise of Tootsie Roll. But I laughed and said, "But not in Hoboken. Nobody who is a native of Hoboken will eat Tootsie Rolls." And the truth of the matter -- I don't think the feeling, in the beginning, was anti-the individual people, but the practices of the company. It was big business at its worst, and when the company decided to leave, they just abandoned the people. They up and moved down to another geographical area of the United States and left the people, whom they had brought here with the promises of jobs and, I guess, better living and economic resources they couldn't get on their island, and then they walked off and just left them; left them unemployed, left them without benefits,

and I don't think there was any kind of severance pay. All these kinds of components.

So you had a large group of people who were left in pretty dire straits, who had to make their way, economically, and I imagine the children who were growing up in those homes went through tough times. A lot of the people had to go on public assistance in order to make ends meet, so I think you had the development of an underclass, that maybe was not so prevalent or obvious in Hoboken, to that extent. And, of course, they didn't speak the language. Not that other groups that came also didn't speak the language, but it was just, I think, abandonment. They didn't come to family. When other people came here they had relatives that brought them through. There were cultural ties. These people were basically deserted.

So the youth group grew up, and I guess they were looking for their place in the economic mainstream and their acceptance. At the time of this festival, all of a sudden -- I remember we used to have a public address system, and the sirens went off and all off-duty policemen, all off-duty firemen were expected to report down to the area (and that would be around the festival) that a riot had broken out. It almost was one group pitted against another group, and because it was a

congested area it started a chain reaction. All of a sudden the town was gripped in a situation where there was something that had never happened. Here this festival had gone on, at that time it was over fifty years, and they never had had a problem. It was being disrupted by what was going on with another group, and I felt a polarization had occurred. I think everyone was literally shocked; that this was something that had never happened to the town before.

A series of events started to spiral from that. I always call that the period of time where I saw a transition go into the town, with its sense of personal safety. Shopkeepers were starting to put gratings on their businesses, to protect their businesses. Those kinds of things were going down, and you'd never had that kind of shutdown in the city before. The youth -- The agitation continued. That was the first event that occurred, and then there were a few other events. Then there was another feast that occurred, at the end of the season -- which would happen around St. Francis parish, which was over Labor Day weekend -- and then people were concerned another riot broke out, another confrontation, and in the geographical area it was a turf thing; people moving into neighborhoods, pushing people out. Those things, I think, all

kind of exploded, and it went into another outbreak. There had to be a series of negotiations that had to occur.

The reason it stands out in my mind is that my father was intricately involved in it. At that time he was the Law & Public Safety Director, and as the head of the Law Department, he had oversight, As well as civilian oversight for the police department, to make sure that brutality and those kinds of abuses did not occur, and to investigate any civilian complaints. So they had to go into negotiations, and I remember both sides would not agree to sit down unless he was present. He seemed to have been able to have the credibility with both sides. We didn't see him for three days. He just came home to change clothes, and went back down again. I remember the police chief at that time had a heart attack, in the middle of negotiations, and had to be hospitalized. [Inaudible] as a way to try and bring together the factions of the community so that a peaceable resolution could be an outcome of what had occurred. They worked out an agreement after about a three-day period, with certain points and certain kinds of concessions that would be made, how conflict would be resolved in the future, and to see how things could be worked out; that there was some equity and people's

demands were heard; that people had equal access to the economic mainstream.

It was a very telling time. It was played out here in Hoboken -- You had local dissatisfaction of youth at that particular point, which, I think, was also a national phenomena. But also, in the agitation of it, that as some of these events occurred there were some local people involved, but there were also outside leaders coming in, using this as one of their focal points. That was the process that was identified also. So every element that seemed to be going on on the national level got played out in a microcosm, here, at that point.

What I found difficult at that time to understand was the flavor of what was going on. Again, I don't know. In my neck of the woods, the kids who were coming from Puerto Rico mingled in with the kids from our neighborhood. To this day one of the first families that settled here from Puerto Rico, the fellow became a childhood friend of my brother's, and we're still in contact with the family, over the years. They were in the neighborhood. It just occurred. They were Hoboken. That's the way we looked at it. And to find out that people would feel so completely polarized, that they would be so moved as to have a communal outburst -- such a

thing as a riot -- a disruption of something, where there was always a courtesy and an amenity -- you know, certain kinds of customs -- I think was a wake-up call to everybody. It was shocking. I really do look at it as a turning point, where you started to see a change in transition, and the transition I'm talking about has nothing to do with ethnic composition. It was the question of the fact that all of a sudden barriers came down; that people felt they had to put gratings on their windows; that stores had to lock down; that people talked about protecting their property against who would basically be a neighbor. It was very frightening to me, on a whole other level, to realize how precious even a democracy is; what could really get out of hand, and how very easily a lack of sensitivity or something could really be something that could overturn something along that line.

I still think the thing we were fortunate about is that it never got out of hand to the degree that other communities suffered. Again, it was the fact that we basically had the melting pot in terms of the high school; that by the adolescent years people got together and got to know each other. I think to this day that was the factor that kept us from ever going to a burndown. We didn't have the burnings. We didn't have the people going in to destroy the stores. We didn't

have the loss of property. Eventually they got to the table and were able to do certain kinds of negotiations, and accommodations began to occur and changes, interfacing, and the integration of the culture started to take place. I think it was really the youth saying, "We're part of it." I think maybe prior to that there maybe was a marginalization if only for the fact that it was the company -- You know, I see big business playing a role here where they bought them up, and they kept them self-contained, and only when they did an abandonment and walked out -- It was a disservice to both sets of people, but I think in the Hoboken spirit they eventually worked it out and you saw more of an integration. Again, with the schools, the kids got together in the schools and your playmates became of different persuasions. And because of the neighborhood system that was not unusual. People mixed a lot easier. I think we were fortunate that way. But I think it stands out in people's minds that the problems they were seeing nationally were also here, on a smaller scale. It was just handled differently.

I had a very interesting experience recently. In my own employment I have someone working on my staff -- She was talking about her husband, she introduced her husband, and we looked at each other and there was some

kind of recognition. He couldn't figure out why he was recognizing me and I couldn't figure out why I was recognizing him. We sat and talked, and I found out he was one of the rioters. But he was from Jersey City. He was an outsider who came in. He started to laugh, and started to talk about it. He was talking about sitting down and having this negotiator. He was saying how different it was when they had their episode in Hoboken, as opposed to the episodes they had in other places; that it never got completely violent; that the destruction never occurred. He was talking about this gentleman who was sitting there, who was very much like all of our fathers. He said somehow they reacted to this man; that he seemed to be just like your father; that everyone was very orderly in the room, stating their sides and arguing things through, but everything kept on issue. Then he looked at me and he said, "You remind me of him in some way," and I'm looking at him and I said to him, "In what way?" He said, "I don't know. I feel like I know you." I said to him, "I think that was my father." And he said, "Oh, my goodness. That's what it is. I can see the resemblance around your -- You look like him." And we laughed. He said, "I just couldn't figure out why you were so familiar to me. At a critical point in my life I was the rebel, on the other side." He talked about the negotiation he had and compared it, because

he was part of the group that went from place to place. He said how different it was in other areas. He said there was just something about Hoboken, and he said, "Across the table, after everybody got through with their anger, I found that a lot of people here just looked at each other as if you were neighbors. As we walked out we all felt we accomplished something. But the damage -- Nobody got hurt the way it happened in other places, with it." It was very interesting to hear that other aspect of it, from his perspective. To find that -- what do they say? -- the world gets smaller as you get older? What are the chances of us meeting this outside agitator? He's a judge. He's now in the judiciary. He went to law school, and is very law abiding. And I said to him, "Guess what. Don't tell me now you've become a Republican." And guess what, he is. I roared. He said, "I've gone a complete circle. I've gone from being a rabble rouser to a judge." So that's how small the world is. He said, "My kids can't understand how it was, when we were fighting our way up, because they've all had very good advantages and things along that line."

It's interesting. But I think it was a point that people could measure things in the community, the time before and the time after. And I think people still under the

siege -- Every time I walk on Washington Street and still see things under grating and stores locked, it really bothers me. Because I can remember when it wasn't.

RC: Just for the record -- Your Dad's name was -- ?

CW: -- E. Norman Wilson. And E. Norman Wilson, Jr., which is my brother.

RC: He was also very active in town. Well, before we conclude this side of the tape, is there anything else you'd like to share about your growing up in Hoboken?

CW: I think, truly, that Hoboken was a wonderful place to grow up in. I look back on my childhood here, and I feel it was very rich. I felt it was really a time of -- We had childhoods. And I also think that the one thing -- Maybe it's just something that went with the generation -- It made it the last group of kids who felt safe. I don't think the generation now has that sense of safety that we had. I think they've lost something, because it's something that stays with you, in your psyche. Your sense of psychology; of who you are;

that personal sense that when you "hit" here, you were home. What I find from my friends who've moved away is they still have that feeling about it. They say that no matter where they went, even if they went into suburbs or another kind of community, that personal sense of safety was never the same as when they lived in Hoboken. And I think we were just the last group that had it. I think the riots epitomized the changing of the times. I think thereafter, even with the young children now -- Although you see more kids in neighborhoods now than you did before. For a period of time it was almost childless in the town. Now you see family units and that coming back again. There are more babies. I said the last year of the century and the first year of the century people made decisions. We have lots of babies in our neighborhood now, and one other thing: As I mentioned to you earlier, I've never seen such good-looking kids. I think the children we have in this town are just beautiful. One is cuter than the other. And what I like is it's a total mixture. It's a new mosaic. My neighborhood is totally integrated, and it really is a delight to see these little kids out, all playing with each other, and the families all getting along well. But I think the childhood is not the same. They don't know that innocence. Maybe it was good to be a little dumb. With the internet and all these things that

kids have to deal with now -- The homes were more sanctuaries at that time. There was more stability, and people had roots. Their grandparents were also living in the community. There were extended families, or they had an aunt, or an uncle, or a cousin. I don't think you have a lot of that inter-generational aspect anymore that we had, and I don't think the ethnicity is defined like in terms of -- Because the grandmothers -- the different grandmother titles, whether it was Nana, whether it was Oma, anything along that line -- there would be all those little foods and rituals around the table; the different ethnic foods that you would do and the customs. I don't think the kids have that kind of sharing anymore, with those kinds of heritages. But I see a more spirited integration, which I think is really good, and you have mixed families. No one thinks anything of it. That's what I like. And I like the mosaic. I really like the mosaic flavor of the town. I think that's always been the heritage of Hoboken. It's always been a mosaic, and I think it's like the cutting edge of what's going on in the rest of the country.

RC: Very good. Thank you very much. Is there anything else we haven't touched on, that you think should be part of this?

CW: Well, I think you've got so many areas that you can go into, to talk to people. There are people who have different experiences. I think you ought to do a good thing on the political history of Hoboken. I think that's going to be a sketch and a half. And if I think of anything with the dividing line -- To the rest of the world, that has baseball and football, Hoboken had the spectator sport of politics. It was their spectator sport. A child from the age of three on would know -- You would never have a Florida here. A child from three would know how to go in and vote in Hoboken, in our growing-up stages. I think if you can get some of those people who can tell you --

RC: We don't have chads!

CW: -- some of the events, I think you could probably have a sitcom, with the very luxurious history. If you can get some of the senior groups, some of the last, remaining people who came in, and talk about what it was to be a member of a different ethnic group and how they made the acculturation into the community -- And if you can talk to the veterans, and people who lived through the wars. I was

recently doing a project for my office with seniors, on a completely different aspect of it, and what was interesting was those groups who were ninety years and older, eighty-plus, going strong and mentally intact with memories as sharp as anything -- They were talking about the First World War and how this was a port of embarkation. I think there's a whole rich history in that. Another aspect is different customs people had. I think the religious history of the community is extremely interesting, and there are still people who were part of the different congregations and church groups. Each one has their own rich history to bring to it. The educational structure. Hoboken was a town of firsts. It had one of the first special education programs. When people weren't taking handicapped or mentally challenged kids into school, Hoboken was. That would be as early as 1900. We were working with the kids in our educational system. One of the first high schools was in Hoboken.

RC: And one of the early libraries.

CW: The early libraries in Hoboken. The oldest parochial school in the State of New Jersey was in Hoboken. You had your hospital system opening up here, too,

one of the first ones was in Hoboken. There were just so many things that were done. I just think it's interesting what was packed into this little square mile. The theatre history of Hoboken is extensive. There's like a renaissance going on with it now, with the people who are coming in. I think that's touching back into its cultural history, which I think is truly amazing. Just so many things, that people just take for granted. But there are still people around who have first-hand and first-memory basis of it, that you still can tap into. But I'm sure if you can get the oldtimers to talk about some of these political stories they tell, you would absolutely have a treasure. Because it's just interesting on the evolution of how all that has occurred. People who worked on the docks can talk about all those things. We won't have to worry about *On the Waterfront*; they can give you the first-hand experience of what they dealt with, and they're here, they can be reached and they can talk, and they can give really cogent experiences.

We were kidding before about the "giving tree" that we do in the library, and I was just telling somebody a few weeks ago that one of the interesting things I find by doing that tree (and there's a reason why I always decorate it on Saturday), is that I get the most interesting stories from people. It evokes memories. When I'm decorating it, and I'm

sitting there -- and people can't understand sometimes why it takes me two days -- It's because people come over and share reminiscences of their childhood or a memory that they have. And what I find most interesting is it's men --

RC: Really.

CW: -- who will come over and just stand, and have a memory of their mother.

RC: Because it evokes --

CW: -- something. And I stand there sometimes and I say to myself, "I should be writing this down. If these mothers were alive now, to hear their sons, their grown sons, talk about some thing that are so sweet and gentle, and they associate with their mother --" I get tears -- I look and say to myself, this really is -- And you don't expect it. It's the ones you least expect. They'll remember a food, or some extra thing their mother would do. And it's really funny: I get it from all religious groups. A person who sees the tree will give me a Hanukah memory, because they relate it to the time their mother "candled it." I said, "Yeah, I'll have to come

back and finish it up," because I sit and listen and talk with them, to hear what they have to say because it is extremely interesting. And I noticed, it's a lot of men.

RC: We'll have to give you a tape recorder for next Christmas.

CW: When you think about it -- I realized I was absorbing all these stories. Then all of a sudden, this past Christmas, I think, because you had spoken to me a week or two prior about this project -- So when it was happening again; three or four people were coming up, and again, it was a gentleman, talking about different things -- "My Mom would do this" -- and this year I put tinsel, what they call icicles, on the tree -- and I did that specifically because the person who we were "doing the tree in memory" talked about how her family used to do the tinsel on the tree, so I wanted to go in and add that piece to it. That addition brought out more stories from people walking out. "Oh, I remember my mother did this," etc., and then they would go on to another thing. When they got done I said, "That is what has occurred each year, and I just realized it was predominately men, who would be going in and out, the ones you would least expect, who

would come over and make a sharing of a story or something; something they picked up; the memory of a food their mother cooked." They would get almost done and then they would get a little gruff [clears throat] and out they'd go. I said, "I think that's why I've done it all these years." Consciously, I wasn't even aware of it.

It is a very interesting social engagement. I say very little. I say yes and uh huh and I listen, and I get a tale told about something, or a decoration that reminds them of something, but it's always a memory.

RC: Do you think people would be willing to be taped? Or some way to --

CW: It was something I had not been conscious of until this year. Because, we were doing a tree "in memory of." It was a funny thing I'd specifically do, and people were coming, and I said, "You know, this happens every year." Last year the library would be open from 10:00 to 2:00 and I was there for the whole four hours. Then I would have to come back another day and actually do the work, because of these people coming in and chatting and sharing their stories. There was this gentleman who was talking about -- "My mother

would do this," and then another one joined in, then someone came over and was looking at something and said, "Oh, I remember when my mother would take the pine needles and we'd get this aroma." But each one of them has some kind of a memory. As I say, again, the thing that struck me was it was mostly men.

RC: It's a theme here.

CW: They miss their mothers! But the way they remember them is such a beautiful -- I looked and I said to myself, "Boy, I wish their mothers could hear." When you think, unconsciously, you're doing something and you think it went over their heads, all of a sudden it's in there, something comes out, and they really look at the very simple things that mean so much to them. It's something that they carry. It's a lesson for all of us.

RC: Yes. And very touching. I'm going to bring this to a close before the tape runs out, with many thank yous.