

John Link, Tape 1

JOHN LINK

Interviewed by Florence Pape

THE HOBOKEN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN LINK

INTERVIEWER: FLORENCE PAPE

DATE: JANUARY 19, 2005

LOCATION: LINK APARTMENT, HOBOKEN

SIDE ONE, TAPE 1

Ms. Pape: Hello.

Mr. Link: Hello, Florence.

Ms. Pape: Hi, John. Could you please tell me your name?

Mr. Link: John Link.

Ms. Pape: And when were you born and where were you born?

Mr. Link: Born December 25, 1928.

Ms. Pape: And were you born in Hoboken?

Mr. Link: Yes, at 1110 Hudson St.

Ms. Pape: You were born at 1110 Hudson St.? You lived one block away?

Mr. Link: At the time I was born. And shortly thereafter we moved to 302 Hudson.

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Ms. Pape: So you lived your whole life in Hoboken?

Mr. Link: Yes.

Ms. Pape: Now, where were your parents born?

Mr. Link: They're both from Hoboken also.

Ms. Pape: And where were their parents born?

Mr. Link: So far as I know, Hoboken.

Ms. Pape: Really? So you really go back 3 generations. More, I guess now with your kids. Your grandchildren were born in Hoboken.

Mr. Link: My grandfather was born in Hoboken.

Ms. Pape: What did your grandfather do, do you know?

Mr. Link: So far as I know, my one grandfather was a bartender.

Ms. Pape: Your grandfather was a bartender in Hoboken?

Mr. Link: In Hoboken.

Ms. Pape: Where in Hoboken?

Mr. Link: The Hoboken Elks club, and the Elysian Bar. And my other grandfather, he was a baggage-master for the Lackawanna Ferries. He used to handle all the steamer luggage going into New York.

Ms. Pape: So the ferries – is that what you said?

Mr. Link: Ferries...

Ms. Pape: So now what port did they leave from? What area of Hoboken did they leave from?

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Mr. Link: Right down at the ferry house at the Lackawanna Terminal.

Ms. Pape: So all the way downtown?

Mr. Link: All the way downtown. All the steamer trunks would come into Hoboken by train, they were transported across the street to the package terminal, and he would arrange to have them sent to different piers.

Ms. Pape: Do you remember your grandparents well?

Mr. Link: I remember my father's father; my mother's father, I only saw him a couple times briefly. My grandfather, my father's father, we lived right next door to each other for many years. He saw me grow up and he was always there for us.

Ms. Pape: Your grandparents?

Mr. Link: My grandfather and my step-grandmother.

Ms. Pape: Now where did they come from? I know that Doris said that a lot of her heritage is German. Are you...

J: German and Irish... I guess, if you go back far enough.

Ms. Pape: Do you remember the... what year the first Link arrived in the United States?

Ms. Pape: What kind of work did your father do?

Mr. Link: My father was a police officer. He'd go to a call box and get them whatever was needed – an ambulance, or car, but...He didn't talk much about the job, unless they got a pay increase.

Ms. Pape: What did your mom do?

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Mr. Link: My step-mother was a practical nurse. Then she performed private duty.

Ms. Pape: She worked when you lived with her?

Mr. Link: Yes

Ms. Pape: What hospital did she work for?

Mr. Link: She worked for St. Mary, St. Francis. And also she worked for a dentist at one time – Dr. Spiro.

Ms. Pape: Do you have any brothers and sisters.

Mr. Link: I had two sisters.

Ms. Pape: What were their names?

Mr. Link: Mary and Ruth.

Ms. Pape: Where were their families? Did they live close by?

Mr. Link: Ruthie lived at 302 Hudson St. She passed away. She had a bad childbirth, and she passed away when she was 23.

Ms. Pape: And your other sister?

Mr. Link: Mary. She stayed in Hoboken. She had three children. Thomas, John, and Ruthie, after my sister. I guess John after me. They still live in Hoboken – all her children.

Ms. Pape: Her children are still in Hoboken?

Mr. Link: They're all still in Hoboken, and 2 out of 3 of mine are still in Hoboken.



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Mr. Link: Ruthie had a son, she raised him, and her son moved out of town. But she's still in Hoboken.

Ms. Pape: Do you see her?

Mr. Link: Sure – I still see her.

Ms. Pape: I think it's nice, isn't it, to have family... people who know the whole history of the Link family... who they are and what they've done.

Mr. Link: Some people do, yes.

Ms. Pape: And they remember... Are there people in Hoboken who remember your dad?

Mr. Link: Oh yes. Sure. There are still retired patrolmen. And a lot of the senior citizens remember him from when they were kids.

Ms. Pape: That's nice. Did you ever want to be a policeman like your dad?

Mr. Link: At one time. Yes – I took the test in Washington, DC. But Doris wasn't too happy about it.

Ms. Pape: Doris was not eager...

Mr. Link: She didn't want to go to Washington, DC.

Ms. Pape: So you had this opportunity in Washington, but she didn't want to leave Hoboken?

Mr. Link: I thought I had an opportunity in Washington, but...

Ms. Pape: She just didn't want to go.

Mr. Link: She said no; she wouldn't be happy there.

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Ms. Pape: Doris indicated in her tape that she hasn't traveled much but you've been to a number of places...

Mr. Link: I traveled when I was in business.

Ms. Pape: What kind of business were you in?

Mr. Link: Testing. I was in the testing business my whole life.

Ms. Pape: You graduated from high school. Did you go to college?

Mr. Link: No.

Ms. Pape: I know that you're a very intelligent, intellectual person, because your wife told me that. She said that you had some very important jobs. What did you do?

Mr. Link: I went to a technical institute for a couple of years – electronics. And then I located a job with US Testing in Hoboken here, as a technician. I was with them for 16.5 years. When they changed their management, things happened, and I was out. That's when I went to work for Stevens Institute of Technology.

Ms. Pape: What did you do at Stevens?

Mr. Link: I was a technician also – at the Davidson Laboratory. We tested ship hulls.

Ms. Pape: What kind of tests did you do...

Mr. Link: For stability – motions. See how the hulls would react to waves, at various speeds. We tested just about every type of thing that could go in the water or on the water. Or under the water.

Ms. Pape: Were there a lot of technicians working on this with you?

Mr. Link: Oh, yeah.

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Ms. Pape: Did you like working for Stevens?

Mr. Link: Oh, yes, I enjoyed it. There were a lot of good people in my laboratory: good engineers, good directors. It was a nice place to work.

Ms. Pape: Did you... where did they send you on business? Did you travel for Stevens?

Mr. Link: That was US Testing. I was the technical representative for the American Safety Belt Council. I did plant inspections where they made safety belts. I think it was like California, Kentucky, Colorado, Chicago.

Ms. Pape: How often did you travel for the job?

Mr. Link: We had to go to each plant twice a year.

Ms. Pape: How many plants did they have?

Mr. Link: They had a dozen different plants I had to inspect.

Ms. Pape: You went on maybe 24 business trips. So you really got to see a lot of different cities and life styles. So how did they compare to Hoboken? Where in Kentucky did you go?

Mr. Link: Lexington.

Ms. Pape: How did Lexington, KY in the 1950s...

Mr. Link: 60s

Ms. Pape: ...60s...compare to the streets and lifestyles of Hoboken?

Mr. Link: Totally different.

Ms. Pape: What was the major difference?

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Mr. Link: It was like suburbia where I was, where the plant was. It wasn't in the city proper itself. It was a different lifestyle altogether – you wouldn't recognize it. You didn't see the stores like we had on Washington St. Maybe if you went into the city. Like Hoboken Luncheonette on Washington Street... you were out of the business area, it's just residential. And it's more or less like that. But the houses aren't – at least where I was - closely packed. But they're both nice places, nice people.

Ms. Pape: What makes the Hoboken people stand out? Because you really knew about a lot of people in a lot of different areas.

Mr. Link: I don't know. It's different now, because I don't know a lot of the people. Years ago, I knew the whole police force through my father, and they knew me.

Ms. Pape: So they would wave to you, and say, "Hey, Johnny!"

Mr. Link: They all knew me. If I misbehaved, they would tell my father, too.

Ms. Pape: So the cops would see you misbehaving? You, Mr. John R Link?

Mr. Link: Of course. We used to play ball in the residential areas, where we weren't supposed to, and people would call the police, and they would chase us.

Ms. Pape: They would chase you?

Mr. Link: Not just me – the whole gang.

Ms. Pape: What kind of games did you play? What were the activities on the streets of Hoboken.

Mr. Link: We used to play stick ball. Just a rubber ball and a broomstick.

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Ms. Pape: A broomstick?

Mr. Link: Yeah – cut-down. He pitched to you, you hit the ball with the broomstick.

Ms. Pape: Did you play in the streets? Were there many cars?

Mr. Link: There weren't that many cars.

Ms. Pape: Did you play in the gutter?

Mr. Link: Oh, yeah

Ms. Pape: And the people didn't like that you were playing in the gutter?

Mr. Link: And the noise.

Ms. Pape: The noise? It's hard for me to believe you were noisy.

Mr. Link: A bunch of kids playing ball – yell at each other. Every time something happened - a close play, you argued about it. Oh, yeah, we made noise.

Ms. Pape: What other kinds of games did you play?

Mr. Link: All the games we played were in the streets. You had parks, but you didn't play in the parks.

Ms. Pape: You didn't play in the parks?

Mr. Link: There wasn't room to play ball in the parks.

Ms. Pape: You played in the gutter. Did you have a lot of friends growing up?

Mr. Link: Oh sure. Some of them are still around.

Ms. Pape: Who's still around from your childhood?

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Mr. Link: From my childhood? I have to think about the names. We don't see them that often, but some of them are still here. But I've seen Signore – he graduated with me. He owned a bar in Hoboken. John Bocci – he owned a bar in Hoboken. There are a few of them; they're still here. I'm always glad to see them. We still remember each other when we spot each other. We haven't forgotten each other. John So-and-so... Bob Madiere who went to school with me; he just moved out of Hoboken; he owned the Washington Furniture Store.

Ms. Pape: Where did you go to school?

Mr. Link: Grammar school at St. Peter and Paul's.

Ms. Pape: So you went to Catholic School?

Mr. Link: Yes. To the eighth grade. Then the 9<sup>th</sup> grade I went to David E. Rue. That was what they called junior high -- public school – 9<sup>th</sup> grade only. Then Demarest High School. Back in those days it was Demarest High School. There was no Hoboken High.

Ms. Pape: In those days, what were the schools like? What was the Catholic school like? Was it strict?

Mr. Link: Yes, a lot of discipline. Tremendous discipline from the teachers...

Ms. Pape: Did you ever get smacked?

Mr. Link: On the hands – with a ruler. Not often.

Ms. Pape: You were a good kid.

Mr. Link: I tried.

Ms. Pape: Do you remember what your favorite subjects were?

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Mr. Link: I always liked arithmetic... a little bit of history. I didn't like English.

Ms. Pape: You didn't like it, but you liked history and arithmetic. How did you meet Doris?

Mr. Link: Me and Doris were in first grade together.

Ms. Pape: You and Doris were in the first grade together?

Mr. Link: Right. And we parted at the fourth grade.

Ms. Pape: And did you like her even then?

Mr. Link: I tell her that, but she won't believe me.

Ms. Pape: But now I'm asking you. Did you ... what was your feeling about Doris?

Mr. Link: She was a girl. That's all. At that age. Then a little bit later I moved uptown, and started hanging out on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, with the gang up there. And Doris had her gang on 12<sup>th</sup> St. And every night, we'd be on the corner, and we'd talk.

Ms. Pape: She said to me during her interview that blocks hung out; each block had their gang of kids that hung out together. So if you lived downtown, and she was up on 12<sup>th</sup> street...

Mr. Link: I said, I moved uptown.

Ms. Pape: Sorry, you did! You moved up to what street?

Mr. Link: 1024 Washington.

Ms. Pape: So when you were at 1024, you started to hang out...

Mr. Link: I hung out with the 11<sup>th</sup> St. gang in the park over here.

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Ms. Pape: The 11<sup>th</sup> Street gang.

Mr. Link: And when that broke up, I moved up to the 12<sup>th</sup> St. gang.

Ms. Pape: And that's when you found her again.

Mr. Link: That's when I came across her.

Ms. Pape: How did kids go out in high school?

Mr. Link: Back then, you didn't start going out. We used to have a lot of dances in Hoboken – church groups. We used to have OLG, St. Peter and Paul, St. Josephs. All these parishes sponsored weekly dances.

Ms. Pape: What kind of dancing did you do?

Mr. Link: I was a slow dancer; Doris could do everything.

Ms. Pape: What kinds of dances?

Mr. Link: Doris could do the lindy and all the others, but not me. We danced with each other at these dances, and that's how we got to know each other. And then you began to realize that boys and girls are nice together. And then you would start dating from there.

Ms. Pape: How old were you... you graduated from high school and then what happened?

Mr. Link: I went into the army.

Ms. Pape: You went right into the army from high school?

Mr. Link: I got out in June and worked part-time at Shulton Company at that time until September.

Ms. Pape: Where did you work?



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Mr. Link: Shulton – you remember, they bottled Old Spice and Friendship Toilet Water. I worked for them in Hoboken. I went into the army in September, and served in the Philippines and then Japan, and I came back in 1948 to Hoboken. I went in in 1946, September, and got out in January, 1948.

Ms. Pape: Did you correspond with Doris during that time?

Mr. Link: No, no. At that time there was not that much interest. When I came back, we got to know each other better. I used to write to a couple of girls from the gang.

Ms. Pape: From the gang, you wrote to a couple of girls?

Mr. Link: Oh yeah. I decided while I was there... In the Philippines I served in the ordnance. Then I was sent to Japan, because I was over 6 foot, and I have an IQ of over 140.

Ms. Pape: You have an IQ of over 140!

Mr. Link: At least that's what they told me in the army.

Ms. Pape: But that's Mensa material. Did you ever join Mensa?

Mr. Link: Mensa? No.

Ms. Pape: That's an organization for brilliant people like you.

Mr. Link: They needed a couple of guys in the Military Police to do the war crimes trials. That's where I worked – the Japanese war crimes trial. I served, I guess, about 10 months with the MPs, and then I came back home.

Ms. Pape: So you served with the Military Police?

Mr. Link: We were the Interior Guards at the Japanese War Crimes trials.

Ms. Pape: You must have seen and heard some extraordinary things.

Mr. Link: I didn't hear a lot because every day there were 26 of the major war criminals – Tojo, the big admirals, the big generals. In fact, one day I had to stay back in the ante-room, and Tojo was meeting with his lawyer. Tojo was the premiere of Japan, he had most of the rap of the war, and he didn't like America at all. You always had to keep a close watch on him. When I was in the ante-room, they told me, whatever you do, the lawyer hands him nothing; unless it goes through you. You search every page, no razors, no staples, no pieces of metal. Make sure there's nothing between those pages. And that's what you did.

Ms. Pape: That was an important job. You really were security.

Mr. Link: You were responsible for him. You just hoped nothing happened to him while you were on watch.

Ms. Pape: And nothing happened to any of those criminals while you were on watch.

Mr. Link: No, no. Overnight they stayed at the prison. While they were at the prison, every ten minutes everyone was checked. In other words, all the guards – there were 26 of them, in this long hall, with all the rooms. And each one, the MPs would just keep circulating down the hallway. About every ten minutes, assigned randomly, they would switch times, different guys would go into different rooms and make sure that everything was OK. They kept them alive to serve their time or... 21 out of the 26 got hung.

Ms. Pape: Very, very interesting.

Mr. Link: It was interesting.

Ms. Pape: OK. Now you come back and... what do you do? You came right back to Hoboken?

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Mr. Link: I came back to Hoboken. In fact I worked for Shulton, except this time in New York City, I worked in the office. That wasn't my cup of tea, so. I worked for Maxwell House for a while.

Ms. Pape: Now where is Maxwell? I mean, I look out your window, and I don't see Maxwell anymore.

Mr. Link: It's gone.

Ms. Pape: So tell me about that building from our viewpoint over here; when it went up, when it came down.

Mr. Link: There was a lumberyard there before. The property became available, Maxwell started building there. American Can was in an adjacent building, because they supplied the cans. It was a great place to work for in Hoboken, because it employed so many people there.

Ms. Pape: How many people worked there?

Mr. Link: At one time, it was up to 1500.

Ms. Pape: 1500 employees?

Mr. Link: 3 shifts, 7 days a week. They had 7 buildings there. They had the canned coffee, and they also made other brands besides Maxwell. You had instant coffee, you had decaffeinated coffee; all separate buildings; they had freeze-dried. Over the years, there were just an awful lot of people.

Ms. Pape: And your job specifically was for which division?

Mr. Link: I was with canned coffee. I was what they called a can stacker. Can stacker was with the can company, and they would feed into our production lines. If something happened in the production lines, you had to take the cans off the line and stack them. When the lines started up again, you had to put them back on.

Ms. Pape: So you really had to be alert.

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Mr. Link: You had to be on your post.

Ms. Pape: Because if you didn't grab the can off the line...

Mr. Link: It wasn't a can. You had a fork; with 11 prongs - you picked up 11 cans at a time. The line was 22 cans wide. You had a partner, and you would alternate. When the line started back up, you picked them back up and put them back on the line. When the cans started good again, you could stop for a while, until something else happened. When the can company was over-producing, you had to take off. Later, they put you back on. So I did that for about 8 months; I said that was not for me.

Ms. Pape: You talked about US Testing and Maxwell House. What other plants or manufacturing existed in this town? And did other plants employ the same number of people as Maxwell House?

Mr. Link: No, that was the largest employer.

Ms. Pape: What were the other employers?

Mr. Link: Keuffel and Esser – they made engineering instruments for papers. You had Lipton Tea, Standard Brands, Franklin Baker, you had Shulton, where I started working in Hoboken. We had a lot of industry in Hoboken. Ferguson Propeller that made the big ship propellers. I worked for Graphic Register – they made business forms. I worked for Jason Corporation that made a lot of plastics for different applications. I had a lot of little jobs.

Ms. Pape: And what about the small businesses. What kind of businesses did you find on Washington St.?

Mr. Link: Just about everything. We had florists, druggists, on Washington St. – there was almost a druggist on every block down to 7<sup>th</sup> Street. And Barons on 5<sup>th</sup> St.

Ms. Pape: That's still here. How old is Baron's?

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Mr. Link: I think they just had a sign up there – about 55 years old.

Ms. Pape: Did the stores come all the way up Washington St or did they stop at a certain street.

Mr. Link: The real businesses stopped on 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

Ms. Pape: It went up to 7<sup>th</sup> street and then it stopped?

Mr. Link: Up to 7<sup>th</sup> Street we had ice cream parlors... Restaurants... Barbers...everything.

Ms. Pape: What about the bars? Where were they?

Mr. Link: Most of the bars were between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> on River, and 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> on Hudson.

Ms. Pape: Were there as many as...

Mr. Link: Almost every location was a bar.

Ms. Pape: Really?

Mr. Link: Oh yeah, nothing in between. One bar after the other.

Ms. Pape: Every block had a bar.

Mr. Link: Not every block.

Ms. Pape: Every store was a bar.

Mr. Link: Every store was a bar. Of course, then you had all the shipping industry; the docks. They kept all those bars going.

Ms. Pape: Did New Yorkers come over? I remember reading how they used to come over.

Mr. Link: To the Clam Broth House.

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Ms. Pape: So New Yorkers would come over specifically for the Clam Broth House?

Mr. Link: Oh yeah

Ms. Pape: When I came to Hoboken, the Clam Broth House was already on its way down.

Mr. Link: Oh yes

Ms. Pape: What was the Clam Broth House like? Did you go there with Doris?

Mr. Link: We went there, sure. It was the same.

Ms. Pape: It's gone now...

Mr. Link: It wasn't the same anymore, I guess. It was a great place to go.

Ms. Pape: The food was good?

Mr. Link: Very good.

Ms. Pape: You would drink clam broth?

Mr. Link: It was a regular bar. I went in there all the time. They had little cups – big kettles of clam broth.

Ms. Pape: It was really good – good for you?

Mr. Link: That's what they said. Everybody really believed it.

Ms. Pape: When you were growing up, was Hoboken a safe town? Was it comfortable? I know your father helped to make it safe with his foot patrol. Were there gangs? What was the feel of it?

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Mr. Link: There were gangs on the back of Hoboken.

Ms. Pape: There were gangs on the west side of Hoboken?

Mr. Link: West and south, too. The south-west corner.

Ms. Pape: And that's where your father...

Mr. Link: That was part of his post. They had battles with each other. It was mostly fist fights. They'd throw rocks at each other. It wasn't like knives and guns.

Mr. Link: The docks were something. They always had a police detail on the docks.

Ms. Pape: Right on the docks.

Mr. Link: Right on the streets into the docks

Ms. Pape: So the men would fight with each other?

Mr. Link: There was a lot of labor problems. The dock boss would hire certain people; others wouldn't be hired. They'd fight about that. The dock boss was a tough job to have, because he'd get shot. You'd have the Italian dock boss, the Irish didn't like it.

Ms. Pape: In other words, if you had an Irish dock boss, he would hire Irish?

Mr. Link: The dock boss would hire primarily his own people. So he'd get shot, then you'd have an Italian dock boss, he would hire his own people.

Ms. Pape: You said "he'd get shot"?

Mr. Link: I remember three dock bosses being shot. Hearing about it, not personally.

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Ms. Pape: You heard about three dock bosses getting shot. Did these dock bosses have protection? Body guards?

Mr. Link: They probably did, but you didn't hear about it. They probably had guns of their own, too.

Ms. Pape: So people would hire their own people. In the beginning, when they were hiring, was it mostly... was there ever a German dock boss? Or was it mostly Italian and Irish?

Mr. Link: If there was, it was before my time.

Ms. Pape: So the dock bosses that you knew about were Irish and Italian. The fights broke about over who they hired.

Mr. Link: Shipping gangs and dock workers. They'd fight among themselves once in a while, too, individually. So you had a police detail constantly. And if they walked off the job, you had to call the union there. You had police patrol on horseback to monitor the trucks going in. Some of them would try to beat the lines – they'd have the trucks line up. The truck drivers would be fighting.

Ms. Pape: So the truck drivers... So people were really doing lots of business on the docks.

Mr. Link: That was a busy place.

Ms. Pape: There were no women working on the docks?

Mr. Link: Not then. When I was a kid, I guess about 8 or 10 years old, at lunch time we'd walk down the shore road. Because the docks used to go up to 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

Ms. Pape: The docks went up to 8<sup>th</sup> Street?

Mr. Link: 5<sup>th</sup> Street was Holland-American line; then came the German line, about 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> Street, then came the Long dock, which went up to 8<sup>th</sup>



Street, that ran parallel to the shore line. All of us would go out for glasses of water. The longshoremen would come out for lunch. They always left their bottles behind; soda bottles. We used to go down and collect their soda bottles; there were two sets of those: little and big ones. We'd make ourselves half a dollar a day sometimes.

Ms. Pape: But you had to go down to the docks. Were your mother and father happy to find out that you were flitting around on the docks?

Mr. Link: You could play on the docks by the shore road. Just the shore road; you could walk down there. You couldn't get near the docks, you had to stay outside the docks.

Ms. Pape: So you were safe.

Mr. Link: We never had any trouble. No problem in that.

Ms. Pape: When did the docks disappear? What year did the last of them...

Mr. Link: The majority of them were there until, I guess, A, B, and C were the last docks there. The Port Authority had them. This would be the 60s or 70s, until they were finally gone. It just transferred out to Port Elizabeth.

Ms. Pape: What brought the end of it?

Mr. Link: The changes in the big ports, like Port Elizabeth, Port Rock.

Ms. Pape: Hoboken didn't have the room for the container ships.

Mr. Link: That's right. The drainage wasn't that large... They got some, but very small boats. These cargo ships got to be bigger and bigger and bigger.

Ms. Pape: So they went to Port Elizabeth...Most of the people who worked on the docks – were they men from Hoboken or Hudson County?

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Mr. Link: Most of them were Hoboken, I would say.

Ms. Pape: What did those guys do after the ships...

Mr. Link: They went with the jobs. They transferred out to the ports – to Elizabeth.

Ms. Pape: But the industry was gone from Hoboken

Mr. Link: The boats didn't come here any more.

Ms. Pape: The boats stopped coming here. Now, you were at war. Doris talked about the sailors on the streets of Hoboken. Do you remember them?

Mr. Link: Oh sure. We had a USO in Hoboken, at the Y.

Ms. Pape: And there were dances there.

Mr. Link: Sometimes the ships would come in there for repair, and the crews would get off in Hoboken.

Ms. Pape: How many people were in Hoboken at that time.

Mr. Link: During the war years, with all the jobs and the ship repairs and everything, there were close to 50,000.

Ms. Pape: And there weren't many cars on the street, so people didn't have trouble parking their cars.

Mr. Link: Not back then.

Ms. Pape: How does... what's the best of Hoboken that you remember growing up? What do you think the best was? And the worst?

Mr. Link: I had no 'worst' in Hoboken. I always enjoyed being with my friends and family. I loved it – I never had a problem with Hoboken. I still love Hoboken.

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Ms. Pape: You still do. What do you love about it today?

Mr. Link: You see the changes going on. You realize you have to have the change to grow – without growth, you'd be a ghost town.

Ms. Pape: What changes do you enjoy about the new Hoboken?

Mr. Link: I still enjoy the older people in Hoboken; the ones I know in Hoboken. And the newer people I got to know you through the Y. You find out new friends are nice, too. But you don't get a chance to meet many of them. Like Doris knows that group from the Y. And she gets along great with many of them, and I like them. That's how you develop friendships, but they're hard to do today. Unless you have that connection.

Ms. Pape: Unless you have some reason to get to know new people.

Mr. Link: I used to get to meet a lot of new people through the Elks.

Ms. Pape: You belonged to the Elks?

Mr. Link: Oh yes. I was a past Exalted Ruler.

Ms. Pape: Really! I'm so impressed!

Mr. Link: 1968

Ms. Pape: The Elks... were the Elks still on 10<sup>th</sup> and Washington even then?

Mr. Link: Yes

Ms. Pape: How often did you go to the Elks?

Mr. Link: I hung out there regularly. But now I can't go there anymore, because of the emphysema.

John Link, Tape 1

Ms. Pape: Do they still have smoking there?

Mr. Link: Yes, at some of the affairs, and down at the bar. I miss the compadre of it, but that's all. I still have a good life. I still have my Doris, of course.

Ms. Pape: Your Doris...

Ms. Pape: Tell me about "your" Doris. Everybody who knows Doris says "she's my Doris." I feel I've adopted her as my mother.

Mr. Link: That's the way she is. She gives so much of herself. She can't do enough for people. She's always there for me. She's the greatest thing that ever happened in my life.

Ms. Pape: To have met and married Doris. How many years are you married?

Mr. Link: 51.

Ms. Pape: And your life has been a good life with her. Joy.

Mr. Link: Joy. Happy.

Ms. Pape: Do you know how lucky you are?

Mr. Link: Yes. I consider myself very lucky. A lot of people who know Doris, they tell me this.

Ms. Pape: That you are the luckiest guy in the world.

Mr. Link: Yes. They say I'm a lucky guy. And I agree – I am.

Ms. Pape: How many children do you have?

Mr. Link: Three

Ms. Pape: What was their life like growing up in Hoboken?

John Link, Tape 1

Mr. Link: They enjoyed growing up here. They all had their groups of friends in school. They kept themselves active and busy.

(fire engines)

Mr. Link: They enjoyed living in Hoboken. Jackie to this day, he loves Hoboken. Even though he doesn't live here anymore. When he comes by, all his friends come to see him.

Ms. Pape: Now I understand that Jackie took after his grandfather, in terms of becoming a bartender.

Mr. Link: Yes.

Ms. Pape: And how long has he been a bartender?

Mr. Link: Oh gosh... a long time.

Ms. Pape: Is that the Wilton Bar?

Mr. Link: Yes. I was a bartender too - part-time.

Ms. Pape: At his bar?

Mr. Link: No, not then. At Maxwell's, and at Tahen's...

Ms. Pape: You were a bartender?

Mr. Link: Part time. Just kicking around on weekends.

Ms. Pape: Now it's a big deal.

Mr. Link: No, not then.

Ms. Pape: What kind of drinks did you make?

Mr. Link: Mixed drinks and beer. Highballs.

John Link, Tape 1

Ms. Pape: What's a highball?

Mr. Link: A highball – just whiskey and soda.

Ms. Pape: So people didn't come in and ask for martinis...

Mr. Link: Not in the places I worked. But part-time, it was a good deal. I had a lot of fun in Hoboken. We did a lot of things.

Ms. Pape: John, you talked about going to school after the war. How did you come to pick a technical school? How did that take place?

Mr. Link: Well at that time television seemed to be the big thing. So I went to electronics school – Jersey City Technical Institute, which is up in Journal Square and Bergen Ave. I went there and took some courses.

Ms. Pape: Was that paid for?

Mr. Link: That was paid under the GI bill. Not only did they pay for the school, but I got an allotment every month while I was going.

Ms. Pape: Excellent

Ms. Pape: You made reference to belonging to the Democratic Club. What were the politics of Hoboken growing up? How did it change from Mayor to Mayor? Or was there one Mayor that you remember?

Mr. Link: John Grogan was the one I was closest to.

Ms. Pape: You felt closest to him?

Mr. Link: Yeah, in terms of the Mayors. I worked for him on campaigns. I was active in his club. He was the first one when I started to pay attention to politics. I worked with Louis DePasquale, and Steve Cappiello. They all three appointed me to the Local Assistance Board, which you know was the welfare board in

John Link, Tape 1

Hoboken. I was eventually the chairman of that board. So... I got ill, and I had to stop. Too much activity.

Ms. Pape: So you were very involved in politics, at one point, before you got ill.

Mr. Link: At one time I even ran for City Council – second ward.

Ms. Pape: You ran, or you won?

Mr. Link: I ran. I ran for it, but I didn't win. I ran independently. There wasn't a chance of winning, but I did it on principle.

Ms. Pape: Why wasn't there a chance of winning?

Mr. Link: Three of the other candidates were on major tickets. If you run as an independent by yourself, it's tough to raise the money. Out of the 5 candidates, I came in fourth, I didn't come in last.

Ms. Pape: Do you follow politics today in Hoboken?

Mr. Link: Not like I used to. I like Davie Roberts – he's a nice guy. I think... he's doing a great job. Naturally, it's getting near an election, so you hear a lot of criticism from the opposition, but I think he's doing the best he can.

Ms. Pape: Would you would like to sum up what you think the Hoboken of the future is going to be like, or where you see Hoboken going, or how it's changed?

Mr. Link: It's changed a lot because of the growth. You have to grow, or you just go into the past. We had one period, when Louis DePasquale came into office, we had like 50 empty stores on Washington St. But then Louis DePasquale got the so-called model cities program going, and he started to re-build the housing – that's what they call Applied Housing now. And he built 1,000 units, and reconstructed them, and brought them up to modern standards. The re-birth of Hoboken started there.

Although Capiello would never admit it. Capiello used to say the city should be embarrassed because it had to apply for model cities, but it was the best thing that ever happened to Hoboken. It started the re-birth, and the stores started to get business again, and people started renting the stores. I hear certain people saying it's too much growth, it's getting to be too crowded, and there's too much traffic. Most of these places provide their own parking. Most of the people don't use their cars to go to work; they leave them in the underground garages while they work, and use them on the weekends and at night. But I never see any... maybe during the rush hour you might see some congestion, but other than that, the growth hasn't hurt Hoboken.

Ms. Pape: You are optimistic about the city and its future.

Mr. Link: You hear about so many projects on the Planning Board, and most of them are going to come to fruition. Now today, in the paper, you read about Roberts' plan for open spaces, and people are crying about that also. He has a master plan for that, also; it looks like a nice plan. But God only knows, there'll be critics.

Ms. Pape: There are always critics.

Mr. Link: The elections coming up, so you have to have critics.

Ms. Pape: Sounds like you've been through a few elections.

Mr. Link: Oh yeah. I always found, Florence, the supporters of a candidate... the candidates are never as good as they think they are. The opponents... the people aren't as bad as they say they are. They're just good people, most of them, trying to do a good job.

Ms. Pape: Trying to do the best they can.

L. That's all. That's the way I look at politics.

Ms. Pape: Is there anything you'd like to add in closing. Is there anything else you'd like to say?



John Link, Tape 1

Mr. Link: We covered quite a range. I thought it very interesting.

Ms. Pape: You can add anything you want, talk about anybody you want, any other reminiscences.

Mr. Link: I reminisced enough.

Ms. Pape: You covered it all... Doris said I shouldn't do this, but here's a big kiss for you.

Mr. Link: Thank you.

### End ###