

THE HOBOKEN HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEWEES:               LEE RAINES,  
                              CATHERINE RUCHOVANSKY

INTERVIEWER:               ROBERT FOSTER

SUBJECT:                    HOBOKEN GIRL SCOUTS

DATE:                       19 JUNE 2006

SIDE ONE

RF: It's about 1:30 in the afternoon, and we're going to do a little talk about the history of the Girl Scouts in Hoboken, from their collective memories. We're going to start with Lee. Lee, could you introduce yourself?

LR: Yes. My name is Lee Raines, and I'm a schoolteacher in Hoboken. I've been a Girl Scout for sixty-two years. I started in Hoboken Girl Scouts as a Brownie, in 1933, and my first leader was a very wonderful little person -- Miriam Rothschild's sister. She read us stories every week in Brownies, and we were so thrilled. We were very young, then. We were like

seven, eight, nine. We could join Brownies, and the dues were only five cents a week -- which, during the Depression, sounded like a lot, but right now it isn't.

We loved Brownies. Then, as soon as we were ten years old, we would enter Girl Scouts. We were allowed to enter Girl Scouts. So I entered Troop #9, and we had a Girl Scout leader called Betty Van Cleef. She lived on Eighth and Washington Streets, and she took our Girl Scout troop to the Museum of Natural History. I've never been out of Hoboken since. I was so, so thrilled, as a little, ten-year-old girl, to get out of Hoboken, and see a museum. I always remember that. That was 1935. How I could go from Hoboken to New York, go and enjoy a wonderful trip. Because my parents never took me anyplace. We just stayed in Hoboken. So I was very grateful that the Girl Scouts would take us out on trips, and that's exactly what we did.

RF: Where did you meet?

LR: We would meet in front of Betty Van Cleef's house on Eighth and Washington Streets. I'm trying to think -- it was right next to 817 Washington Street -- and we'd all go together. There were no buses,

no modern transportation in 1935, so we walked all the way. There were no buses. We walked all the way to the "tubes" (we called it "the tubes"), to go to the museum.

RF: And how many girls would be in the --

LR: There would be a good troop number. There would be about fifteen Girl Scouts at that time, in my troop -- Troop #9. We had such a wonderful time together. I said, "This scouting is wonderful. I'm so happy that I joined." Because I learned a lot. We had so many activities. We were really happy about it.

After that, a year later I joined Rosalind Homes' troop, Troop #2, and that had a lot of activities, too. There were many troops at that time. There were at least eleven or twelve troops at that time.

RF: In Hoboken.

LR: In Hoboken, yes. Then, finally, in 1937, I joined my final troop, which was Miss Davey's troop (Violet Davey), and I stayed with her what seems like forever, because she appointed me assistant leader. I was an assistant leader to her, then leader, and then

we did all the activities, so many things, together. She was also a schoolteacher. Yes. We had a wonderful time. She used to take us, with her car, on trips to Bear Mountain. Violet Davey had a car, and she would take our troop all over, traveling all over -- Hyde Park; we went to the zoo; to Tallman Park; we went to places we had never gone before -- and this is little Hoboken Troop #1. Her troop was Troop #1. We were very, very happy with her, and I stayed with her to the very end, until I became a Brownie leader myself.

RF: Would the troops ever get together for events?

LR: Oh, yes. We had merit-badge earnings. We called it a rally. Every troop earned merit badges, and we'd get together in the Waldheim-Stevens Forum. Each troop would get awarded merit badges. It was wonderful, because you could see how you'd start from Brownies, Tenderfoots, Juniors -- as you'd go up through the ranks, you'd earn more badges. It was fun. And we had our own cheers, we had our own songs, and all the troops met, with the leaders, and it was really enjoyable events.

RF: Catherine, do you want to talk about some of your early memories?

CR: Well, I joined Girl Scouting in Hoboken in 1940; and, of course, by then, we did have our Hoboken Girl Scouts, which we called the "Little House." It was such fun. The people I met, even at that time, some of them I still know, love, and correspond with. I telephone a lot more. But it was really fun. But I was not one of the great Scouts that they loved, at first, because I always did things different, or I laughed when I shouldn't, and they would say, "Maybe you'd better go home." Like they said the dues were five cents, but there were six children in my family and, like she said, five cents, at the time, was a lot of money.

But we did have wonderful times. The one thing I remember is going to the World's Fair, in 1940. The Girl Scout council hired the buses, we had to pay ten cents to get in, and we were told that if we got lost, to go back to the buses, and we would see no more of the World's Fair. I had fifty cents, and I spent my fifty cents. I went back to the bus, and they couldn't believe it. They spent half a day looking for me. But I was back

at the bus, having fun, just sitting there -- me and Henrietta [Fromholz].

But the leaders I met -- Marian and Grace Spencer; Violet Davey; Mim [Miriam] Rothschild -- they were all wonderful, educated women, and they tried to instill in us a feeling that we were very good people; we were worth something. They would tell us -- like cooking. How much did a cake cost, in a bakery? Well, \$2.00. "But how much would it cost you to make it?" And this is what brought around badges and things. House cleaning. How do you house clean? Some of us had never cleaned a refrigerator. Our mothers did it, or -- We cleaned the refrigerator. How do you do wooden floors? They showed us how to clean wooden floors. Things that we did not have at home.

But then, of course, when I joined (1940), it was the war, and we made beautiful curtains. We made curtains, because we had blackouts. We had the Stevens Forum in front of us, in which we had many, many events-- including every Christmas we had a Christmas play, that was put on by Margaret Marnell, from Demarest High School, and Miss [Theresa] Rabold. That was the art teacher in Hoboken High.

I was never a good actress, but Miss Rabold always made sure I had something to do. Nina Hatfield was a wonderful person. She gave me my only badge I ever worked on -- needlecraft, or something like that. Oh! But she was a wonderful, wonderful woman, and very kind.

RF: Could you tell me a little bit about the troop house? Most people don't know where it was.

CR: At the Girl Scout house -- we had meetings there every night. We had a kitchen which we learned to cook in; then we had a troop chest, where we could put all our supplies, and keep our arts and crafts that we did. We could keep them in one troop chest that was there all the time, and nobody ever went in and took your stuff. It really was wonderful. We learned how to take care of a house.

And the gardens! Oh! We had beautiful gardens. Miss Davey would teach us how to take care of the gardens. Then we had an outdoor fireplace, where we would have cookouts, when nobody, in the '40s, had cookouts. We had a stone fireplace, outside, where we could cook hotdogs, make S'mores and stuff like that.

But our Girl Scout house was very precious to us, and we had cushions -- I remember we had cushions on our chest, to sit on; or, we'd put them on the floor, and sit. We had to take them outside every once in a while, and beat them like crazy. In the city, you didn't have that.

But we did a lot of walking. We'd go hiking.

RF: So the Girl Scout house -- you had your individual troops --

CR: Yes.

RF: When would you go to the troop house?

CR: Every week.

RF: Every week. Would you meet other troops there?

CR: Every week we would have our own troop meeting. Like, there were troop meetings on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday -- no, Thursday was band. We had a

Girl Scout band. Friday we had troops. My Girl Scout leader was also Jo Smithson, Marian Spencer, Dorothy Susselman -- and it was also Troop #9 on a Friday night, and also Troop #3 met. Saturdays was the Brownie troops - the young Brownies. We met mostly at night, because by the '40s most of the leaders were working. I think the only leader who had free time in the afternoon was Miss Davey -- who was a schoolteacher.

RF: I was going to ask you -- most of the troop leaders were women?

CR: Yes.

RF: And what type -- were they professionals? Or were they housewives?

LR: Most of the troop leaders, and council members, also, were women who were professional women teachers. Ninety-nine percent, I'll say, were schoolteachers. Others were volunteer women in the community, like a nurse, and someone -- a dean or a college professor would marry one of our local women, who would volunteer as a leader or council member. They were

all women who volunteered to give their service, and there was no question about money, because this was a strictly volunteer organization. Nobody got paid, but we all volunteered our services, day and night -- night troops, day troops -- whatever was needed, we would volunteer our services. And the women were very kind and good to the girls. If ever you needed help, with anything, they would always say, "Let me help you," even with the first aid. "Let me help you." We loved that spirit of helpfulness. They really wanted to help us. And we were very proud of them. The women were wonderful women.

CR: They also were nurses, bankers, executive secretaries, besides teachers. There were a lot of teachers.

RF: Did they wear uniforms, too?

LR: Oh, yes.

CR: We all wore uniforms. Not like today. But you never went to a Girl Scout meeting without either your Girl Scout uniform, or what they called an alternate

uniform -- which was a white blouse with a collar, a black skirt (or blue), black stockings, and shoes. And our kerchief -- yellow kerchief, or Girl Scout -- whatever color our troop was. That was the alternate uniform, and everybody had a uniform.

RF: So there were dues, but you probably had to pay for your own uniform.

CR: Oh, yes. We paid for our own uniforms. In fact, when my daughter went into Girl Scouting, that was always her Christmas present -- her Brownie uniform; her intermediate Girl Scout, and her Senior Girl Scouting. We had three levels at the time, and that was always her Christmas present. As she graduated in Girl Scouting, that was always her Christmas present.

RF: Did each troop have a color, did you say?

CR: Our own kerchiefs. Like, we had a necklace, a kerchief --

LR: Ours was gold. Troop #1 was a gold kerchief, and the children loved it. It was like a tie, and we were proud of it.

CR: It was a triangle, and we put it into a knot.

LR: Our symbol was purple --

CR: And we also had, on the uniforms, a badge. Our troop, #9, was daffodils.

LR: Yes. We identified each troop.

CR: As we got older, and had to merge with different councils -- Jersey City, East Orange, and all the others -- then we had to have numbers on our uniforms. But at first, we didn't.

LR: Our symbol was the purple pansy, and Violet Davey was always very proud -- everyone wore a purple pansy on their uniform. It was very beautiful. It was embroidered, and we were very proud of that.

CR: We were very competitive. Every year, on Decoration Day, when we would go into the parade, what we had was troop inspection, which every girl had to show up for. At that time -- Decoration Day, or Memorial Day, as we called it -- every girl showed up, and every girl was inspected, to see how her uniform was; also, how clean and neat her nails were, and that they weren't bitten! They didn't like children to bite their nails.

That we did have. Then the troop that got the highest points got gold braids to wear in the parade, and they carried their flags on stage, at the Girl Scout rallies that we had in June.

LR: It was a great honor.

CR: Oh, it was. We won once. Troop #9 won. I carried the American flag.

LR: We won once, too. Because Brownies -- they don't usually win.

CR: No, they were not included as much.

LR: Once they did, because the other troops, apparently, didn't get very high points. So the inspector said, "Well, this time we'll let the Brownies win, because they scored the highest points." So we were very lucky that year only, that one year. We were very happy.

RF: You talked about how you were in different troops. Why would you move from one troop to the next? Was it because you got older? Or you rotated?

LR: No. My girlfriends joined, then they moved -- they joined another troop, and I went with them. Finally, most of the neighborhood children joined Miss Davey's troop; then, I was with them. These were friends that I lived next door to, who were on my block, and I wanted to be close to them. So that's why I joined that troop.

CR: But we did have girls from all over the city, as far down as First and Jefferson, Jackson, whatever the streets down there -- and they walked -- I must say, it's the same thing -- they walked (and we could walk anywhere in the city, in the '40s, day or

night), and they were dedicated -- children who just loved it. We just had a wonderful time.

Like Lee said, we went places. I remember we were supposed to go on a hike. You had to bring a box lunch, because at that time you didn't have all these backpacks and stuff. So you would pack a shoebox or something. And we were supposed to go on a hike, up to Interstate Park. We would walk up to 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and get the 22 -- up to Cliffside, where Palisade Park was, and then walk down the hill to Interstate Park, and that cost us like ten cents. I had my lunch and everything, and it started pouring rain. So they said, "Well, we're going to take you to the theatre, in New York."

So we went to the Roxy Theatre, and, of course, like I said, I was always in trouble -- I was eating my hotdog and laughing at the movie and stuff, and the people in back of me hit me on the head with their paper and said, "That's enough. Behave yourself."

[Laughs] Well, like I said -- I always thought everything was very humorous.

RF: Can you describe a little more, Lee, the Girl Scout house?

LR: Yes. We had two large rooms, and in the middle was the kitchen. The two large rooms were the troop meetings -- Troop #1 would meet in one large room, and Troop #2 would meet in the other large room. Then in the middle was the kitchen. We also had, around the rooms, built-in closets, where the band instruments were put. They were very large, so we really needed that space. Also, we had benches around the rooms, and the benches would have openings; you could open the top, and inside was equipment -- the handbooks; Girl Scout equipment; arts and crafts; needlecraft, and every room had, oh, I would say, at least eight or nine benches, which you could open and put in your equipment. Each troop got its own bench, so we didn't lose any time finding our stuff.

The Scout House itself, if I remember, a light green. The walls were a light green, to resemble the color of the Girl Scout colors. One room had a large fireplace. That's the room, as you entered the main door. On the right side was a real fireplace, and then Miss Davey donated an old-fashioned fireplace from her house in Vermont. She brought it to Hoboken, and they had it built in. It was beautiful. We toasted marshmallows there, as part of our troop meeting. The girls loved it,

because we never had the opportunity to do things like that. We used to cook there. It was wonderful.

The kitchen wasn't too large, but it had the refrigerator, the sink, and it had cooking equipment. We cooked meals there. Then we had our council meetings, and our leaders' meeting dinner -- we would take a lot of the food we could make, from the kitchen -- likes salads, things that were easily accessible to make -- and serve it right at the dinner, and the dinner was always held in the large room, as you came in, because we had a lot of space.

It was very enjoyable. We enjoyed the Scout House. We didn't want to leave. We didn't want it to be demolished. We loved it.

RF: Could you see this from the street?  
What block was it on? It was on Garden?

CR: It was on Eighth and --

LR: 916A was the address of our Girl Scout house, 916A, and in the front was the Forum. The Forum was big. Then in front of it was trees. In front of our Scout house was a little garden and trees. Unless you

walked the path to the back, then you would see the Girl Scout house.

CR: You couldn't see the Girl Scout house from the street.

RF: So you would actually have to walk down the alley --

CR: -- to see it.

RF: And that's how you entered, through the alley.

CR: Originally, it was one large room, a bathroom and a kitchen, and a small room. Then, finally, when the Girl Scouts got the deed to the land, from Stevens, we built on. Then from one end of an alley, you could see part of the Girl Scout house. But until then, you couldn't.

RF: So it sounds like you both were in the Girl Scouts at a time when you had a lot of community involvement.

LR: Activity, yes.

CR: Yes. We collected tin cans, we collected money at the U.S. Theatre and the Fabian Theatre in Hoboken, as girls.

RF: Was that for World War II?

LR: World War II. I wasn't around for the first one.

RF: I didn't know if it was to raise money for your organization, or for uniforms, or --

CR: We raised money, mostly, at that time, for the Red Cross.

LR: Also, our girls served as hostesses for the USO soldiers, at the YMCA. Many of our Girl Scouts --

CR: You mean the Girl Scout leaders.

LR: -- gave food, and they were so appreciative, the soldiers who came in from World War II, they didn't know how to thank us ("Thank you, thank you"), and also, many of our leaders volunteered, immediately enlisted, as soon as the war started -- enlisted in World War II. Dorothy Van Seggern, Betty Wehr, Iona Stang, Lottie Balk. They immediately went, Hoboken girls; immediately enlisted. And many of them held ranks, like Captain. One girl could have been like a Lieutenant General, because she was not only a college graduate and teacher, but she also was a registered nurse, and they needed nurses at the time. So they put her on top of the ranks, to help our soldiers. She was in the hospital, helping our World War II soldiers, and we were so proud of all our leaders. And they all came back safe.

So we were very proud of them. And they were very active in the community. The Girl Scouts were never dull. We were always doing things for Hoboken. We planted "cherry" trees, all around the city. It was beautiful, at the time.

CR: But they're gone. They didn't survive. [Laughs]

RF: Well, they have a life -- thirty or forty years, that kind of thing.

Any idea how many Girl Scouts were involved?

LR: Yes. At the peak of girl-scouting, we had 500 registered members --

CR: Yes, we did.

LR: -- in the Hoboken Girl Scouts --

CR: -- including a band.

LR: A band. The "council" was registered, the leaders were registered --

CR: -- and the girls. There were 500.

RF: What do you mean, "registered?"

LR: That means, when you join you give dues. I think at the time it was fifty-cents to a dollar dues.

CR: That was the registration, but we're talking about when registration went national -- registered with National Girl Scouts.

LR: It's like joining a veterans' organization -- how many are in your --

CR: -- museum. [Laughs]

RF: You have a local chapter, then there's a regional office.

LR: Yes. And our local was 500 Hoboken girls --

RF: That's amazing.

LR: -- on our roster. And everyone knew everybody. You would look -- "Oh, I know her. I know her" -- because we went to school in this small area. All the

girls went to Brandt (junior high school) at that time; all the boys went to Rue School, and everybody knew everybody, whether you lived on Jackson Street or you lived on Hudson Street. Everybody knew, from the troops. We would have a lot of intermingling by meetings, socials -- we would have a lot of socials.

RF: What was a social?

LR: Well, when we would have cookie sales, we'd get trips. We'd all hire buses, and we'd go to Harriman State Park or Bear Mountain. We would bring a little box lunch, and we would sit on the lawn. We would play games, and every troop would get to know everyone.

So we enjoyed that.

RF: So how many troops were there in Hoboken, do you think?

LR: At the height, I think it was about twenty?

CR: About fifteen.

LR: About fifteen, you'd say?

CR: Yes. No more than fifteen troops.

RF: Then would you have your troop meeting right after school?

CR: There was only one, that was Violet Davey, and then there were two every evening except Thursday. Thursday had the band, and then there were three or four on Saturday morning.

LR: Saturday morning I had my Brownie troops.

CR: Yes. I was a Brownie leader, but many years later.

RF: Yes. Let's talk about that. So you both were Brownies and Girl Scouts.

CR: I was never a Brownie. I was only a Girl Scout -- Intermediate Girl Scout, Senior Girl Scout, and then a Girl Scout leader.

LR: I also -- with Miss Davey's troop -- she said you could be a leader, because at that age --

CR: You had to be eighteen.

LR: Yes. I was. Then I started my own Brownie troop, and I ended it when the Girl Scout house was demolished. I had to quit my troop. There was no more Girl Scouts; no more Brownies.

RF: Right. How long were you a leader?

LR: About 1940, I started -- '40 to -- I was graduating high school, I came in, and Miss Davey said, "Come on, be an assistant 'Louie,'" she used to call it; an assistant lieutenant.

RF: A Louie?

LR: That was her term for lieutenant.

CR: The troop leader was called the Captain. Anybody else was a lieutenant. [Laughs] And they called us like Lieutenant Catherine or Lieutenant Lee.

RF: So you became a lieutenant?

LR: Yes, in Miss Davey's troop. After that, I started my own Brownie troop, around 1950. Troop 13. I was twenty-four years old.

CR: I know we had to be twenty-one to have a troop. I was never really a troop leader. Like you were a captain, but I was always an assistant. Lenore Schriefer -- I went into her troop (troop 13) as an assistant leader, or lieutenant. We had, at that time, Intermediate Girl Scouts. Then we had Juniors and Cadets. Finally, it got to the point where we met in the afternoon, and we started having Brownies. Lenore Schriefer, she worked for the Hudson United Bank.

RF: Are there any things that you kind of initiated, as a leader?

LR: Many things. The children loved to do arts and crafts. So I would invite a parent in, who was very expert in something like knitting or making materials. She would come in and the troop would give her equipment, colored papers, glue, scissors, and she would show the children how to make arts and crafts things. They loved it. That's one of the initiatives I guess I took. I always encouraged parent activity and participation in our troops. It was, "Come on in and join us." Sometimes, surprisingly, they would also become leaders. They liked what we were doing, and they'd say, "Gee, I'd like to join the troop." We had quite a number of parents joining us as troop leaders, assistant troop leaders, and they would attend every meeting, because their own children were also members of the troop.

So they did wonderful things -- and their fathers, some were policemen and firemen, and they had come in to lecture on safety. The girls would like that, and it was important, because one of the merit badges was on safety. So they would earn it by having people come in from the neighborhood, speak to them, and they would absorb whatever they said. Each child had a little notebook, and they would write down what was important at that time. At the end of the year, we would all discuss

it. We would make a circle and, "What did we do this year? What did we learn?" And they would get beautiful merit badges, on the strength of what they did and what they learned.

So they were very happy about that.

RF: Back to the Girl Scout house -- what was in front of the Girl Scout house? Like if you were walking along the street --

CR: Stevens Forum.

LR: Stevens Waldheim Forum. It was a big building, in front of it.

CR: Most of the time it was used to put on chamber music, any kind of play. Now the Girl Scouts used it every Christmas. We would have a play, and we would give out Christmas gifts to underprivileged children and anyone we felt was needy, or anything like that. We used to have our rallies there, to give out merit badges and things like that. Any time there was a problem with the Girl Scout house -- like one time we had a bad problem with the roof -- we would meet in there.

RF: And how did that look, when you went inside? Do you remember?

CR: It was a big theatre. It had a beautiful stage and rows of seats, just like a theatre. It looked like you were going into a theatre. I wish it was there today, because today we could fill it like you wouldn't believe, with the people who are in this city. And, of course, when Stevens gave it to the city, it became a health center.

LR: It was used for community weddings, political rallies. I remember sneaking into one wedding, because I didn't know who was getting married. The music was so enthralling! I was so little then. I peeked in. It was a wonderful place then, beautiful. They decorated it beautiful.

CR: They always hired a couple, who had a little apartment there, to take care of it.

LR: Ursula Merseberger -- her father was an architect -- they lived there, in the 1920s and '30s.

CR: I don't remember them.

LR: They lived there. He was a famous architect. He built the glass houses on Washington Street. There is a Merseberger on 11<sup>th</sup> and Washington Street.

CR: At the time I was young I lived on 8<sup>th</sup> and Willow. I didn't go that far. [Laughs]

LR: In the 1920s and '30s. I remember, because there was a big parade and a band, because of this first glass house in Hoboken. It was beautiful. But now it's changed a lot.

RF: So what happened to the Girl Scout house?

LR: It's a very sad, sad story.

CR: Well, we merged with Essex County -- Essex Girl Scouts -- and, of course, the city was going to condemn it, so the council did sell it to Hoboken. I must say, it was the end of Hoboken girl-scouting.

RF: What year are we talking about?

CR: Oh, '67 or something like that.

RF: That long ago?

LR: I just don't remember, offhand

RF: And when did you stop meeting there?

LR: I remember 1995 --

RF: We can look up a date. I didn't mean to pick a date. So what contributes to -- Obviously, there are less Girl Scouts?

LR: Well, it was because there was no place to meet. The Girl Scouts in my troop and my school, we'd all meet together in the scout house. But if you've

got no place to meet, if they lock it down, and the parents say, "Well, I can't take my girl to a locked door," then --

RF: It sounds like a complicated story, but why was it condemned?

CR: Because Hoboken wanted to build a garage. The parking garage --

RF: So there's nothing wrong with the building. It's not like the roof is falling in.

CR: There was absolutely nothing --

RF: They wanted the land.

CR: They just wanted the land, to build -- it was, "Either you can sell it, or we'll condemn it." But there was nothing wrong with it, at the time.

LR: It was beautiful.

CR: When you have this huge room to meet in -- and, like Lee said, all these places where we could keep our arts and crafts, our books and everything -- that's one thing. But to meet in my apartment is not great. I didn't have a kitchen the kids could use, because it's too small for two people, never mind a bunch of children. Also, when we first stopped meeting there I did meet with Troop #8, with Irene O'Boyle, at St. Peter & Paul's -- which was also a big room, where you could play games. Because that was part of girl-scouting -- games, and songs, and dancing -- and you could do it there, because they had the big parish hall that we could use.

Then, when they had the school there, after-school children, we couldn't use that anymore, but they said, "Oh, you can go down to St. Ann's," where we were meeting in a classroom. Now when you go from a 50' X 100' room to a classroom, there is nothing you can really do, or plan too much on. We are still, at this time, meeting at St. Matthew's church. They have one troop -- I think it's Troop #8 -- at St. Matthew's.

RF: So, obviously, there are a lot less Girl Scouts.

LR: There's only like ten Girl Scouts.

RF: Now.

LR: Now.

RF: But, let's say, in 1995, when the city is trying to take the Girl Scout house, you probably were really down in numbers, too.

CR: Oh, we were probably down to around 150.

RF: That many?

CR: There were that many. There were quite a few. We still had quite a few girls.

RF: And who is mayor at that time?

CR: Anthony Russo.

RF: And did you meet with him, to appeal this?

CR: We met with him. We met with the Parking Authority. We met in St. Matthew's with the Council. We had parades, everyplace we went. We had petitions, and it meant absolutely nothing. They just absolutely wanted to build that garage.

RF: So, since you had merged with the Essex Council, they are really the property owner? Who is the property owner?

CR: At the time we merged -- Girl Scouts could never own it personally.

RF: Right. The Council.

CR: The Council always owned it. Like when we went with Pavonia Girl Scouts, which was part of Jersey City and all of North Hudson, Bayonne -- they still kept up our Girl Scout house, and we still had meetings there and stuff like that. But once we got into Essex, it seemed like --

RF: -- you lost some control.

CR: -- we lost complete control. To go  
out to Montclair --

LR: You couldn't.

RF: Right.

CR: -- and meet out there -- they all had  
cars, and they could take their stuff, keep it in their  
car. In Hoboken, you can't put your equipment in a car,  
and move it from place to place. I mean, you can, but you  
can't park it.

RF: Do you remember what the property was  
sold for?

CR: For \$125,000.

RF: And that went to the Essex -- to the  
Council.

CR: That went to the Essex Girl Scout Council. The Greater Essex and Hudson.

LR: We got nothing.

CR: Hoboken troops, or Girl Scouts, in Hoboken, received nothing. Greater Essex and Hudson received \$125,000. Some things I remember well.

RF: That must have been a hard pill to swallow.

CR: It was very difficult, and it gets more and more difficult. But I think the house was gone before '95.

LR: Maybe.

RF: I think it's '90s. I remember the issue.

LR: We couldn't take our girls down anymore.

CR: You see, if you have a place to meet, people will come and you can get adults to help. But the adults we had, in the '40s, '50s, '60s and '70s and '80s -- they're still such friends, it's unbelievable. They've been friends for forty-fifty years. Like Joan "Stratton" was a Brownie leader in Hoboken, and a schoolteacher. She was the first leader -- she was only twenty years old when she took over her Brownie troop. But she had graduated from college and she was teaching; they made an exception, and they gave her --

LR: Well, she deserved it. She was good.

CR: Yes, she was excellent. But after a while, people just lose interest, when there's not --

LR: -- when there's not a scout house to go to; no rooms, no doors to open. The parents see that. "I'm not taking my young -- "

CR: In the '40s, we had troops in Our Lady of Grace -- Mary O'Brien --

LR: Mary O'Brien and Mary Devereay --

CR: -- and Mary Stevens. They sold, alone, one year, 25,000 boxes of cookies, just there. Then, after a while, after our Girl Scout house was gone, they also met in Our Lady of Grace School, in the auditorium there. But when they closed the school, the Girl Scouts were gone from there. So they were gone from there, they were gone from St. Peter & Paul's --

LR: There's nothing left, really.

CR: Only St. Matthew's.

RF: So the Girl Scouts now, you said, is maybe around ten people?

CR: About ten.

LR: Yes. About that.

RF: Do you think there's any future for girl-scouting in Hoboken?

CR: I don't see anyone in the last ten years (or better) showing any interest in girl-scouting. The mothers I meet or see today are more career-minded. Girl-scouting always took a lot of energy and a lot of time. I was one of the few leaders, I think, who didn't work, and I was the go-fer. "We're going to have a meeting." "Will you get this ready? Will you get that ready? Will you do this?" I did all that. It was fun. Because it seemed to me that every other leader worked. I was the go-fer.

Now my husband was very involved. My husband, Steve, was very involved with scouting, all the time. From the time we were married, in the '50s. He would fix things in the Girl Scout house -- when the toilet didn't work, and the heat didn't go on, and all the million and one things that went wrong. And so was Mr. O'Boyle, Pat O'Boyle was very good with coming in to girl-scouting. The men we had on the council -- Al Stein. He was wonderful. He was a Boy Scout leader, and gave a lot of time to girl-scouting.

RF: I was just thinking -- did you also go away for camp? You talked about the Bear Mountain

activity. I know, let's say, that for Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts that's a big thing, to go away for --

CR: I was not involved in camp. I did go to camp -- A couple years we went to Camp Lochbrae, down at Whitehouse Station, and we had two busloads of girls, but that was a camp that was very modern, to an extent, because the buildings had electricity, as well as indoor bathrooms. It was great. We used to have two busloads of girls going, which was about eighty girls. I always took my car, because they always wanted a car there in case there was any type of emergency. So I drove, and everybody else went in two busloads.

Camp Hudsonia we went to a few times, but that was a very primitive Girl Scout camp. There was no electricity in the cabins. There were outdoor latrines. I would go for the day. I was not a camper. Lenore Schriefer and Ann Ciski, Ruth Maus, Marian Spencer, they all -- there were so many of them, who were campers, who went for the Pioneer badge. As leaders, they went for the Pioneer badge -- and had to do all these things at a camp.

But I was not a camper. I don't remember you going either, Lee? [Laughs]

LR: I was working, I guess.

CR: No, we went on weekends, Lee. You didn't work weekends.

LR: I guess not.

Tell me -- One of our Hoboken leaders was also the leader of the camp. Helen Kaufman would be an official leader of the camp -- she and her girlfriend, who was also a schoolteacher, and also a leader of the band. She would go down and be an official leader of the camp, of the Girl Scout --

SIDE TWO

LR: -- applications for camp. She would encourage it. She would go to every troop and say, "Who would like to go to camp this summer? Have your parents fill this out. I'll correct it next week. We want people to go to camp." That's how she got our local Brownies to go to camp, because there was a special section. She would encourage that. Also, the Girl Scout camp. That was a wonderful thing for her to do.

CR: At one time, to go to Girl Scout camp was a wonderful experience. We had girls, at that time, from all walks of life, from the poorest girl to well-to-do families at the time, who went to Girl Scout camp. Then, I guess it was in the '60s or '70s, they got a hold of this -- Jersey City had the camp, and they got a grant -- which I thought was wonderful -- but they took in too many underprivileged. Too many. And that was the end of camp. People would not pay to go to a camp where 85% did not. The same thing happened with Camp Hudsonia. Like, we had no Girl Scout house. When you had too many free children going to camp, nobody else went.

So that camp went down. Camp Lochbrae is also gone. At one time, Jersey City had three camps, and they've all gone. Now Greater Essex-Hudson has Great Eagle Rock, which is up in Lake Paliske, New York State. It's a beautiful camp. I've been there -- one day -- but it's very expensive to go to.

RF: So, like, the selling of the Girl Scout cookies was one of your big fundraisers --

CR: Oh, and how! And it was fun.

RF: And you'd have competitions, to see who could sell the most?

BOTH: Yes.

LR: One of the girls, she would sell so many -- Laura Lynn Schwartz.

CR: Laura Lynn Schwartz. Her whole family. Every girl who was ever -- her mother and father went around and sold cookies.

LR: And they won beautiful gifts. They won the first prizes, always -- the radio, a transistor, something beautiful and very expensive. But they deserved it. They sold thousands of cookies.

RF: So what was their secret? Their father worked at a big company or something?

CR: They sold more cookies than anybody I know. I sold cookies all my life, and never -- I started selling cookies when they were twenty-five cents a box.

RF: What are they up to now?

CR: I think \$3.50. At the time, we could knock on doors and just say, "Would you like to buy cookies?" and they bought them. Now you can't do that anymore.

LR: It's illegal.

CR: It's to friends and family that you sell. And of all the cookies we sold, I think there has only been a few times that we've lost money -- not lost money -- but that a troop did not pay for all the cookies they received. I think you could count on one hand -- I think that's a fantastic thing, when it involved thousands and thousands of dollars. Even at fifty-cents a box, it was a lot. There were times when we sold 25-30,000 boxes of cookies.

LR: I remember.

RF: Wow. And what's the favorite Girl Scout cookie?

LR: I'm not sure.

CR: Chocolate mint.

LR: I love chocolate mint.

CR: But I still love the plain vanilla.

[Laughs] The original.

LR: The short bread. The short bread.

CR: They only had one kind of cookie when we started. Then they'd keep adding and adding and adding. They sell a lot of cookies, but I think one or two would be enough -- or maybe three. But no matter where I go, if they're selling Girl Scout cookies -- [laughs] --

RF: I'm kind of interested as to why Girl Scouting doesn't come back. You see a lot of new families in Hoboken.

CR: There are a lot of families in Hoboken, and they do not give their time to girls. Like I

said, if I could come in here and say, "Hey, come on. Look at this room. You could meet in this room, here." Okay. You've got a big room. You've got a place to put a cabinet and all your junk in," maybe they would be interested. But when you say you've got to meet in a classroom, or you've got to meet in your home, it's not very appealing.

RF: It's not like having your own keys.

CR: It's not like having your own key, and having a place -- "We're all going to get together now." When we were leaders, we had a leaders' meeting once a month on a Sunday night. We lived in the city, so everybody walked, and it was wonderful. You got to know all the leaders, you talked over things, you planned things for the children -- all troops together -- or you had to get permission, at times, from the council to do certain things.

Like we started to go on weekend trips. Well, if we wanted to do that, we had to get permission from the council. If we went out of town, at any time, we had to -- Even to go to Bear Mountain.

RF: So was there like a leader of the leaders, for Hoboken?

CR: Well, that would be a councilman. Then we had a leader of the council.

LR: Violet Davey, she was the president of the council.

CR: Miss Duncombe was one.

LR: Eileen Duncombe was one. Yes, we would call them, and they would --

CR: Helen Kaufman. Off-hand, I just can't think of all the -- but they were -- she was the president. Let's say it was Violet Davey, at the time. Then there were five or six helpers; people who worked just on the council. They didn't work directly with the girls.

RF: They were like trustees, almost, or council members.

CR: Right. And they made sure that things were done right.

LR: If we had, first, a place to meet -- a Girl Scout house -- then we would advertise in the paper.

CR: We did, but as this city changed, nobody volunteered.

LR: Well, we could try. Even if you get ten or twelve members, with their parents, to come in -- but first you have to have a place. You can't just say, "Oh, we're meeting --" as Cathy said, "in the school house," or a room in somebody's house. You can't do that. You must have a permanent place to meet. Then we can encourage the girls to come.

I think they will come. Not as many as 500, as we had in the 1920s and '30s, but enough to start a nice Girl Scout troop.

RF: I think you're right.

LR: We really need that.

But it's not happening, and we don't have a place. And since real estate is so precious in Hoboken, I don't think anybody is going to donate a place for us to meet. So we have to be honest and practical.

CR: Well, maybe we should get after some of the developers to give us a community room. Right? "Applied housing" gave a lot, but we need just one more. [Laughs] One more place.

LR: If it's centrally located. We can't meet on Jackson Street, 1<sup>st</sup> and Jackson. Developers are now developing that area. The other part of it is 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison, Jackson --

CR: Maybe we should try the Maxwell House -- [Laughs]

LR: Maybe. That would be nice, except --

CR: Get them to give us a community room.

LR: That would be very nice. I wish they would, because then the girls could meet in a central

location. But that's not happening. I think people are more interested now in money instead of girls.

CR: Well, I think they're still interested in girls. I think they're very interested in their children, in a different way. I think that when I grew up in girl-scouting, in the '40s, when I was ten years old, up until I retired a few years ago, it was different. Our families didn't have a lot of education or a lot of money. It was something, like Lee says, that we could do. We didn't have to spend a lot of money. When you had the Women's Club in Hoboken, we had a lot of women who were interested in girl-scouting, who belonged to the Women's Club, but at the Women's Club you always had to be better-educated; you had to have money. It always cost a lot of money to belong to the Women's Club. It didn't cost only fifty-cents or \$2.00 a year, [like] to belong to girl-scouting.

RF: And what was the Women's Club?

CR: The Women's Club was an organization here in Hoboken -- that did a lot of good for a lot of

people -- but I didn't belong to it, so I can't tell you too much about it.

RF: Did they meet in the Stevens Waldheim?

CR: They could have met there. They also, for many years, met in the YMCA, before it was such a health club -- when it was just the YMCA. There were also rooms there that you could meet in, at times. They did a lot of good in the city, the Women's Club, but I didn't belong to it.

RF: But they were for older people, a cultural kind of --

CR: As the years went by, the Women's Club became the Junior Women's Club; they weren't juniors, but they were women who were completely professional women. It was different. Whereas, girl-scouting was more of a mixture of people, of women, and taught more. They were not involved with girls, in particular, as we were -- children. Like Lee said, you

would have girls from well-to-do families as well as poor, underprivileged families.

RF: You mentioned parades. What was the big parade?

LR: Oh, Memorial Day. That was the biggest one. We all looked forward to it. The girls loved it, because they had a chance to wear their gold cords in the parade, hold the flag, and be color guards. This is their chance to shine. Their uniforms were spic and span, and they loved it. Everyone looked forward to it. "When are we going to march?" That was our big parade.

CR: I think that was the *only* parade in Hoboken. I can remember being in high school -- of course, I was a Senior Girl Scout, I was marching, and, of course, who's a Girl Scout in high school? Only me, like I said! They would say, "Hey!" making remarks, as we walked up. And Miss Davey would say, "Don't worry. They know us." [Laughs] They always had a kind word of encouragement. There's not many -- when I was ten -- I was ten in '40. In 1946 I was sixteen, marching in the

parade in a Girl Scout uniform. Today, there's nobody who would do that. [Laughs]

RF: So the band would march in the parade?

CR: The band would march, and we would march in the back of the band.

LR: And Anna Van Twisk, with the big baton. She was this tremendous woman. She was our leader.

RF: Who is this?

LR: Anna Van Twisk. She was the band leader. She was tall, and she had this giant baton and a uniform. She was wonderful. She was our band leader for many, many, many years.

CR: She was also a school teacher.

LR: She was a kindergarten teacher at Brandt School, too.

CR: She was *my* kindergarten teacher, too.

[Laughs]

RF: Lee, do you think the Girl Scouts had anything to do with you getting involved in teaching?

LR: No, I think when I was little I always wanted to be a teacher. I enjoyed it. I grew up in Brownies, Brownies are very young, and I always wanted to teach. It's fun. I still teach. But I teach part-time, at Calabro School, in holocaust studies. This is my fifty-second year of teaching. I enjoy it. The kids look forward to me. They always say, "Are you coming back?" and I say, "Yes, I'm coming back." So I really enjoy teaching. It's something -- I think teaching is something born within you. It's a feeling for children that you have. If you don't like kids, stay out of teaching because you'll never be a good teacher. It has to be born within you, some kind of a gene that maybe I have. But I always wanted to help children, and that's what I'm doing. And I'm enjoying it.

RF: And do you still have your Girl Scout uniform?

LR: Yes. I have some of it. I know I have a hat, and I think I have a jacket or a skirt. But you can see that the material in it is exactly the way the leaders' were, many years ago, the Girl Scout leaders.

CR: He has them. I gave them --

LR: I put it in a shopping bag. It's in my house. Every once in a while I look at it, and I say, "I must give it to the museum," because it's history of Hoboken.

RF: Right. I think we have your drum. We have the drum from the band --

LR: It's not on your list.

RF: What's that? The drum?

LR: Yes.

RF: We got the drum much earlier, I think. But it'll get grouped together, eventually.

CR: The rest of the stuff I have in my  
own apartment --

RF: That's right.

CR: -- but the drum I took out of the  
Girl Scout house, to bring up here. I gave it to "Lenny."

RF: That's right. I know exactly where it  
is.

LR: We would march to that boom, boom,  
boom. Who was the one who had it? Who was the "boom?"

CR: Roslyn was one of them [drummer].

LR: I think I remember some tall girl,  
who would just bang the drum.

CR: Roslyn was a drummer --

LR: That's the one I mean.

CR: -- and so was Jo [Josephine]  
Smithson, and --

LR: I think Roslyn was the tallest that  
used to bang the drum.

CR: I'm not in here, either.

LR: Did Dottie Van Seggern take some of  
the instruments?

CR: No.

LR: I thought she had some.

CR: If she had them -- she's gone, and  
Rose threw everything out. Her sister threw everything  
out.

RF: But we have a lot of the pictures  
that you gave us.

LR: Yes. I gave a lot of pictures. Use a  
lot of them.

RF: We will.

CR: Some of them, I know the names of  
people, that I don't think are on the back of them or  
anything else. We started, in later years, as the  
children became -- couldn't afford \$50, or \$25 a week --  
we would go for weekends. But most of the time it was \$25  
or \$50. What we would do in our troops -- we would give  
the girls bank books, and they could save \$2.00 a week,  
or \$3.00 a week, until they had their money to go on the  
weekend. We went to Disney World. We went to  
Williamsburg. We went to Boston.

LR: Washington.

CR: Cape Cod. Many, many places, and it was wonderful. The children were great.

LR: I'd never been to Philadelphia. I was with them. We would go to go places where we never went before.

CR: Well, Philadelphia was just a day trip.

LR: But it was good, because I saw all the "banks" and the history -- Ben Franklin, Betsy Ross, something that we provided the children, who never had the opportunity. The Hoboken children rarely went anywhere. We did it as leaders; we provided the opportunity for them to see -- and their parents were very agreeable. "Oh, this is good."

CR: We took them to ice shows in New York, as well as the symphony in New York, and Madison Square Garden, different affairs that we had. We really worked hard.

LR: But they enjoyed it, and we enjoyed seeing them happy -- because that was really our motive in life, as Girl Scout leaders -- to see that the children are happy. We, ourselves, became happy when we saw that the children enjoyed themselves.

CR: I always enjoyed Girl Scouts.

LR: When they enjoyed themselves, I was very happy.

CR: I enjoyed the girls, but I think I enjoyed the friendships I made through the years.

LR: Yes. That was worth it.

CR: That was very important to me, the friendships.

LR: We got to know everybody --

CR: -- like Lee and I, and Joan, and --

LR: [ ? ] -- We never had the opportunity of meeting, because we lived blocks away. When we got together in a troop meeting, or a leaders' meeting, we got to know each other better and we all became friends. To this day we even get Christmas cards, from many, many people we met thirty, forty, fifty years ago.

CR: At one time, in girl-scouting, if you were a leader, meeting in the Girl Scout house, with the girls, there was absolutely no smoking or drinking. No matter where you went with the girls, you were not allowed to smoke or drink, and I happened to be a smoker at the time. The one trip we went on -- Miss Kern [Marie Kern] and I were sitting on the bus, after all the girls got off, and we had a cigarette. And, of course, one girl was in the back of the bus and slid all the way down, and when we lit up the cigarette, she said, "Hi!"

I was very upset. I said, I'm not going to do this. I'm not going to feel like a kid, smoking." So the next time -- Now I had at least ten girls we met once a month to play cards with -- Girl Scout leaders -- we had a leaders' meeting, and I said, "Well, I feel we have to smoke on the trip." I did not want to not smoke. They put it to a vote, and I lost.

Now we were going to Philadelphia for a weekend, and I had signed up my daughter. One of the leaders was not going to go on the bus, she was going to meet them there. The day of the trip my daughter got up and said she didn't feel well. She had a slight fever, I took her to the doctor, and he said, "She can't go anywhere." It was Dr. Sussman. He didn't know exactly what was wrong, but he didn't want her to go. So I had to go down to the bus and say she couldn't go.

Well, Miss Davey was going on that trip, and she said, "You are not letting Karen go because of not-smoking. I will never forgive you." I said, "I would never do that." As it ended up, she had scarlet fever. So I called them that night and I said, "I'm sorry I didn't send her. Now you'd all have scarlet fever."

But I think it was the next trip, or the trip after that, that they decided we could smoke. But at that time, there was no smoking in Girl Scouts -- in uniform. That was my experience. I was so upset when I lost that vote. [Laughs] It was like losing the mayor's election -- when you depend on your friends. Well, none of them smoked!

RF: That's why you lost.

CR: I was the only one who smoked.

LR: That's why, yes. Maybe one council member.

CR: Oh, Joyce smoked. There were a few leaders who smoked, but not in my group.

LR: There were some who drank, too, weren't there?

CR: There might have been. That I didn't do. I drank very little. I can't confess to something I didn't do.

LR: Because sometimes, when we would have dinners or something, in a hotel, sometimes they would go to the bar. And I said, "That's great. They're socializing." And they were able to drink and smoke, and it's okay. But when you're in uniform, it's a different thing. You have to set an example. That's what I think the scout law was about: setting an example.

CR: It was not part of the Girl Scout laws, and [ ? ] -- Hoboken "pencil" laws.

LR: At that time, I don't think smoking was that dangerous, at the time.

CR: It was just as dangerous, if not more so, but we didn't know it.

LR: They didn't publicize it.

CR: Dorothy Van Seggern used to say (she was a nurse) -- she used to bug me about smoking. When I finally got around to it, I gave it up. I don't smoke anymore, so I can go back to being a Girl Scout leader, in uniform.

RF: Are there people in the community now, who were in the Girl Scouts, that you had in your troops, who are still in town?

CR: Alice Galmann; Catherine Culhane; Marilyn Schwartz. I don't know how many others --

LR: A lot of them moved out of the community, into the suburbs.

CR: I would like to see what their reaction -- or what they learned from Girl Scouts.

LR: We had the Spencer girls -- Grace.

CR: Grace is in assisted-living, in Pennsylvania. Marian died; Ann's gone; Ruth Maus is gone. All my friends are gone.

LR: Many of them have passed away, because this was many years ago. But there are still a few living, and the younger girls --

CR: Yes, but how many live in Hoboken?

LR: Not many. Most of them - Laura Lynn, Patty Carson still lives here, in "Marine View."

RF: That probably hurt the future of it, too, right?

LR: A few still live here, but not that many. Most all of them moved out to the suburbs. We don't know many. Just us.

CR: As leaders?

RF: But I meant --

CR: -- as girls.

RF: The girls that you had.

LR: Marie Scholar and Lorraine Murphy were in troops.

CR: They're still here. I would say there are quite a few, but I don't know how many.

LR: Not that many. Because most of them that we had in our troops moved out. The girls in our troops.

CR: And now they can't afford to live here.

RF: Right. So they moved out.

LR: That was the answer. The rent is too high. They can't afford it. And they can't buy houses.

RF: And you moved back.

LR: I moved back, because I love Hoboken. I was born and raised here.

CR: But you lived out of town for a long time.

LR: Yes. Thirty-six years, until we saved enough money to sell our house and move back, or we could never afford it. Where would we get all the money, to move in the Union Club? "Prohibitive." You can't do that, unless both people work, and save every penny. Then you can afford it.

RF: So does it feel good to be back?

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

LR: Oh, I love it. I love to walk around the streets and say hello to everybody, say hello to the merchants.

CR: I've lived here all my life. I'm lucky, because I never had a house. Of course, I never worked. But I'm under rent control, so I'm still here. But I never had a house, so I can't --

RF: There are a lot of changes and a lot of new faces. Do you feel comfortable in the community?

CR: Not as much as I used to. Because there was a time when it would take me a good hour to walk from 11<sup>th</sup> and Washington to 1<sup>st</sup> Street. Now I can do it in fifteen minutes, because I don't think I meet three people I know. Of course, the difference is, too -- years ago, we were home by 11:00 or 12:00, even when we were adults. Now they only go out at 11:00-12:00. It's a different world. Outdoor dining is something we never did. I don't think I'll ever be comfortable eating outdoors, because if I want to eat out, on a day like today, I want to go into a nice, air-conditioned

restaurant and eat. I don't want to sit outside, with bus smoke, motorcycles going by and everything else.

LR: It's changed.

CR: I'm not as comfortable, because I don't know as many people.

LR: The community has changed a great deal.

CR: Yes. They're all too busy, in my estimation. Nobody has time to stop and just do nothing, or just enjoy children and stuff like that -- although they seem to have lots of time to sunbath, both up here and down on Pier A Park, and stuff like that. And they do become very involved in the community, the new people. That I think is a wonderful thing, that they do, because I think sometimes --

LR: We need it.

CR: -- too many of us just sit back and say, "Ah, too much work." At my age, it *is* too much work. I can't argue with them like I used to.

RF: So between both of you, how many years in girl-scouting?

LR: Sixty-two for me.

CR: I joined in 1940. I was in sixty-two years, altogether.

RF: So with both of you, it was sixty-two.

CR: My husband was a Girl Scout leader for thirty years. Yes, he was registered. He even had a card. Because, you see, the problem was, if you were a Girl Scout leader, and you were in a Girl Scout house and you got hurt, you were covered -- with insurance or whatever. He would go down there, and he would do things to help us out, and, of course, if he got hurt, he wasn't covered. The building itself was, what? About fifteen feet high? From floor to ceiling?

A: Oh, yeah. At least.

CR: At least fifteen feet -- which means, if you put things in a closet and stuff, you're on a high ladder. So they decided, in order to cover him -- just in case he would fall off a ladder or trip over his own feet -- they would make him a Girl Scout leader, so he was covered. So he was an official Girl Scout, for thirty years, and he got a thirty-year pin, from Essex Girl Scouts --

LR: A Thank-You badge, he got.

CR: Well, I got a Thank-You badge. He never got that.

LR: He deserved it.

CR: The "thanks-badge," in Hoboken, given by our council -- I received the very last one, as the Hoboken council.

LR: I think Lenore got one, didn't she?

CR: Lenore got one --

LR: I think.

CR: There were a lot of women who received the "thanks" badge, but I got the last one, before we merged with Jersey City.

RF: And were you the last troop leader associated with the Girl Scouts?

CR: I would say that Lee and I were.

[Laughs]

LR: We were the last two who had actual troop meetings, in the Scout House, before they started to demolish it. Once the men came in and started working, we had to leave, and we never came back, because the parents didn't want the kids to come back and join again. It was dangerous.

CR: Well, you left altogether, but I went to St. Peter & Paul's for a while, and I went to St.

Ann's. I stayed in a little longer than you. You started earlier than me.

LR: But in the actual Scout House --

RF: Well, among the three of you, you have 154 years.

LR: That's a lot of work, as a volunteer --

RF: That's a lot of hours.

CR: As a volunteer.

LR: We also refused money. A parent would come in and, "Here's -- " "No, we can't accept money." Only the dues, what we gave to the children, for their trips. If they would pay dues, it would either go for a party or their trips.

CR: Because we had Christmas parties every year, for the troops.

LR: We would never take money for ourselves. It was totally volunteer work -- all these years.

CR: That's dedication. [Laughs]

LR: Devotion, dedication. I would say we're still the oldest volunteer group, that years ago -- we're almost eight decades, do you know? It's eight decades, from when we can, in the '20s, to when we ended. We had to end because --

CR: It was a sad time for people who loved girls and scouting.

LR: I think it's the longest organization devoted entirely to girls, and entirely a volunteer organization.

CR: But it's not a completely volunteer organization any more.

In the Hoboken Girl Scout Council, no one ever got paid. I think they had somebody paid for six months, out of all the years.

LR: We never got paid.

CR: No. They had one woman who was paid, for about six months, then they said, "No, it didn't work out." But today, it's a very big business, and they are paid very big bucks.

LR: Oh, you mean the original headquarters.

CR: To run girl-scouting is a very lucrative position.

Well, I must say, even though they pay well, you put in an awful lot of hours. We put in a lot of hours, and we weren't paid. We did. I think one of the things that always amused me -- when I would get the thirty-, or forty-, or fifty-year "pin," and the girls would say, "You're going to get a good pension," and I would say, "Yeah. Just about the same amount I'm makin'."

LR: If you compare our organization, though, with others, we still have the most years from all the others -- we have the most volunteer years, than any other organization. We've been here thirty, forty, fifty, sixty --

CR: We're dinosaurs. [Laughs]

LR: -- until it absolutely closed, we're here -- the same girls who are still living, in Pennsylvania or Ohio, were with us, sixty-seventy years ago. This is what we did. We "bonded," and nobody ever got paid. And we loved to do the activities in Hoboken. We always thought of Hoboken. This is "Hoboken Girl Scouts."

CR: In fact, the few years we had reunions, if you recall --

LR: Yes. I remember.

CR: -- at St. Peter & Paul's, and all the girls we could we sent out letters to, that we knew -- we advertised it -- and we had all these people come, from

all over. Linda Volkemer and Helen Delaney -- they had coats on when they walked into the auditorium, and all of a sudden they said, "Tada!" They took off their coats, and they had their full Girl Scout uniforms on, with their sashes, the two girls (they belonged to Troop #10, with Ann Ciski), when they were growing up, and they must have had forty badges. They had badges from end to the other.

RF: So that's Linda --

CR: -- Volkemer.

RF: Is she the fencing teacher?

CR: Yes.

RF: She's great.

LR: She's the coach at Stevens now. She's good. But she was one of us.

RF: She's a member of this group.

CR: Linda and Helen Delaney -- they were Girl Scouts together, in Troop #10. They came. They were very good friends. But they must have had forty badges. I can still see Linda and Helen coming into the room.

LR: But they came from South Jersey.

CR: No. Linda still lives here in Hoboken.

LR: No, I meant the reunion you're speaking of.

CR: Oh, yes. They came from all over.

LR: From all over -- from Pennsylvania and --

RF: And when was the last time you did a reunion?

LR: Maybe about seven years ago.

CR: About fifteen years ago.

LR: I took pictures at that reunion. Joan Stratton, her aunt was there. They lived in Holmdel, at the time. Usually, the leader would also bring a relative or somebody who helped us in Girl Scouts; somebody who would support us, and cook for us, and do things to help us. They came, as a support person, to the reunion, and it was good to see them. I haven't seen Joan's aunt for a long time, and when they came in, I said, "I'm so glad to see you."

RF: So if we produce a booklet from this, we should do a reunion.

CR: I would love to do --

RF: We could do it right here.

CR: Go to Alice Galmann and her sister, Cathy, and ask them what they have learned.

I know this is hard. When would this be?  
Would it be another year?

RF: It might be. It takes a while.

CR: I know that. The only reason I'm asking at all -- I figured it's not going to be two months -- maybe in your small ones, that you put out, you could put, "Were you a Girl Scout? Send me your -- "

RF: Right. In the Newsletter.

CR: In the Newsletter, "send me your ideas," or --

RF: Sure.

LR: -- then they would notify him.

CR: Yes, they would write to him. Like I know this one friend of my sister's -- she lives in California. She's a member. She would be a type that would write something. But a lot of people who belonged to it are old people, from Hoboken. Maybe there are some who had been Girl Scouts.

LR: Oh, I'm sure there are. People who belong to the museum, also, people who are our ages --

CR: Well, that's what I mean. They belong to the museum, and they were Girl Scouts.

RF: But the core of it will be your discussion, today.

CR: Oh, I'm sure of that.

RF: So any last thoughts? I have your written material, which we can refer to, and it will be really helpful with some of the names we talked about -- their spelling and things like that. But we've talked for about an hour and a half, and I think we got a lot of good stuff.

CR: Oh, my god. Well, I'd say you have more than enough. We'll write everything out, I said. Not me. Well, this I thought, if you want some notes, I have two more. This has some things --

RF: -- from the early years.

CR: No. It says up until -- what? It goes forward -- what we did, and other things I may have missed.

RF: Does anyone remember the Girl Scout promise?

CR: "I will try to do my duty, to God and my country, to help other people at all times, and to obey the Girl Scout laws." But, they've changed it three times since then. That's the only one we remember. They have changed it. That's the original one.

LR: Have they used the word "God" recently?

CR: I don't know what they've done recently, and I've never learned it.

LR: This is the one we both knew, from sixty years ago.

CR: I joined in 1940. More than sixty years -- sixty-seven.

LR: Only three as a Brownie. Well, we had almost the same message as the Girl Scout was: "I promise to -- " Same thing, practically.

CR: But they've changed some of the words.

LR: They changed it. But the one we just recited is over sixty years old, I think.

CR: But, see, that's the history of the Girl Scouts, and he's already done that.