

**Robert E. (Bob) Raymond**  
**Oral History Interview #1**  
**May 28, 2008**

MACRO: Good morning. This is an interview of Bob Raymond, conducted on behalf of the Wood Memorial Library's Oral History Project, by Tony Macro, on the morning of 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 2008, in the Bissell House, 1837 Main Street, East Windsor Hill. Good morning, Bob.

RAYMOND: Good morning.

MACRO: Thank you very much for being willing to give us an account of your memories of life on Main Street. I think probably we should get started by asking you where and when you were born.

RAYMOND: I was born May 1933, in Jamaica Plain, a suburb of Boston.

MACRO: And your family moved to the Hartford area?

RAYMOND: About a year later we moved to Hartford. It was the depression. My father [Robert Fulton Raymond, Jr.] was out of work and he got a job with the then newly found Federal Housing Administration, the FHA. We moved to the Hartford area in '34. We lived in Farmington—in a couple of rental houses in Farmington, until the son of the owners of one of those houses was going to be coming home from WW2. So we had to leave that house. At that time we moved to South Windsor.

MACRO: To which part of South Windsor?

RAYMOND: The first place we lived in South Windsor—I don't know the number, but it was on Main Street, one house north of Pleasant Valley Road, in what was then, you might say, the center of South Windsor, because, at that time, the town hall was there. It has since been removed, of course. Bossen's store was also there, as were the Union School and the Library. So South Windsor was a much smaller town, with kind of its focal point there. And we lived in that house.

MACRO: So you lived in the middle of the action of South Windsor?

RAYMOND: Such as it was.

MACRO: Now, how long were you there?

RAYMOND: Actually, I believe we were there only about a year, because Will Wood, who

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lived in this house, died and we moved up here [to the Bissell house, East Windsor Hill]. It must have been in '45, because we were in this house, when President Roosevelt died. A bunch of us were playing ball out in the north yard here, when we heard that the President had died. And that would have been, I believe, in April of '45, just before the war was over. So we really only lived in that house down the street in South Windsor for a little over a year. The school is right across the street, so it was pretty handy. I managed to go to four different schools, four years each. And grades 5 through 8 was the time I spent at Union School.

It was a much smaller town then. The school: I don't know how many there were all together, but in my class there were eight boys and eight girls; we made up of a class of sixteen people. And, in a simpler day, the school had a teacher for each grade. The teacher—I guess he was the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher—was also the principal of the school. We had a janitor, Deke Fairbanks. I guess there was a superintendent of schools, but that was the entire staff for eight grades of school: eight teachers and a janitor to keep the place under control. Now, there would probably be a principal, and assistant principal and a guidance counselor and several other people to run the same size school. Yes, there were eight boys and eight girls. At this point, I could probably remember most of them but not all of them. Many of them I haven't seen for years and years, because we're talking of a lapse of over 60 years. We were the class of '47. That's quite a while back.

MACRO: You still went to that same Union School when you moved up here to the Bissell House?

RAYMOND: Yes. Union School, at that time, covered pretty much all of Main Street and some of the streets that went out east. There was—I believe—I could be wrong, but I think maybe there were three grade schools in town then: there was the Rye Street School, and then there was a school out in Wapping, and there was Union School down there. I would estimate—and the numbers are available someplace—the town might have had as many as 5,000 people. I don't know what it is now—27 or 28 thousand, perhaps. So it was a much different atmosphere, a much different place, primarily agricultural. Most of the activity in town was up and down Main Street and also focused right around the center of Wapping. Of course, now, the gravity has moved east, and I guess if you want to name the capital of South Windsor, it would be Wapping, with all the activity there.

MACRO: Did you go over to Wapping very often?

RAYMOND: No, not very often. You tended to go up and down Main St.; more things came into Main St. at that time—not that a great deal was going on, but the town hall was there, with the town offices in the basement and a kind of a big auditorium upstairs. Big?—it really wasn't that big. For instance, they'd have square dances up there. And people would go to those things, ranging in age from 12 to 112 as far as I could see. It was kind of a mixture of people that would go.

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The bus line to Hartford ran up and down the Main St., ending, actually, here [at East Windsor Hill]. We used to refer to the streets differently in those days: instead of ‘Pleasant Valley Road’, though some people would call it that, we’d primarily call it ‘Station 39 Road’; and Chapel Road, down below to the South, was ‘35 Road’; and a ‘31 Road’ further below, all dictated by the number of the bus stop. As a matter of fact, there was a change in the fare. You bought bus tokens; I think they were three for a quarter or something. A token would get you from Hartford up to Station 31. And the two tokens would get you all the way up here to East Windsor Hill. When we were young and cheap and we wanted to go to Hartford, we’d walk down to 31, which is perhaps a mile from where I lived, and get the bus there. You’d use the small amount of money you saved for a soda or something. But I think, because of the bus route going north and south in and out of Hartford, and whatever activity was going on in town being focused on Main St., we tended to stick to Main St. a fair amount when we were little kids. Of course, when you got older and you could drive, you went all over the place. We used to bicycle and walk up and down Main St. pretty much. That was as much as the world as we needed to know of at that point.

MACRO: And as a young boy, did you go into Hartford often?

RAYMOND: Yes, fairly often actually. I guess, with a couple of friends, we were fairly adventurous. Pretty early on, we realized we could get on the bus and go into Hartford. The bus came in right below the Old Statehouse. Of course, the area’s totally changed now. It would be kind of the southwest corner of Constitution Plaza where the bus came in—up State St. And the whole area of Hartford then was totally different. Constitutional Plaza replaced Front St., which was a perfectly good ethnic neighborhood, with some good Italian restaurants.

You know, even when we were 12 years old, 13 years old—early teenagers—we thought nothing of going in. There was more going on in Hartford, so we’d go there to the movies, go in there to eat, go in there just to do something. So it was pretty common to go in and out of town. And, after a while, you tended to have the same bus drivers. They knew who you were. Things were just on a different scale at that point. In South Windsor, there wasn’t—for an early teenager—a lot to do. The first job you could have, really—and everybody did it—was working in tobacco. So most of us, by the time we were 14, would be working in tobacco. And that was kind of our first job experience—first way to have some of our own money to spend. And it was pretty common during the tobacco-harvesting season. Virtually, everybody would be working. Early in the season some would be hoeing or doing whatever is necessary early on.

MACRO: The meadows were in tobacco in those days?

RAYMOND: Primarily tobacco, yes.

MACRO: And the other crops—similar to those grown there today?

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RAYMOND: Pretty much so: some vegetables, some corn. The tobacco, in that era, was a much more important thing in the valley than subsequently. It was both shade-grown and broadleaf tobacco. Working in shade-tobacco was fairly different, and just the operation of harvesting was different. I worked for a couple of companies harvesting it, picking leaves off and putting them in baskets and dragging them out and putting them onto carts and into the shed where the individual leaves were sewn onto lath and hung to cure. I spent some time hanging the stuff. Early on I didn't like heights particularly, but you could make about a nickel an hour more in the shed than in the field, so I figured I needed the nickel more than I needed the fear of height, and ended up first passing the stuff up, and later actually hanging in the shed. It was also more fun to work in the sheds because there was usually a bunch of "summer" girls from down south or Pennsylvania working there, sewing the tobacco onto the laths. It was kind of a mixture of people, really. I think one year most of the guys in the field were Jamaican or Puerto Rican and a few of us locals. I know that the Jamaicans spoke better English than anybody else. And they had this nice Jamaican lilt. They were not wealthy, but they were still, you might say, educated enough so that they just had a good a better command of English than a lot of us did, I thought.

MACRO: Did you work easily together?

RAYMOND: Yes, no problem: there would be the Jamaican guys and Puerto Rican guys and then there would be a bunch of guys from the north end of Hartford. Black kids would come out. So you really had a very much of a mixed group. And I don't remember there ever being any conflict among any of the groups. The Jamaican and Puerto Rican people, in general, tended to live in some camps that were run by the Connecticut Shade Growers Association.

It really, in a way, could serve as an example for today, because there were workers that came in on a seasonal basis. They lived in camps that were adequate; they weren't fancy but they were perfectly okay. And they had rules. Generally speaking, if somebody really stepped out of line once, they were told, "Okay, do it again and you're gone." And if they did it again, they were gone. And they sent money home to Jamaica and Puerto Rico—kept some money, but sent most of their money home and at the end of the season went home. And it was really kind of a win/win. The production was accomplished with their help, and their respective communities benefited from the income. We, as an area, benefited without having to spend a huge amount of money educating or paying them to do not much off-season, as became the case later on. But it was a pretty successful system. It worked well. And I guess, in a way, the local kids' horizons got expanded a little bit just by being exposed to people of different types, from different places. So it was kind of interesting for us too.

But those were the jobs—the tobacco work—at least until you were 16. By that time you could drive legally. Everybody drove anyway. It was no big issue to drive as a teenager, because, being a farm community, people were driving tractors and hauling tobacco. You learned that way. Most of us, by the time we got a license, had been driving a lot. Contrary to today, when

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it's probably considered a cardinal offense for a 15 year old to get caught driving, it was just a little more casual then.

MACRO: You would borrow the family car, would you?

RAYMOND: Oh, yes. Many of us were driving around a lot. I got a kick out of the fact that I finally got a license. I had the license only a few days, when I was stopped by a policeman in East Hartford. I showed him the license and he said, "How long have you had the license?" And I said, "Got it last week." He says, "No, c'mon, how long you had this license?" I said, "Look at the date on it." And he said, "I've seen you driving around here for a couple of years." And I said, "Well, officer, I just got the license last week." He looked at me and said, "Get out of here." He wasn't too shook up about it. It was typical.

MACRO: What else did you do for recreation locally? Were you hunting or fishing?

RAYMOND: Some people went down the river and fished. I was never much of a fisherman. Probably one of the main activities for kids, in that era, was to go out to Spring Pond Park, out Pleasant Valley Rd. It was wartime; people didn't have gas. People would come out from Hartford on the bus, but there was no direct bus to the park. It would come up Main St. and dump people off right in front of the Wood Library, the end of Pleasant Valley Rd., and people would walk out to the park. It was probably about a mile out there. But us kids—we'd ride our bikes out to the park, out to Spring Pond, run by the Cowles family for years and years—not living here now; I'm not even sure what the status of that is, whether it's town property or what. Do you know, Tony? What goes on at Spring Pond?

MACRO: I think it is run by the town.

RAYMOND: Well, it was a private enterprise then, run by the Cowles for decades. All during the war it was just a very popular place for people to go. The local kids would go out there. We all learned to swim. In those days it looked like a big pond. The older you got the smaller it got. That is one thing that we did.

We used to ride our bicycles a lot. Before I moved, I spent my 5<sup>th</sup> grade year living right near the school, but subsequently I lived up here. From here to the school was about 2 ½ miles. And, you know, we'd ride our bike, unless it was really wintry, cold—you know—a lot of snow, then we wouldn't. But, otherwise, we'd just ride our bikes down to school. It didn't sound very thrilling, but just poking around town on bicycles was the source of a fair amount of entertainment. Again, we tended to go pretty far. I don't know how old I was, but a friend of mine and I did what we called the big circuit. There was no Bissell Bridge. So if you wanted to cross the Connecticut River, you'd have to go down to Hartford to cross the Bulkeley Bridge.

One day, relatively early on—maybe we were 13—we went down to East Hartford, then across the bridge, up through Windsor and all the way to Windsor Locks and across the bridge to

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Warehouse Point and back down here: just made the big circuit. That was kind of a big deal at that time. I don't know how far that trip is, but it must be, oh gosh, 30 miles maybe. But we had time. The other thing we'd do on our bicycles is we'd ride south and east and get to—well, I can't think of the name of the street now [Long Hill Road], but [as Long Hill Street] it goes down by the East Hartford Golf Course and, eventually, drops down to Burnside Avenue. And we'd turn left there and go out a half a mile to a dairy bar. So that was—it was a long ride for some ice cream, but again, time we had. You could spend an hour getting there, enjoy the ice cream for an hour, and then take an hour to ride back. It took care of the afternoon. 'Long Hill Road' is what I'm trying to think of. We'd go pretty much the length of Long Hill.

We'd also ride down to East Hartford. It wasn't any big deal to ride down right along Main St. to East Hartford. By that time, Route 5 had been built. For years, we called it 'the new road' because it was the new road; even after it got to be 25 years old, it was still 'the new road'. We'd ride up and down that [Route 5] a little bit, I guess, but primarily the bicycle routes were up and down Main St. and down to East Hartford. When you're that age and you've got time, riding a bike what now would be considered some distance wasn't any big chore.

MACRO: Right. You mentioned the new road, Route 5. Was there still any passenger traffic on the rail line just beyond Route 5?

RAYMOND: I don't remember that there was, but there was somewhat more frequent freight traffic (than today). As for the evolution of Route 5, the first business and commercial activity on it occurred at Pleasant Valley Road. There was a package store and a bowling alley, where the ice rink is now, and an ice cream place, Peterson's. So there was a little bit of activity there. It didn't take much activity to draw people. With the exception of the Town Hall and Bossen's, which was the store and the post office, there wasn't much on Main St. But Route 5 just kind of evolved to more and more activity, and Main Street went from being moderately busy to not very busy as Route 5 grew.

Our house in South Windsor was next door to a house lived in by my aunt, who took the trolley into Hartford for years and years. They used to have good trolley service here. I understand that if you patched it together, you could go from Springfield by trolley car down Main St. here to Hartford and on to New Haven.

MACRO: That was the house you mentioned at the end of Pleasant Valley Rd.

RAYMOND: Yes, but the one my aunt lived in was right on the corner of Pleasant Valley Rd., north corner. And the one we lived in was adjacent to it.

MACRO: I've noticed twice that you've referred to that area as 'South Windsor'. Is that to distinguish South Windsor from East Windsor Hill here? Is that an important distinction in your mind?

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RAYMOND: I guess I always considered it was all part of the same town: generically, it was all South Windsor. In those days, if you asked people locally where they lived, they would answer, “We all live in South Windsor, but we live also in Wapping or in East Windsor Hill.”<sup>1</sup> Some people, including a couple that I went to school with, lived along Sullivan Avenue. I haven’t lived in town now for quite awhile, though parts of the family have been around here for 150 years or more. Well, I lived here after I got out of the Navy. The last time I lived in town was 1960, which is getting to be a while ago. And, yet, there are still some names around town that have been here forever. People I went to Union School with—it would be interesting. I don’t know what would happen if we tried to put together that group of 16. I don’t even know how many of them are alive. The only one I’m sure isn’t, is Tommy Jurgelas. Tommy was killed at Bradley Field. He was a National Guard pilot. It has to be 30 years ago or more that that happened. The Jurgelas’s are still around town in great number. But I don’t know about some of the other people. That might be an interesting exercise just to find out where that group of 16 is now located.

MACRO: Yes it would.

RAYMOND: Charlie Gudaitis last I knew was still living in his house down on Main St. I don’t know what happened—we had one set of twins in our class, the Morreys, who lived on Sullivan Avenue. I know that Sally Morrey worked at Connecticut General for a time when I did back in history. But I have no idea where they are now. It would be interesting to see. I think the town, considering its growth, still has a surprising number of people that have been living here for generations.

MACRO: Yes.

RAYMOND: Up and down Main St., I guess there’s still a lot of people that have been around for a long time. I can’t be included among them, so to speak, because I left in 1960. But this house—our son David is the 7<sup>th</sup> generation of our family in the house, which is getting to be a little long. However, I’ve been in China and I’ve seen places where people in their 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> generation are working the same farms. Everything is relative.

MACRO: Yes. You’re referring to this house, where we’re sitting now, the Bissell House?

RAYMOND: Yes.

MACRO: Your family also owned the Watson House, didn’t they?

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<sup>1</sup> In a subsequent message, RER wrote this about the boundaries of East Windsor Hill: ‘Regarding EWH boundaries ... I believe we generally thought EWH extended from the Scantic or a tad north down to about Strong Road or Stoughton’s Brook, and from the Connecticut River to somewhat East of the railroad tracks.’

RAYMOND: They owned that—in the overall scheme of things—not for a terribly long time. I don't know. I'm guessing that was bought by my grandfather in the 1950's. It was not a house that was in the family for a great length of time. There was a guy named Max Green that lived there when I was a youngster. I'm pretty sure Max was a bachelor. And sometime after he died, my grandfather bought it.

The little house to the north of that, where my sister lives—when I was a kid, it was lived in by a family named Jardine. Faith Jardine was one of the 16 in my class, and I guess, of the 16, she and I would be the only ones who lived right here in East Windsor Hill, because the Morreys lived out on Sullivan Avenue. Tom Jurgelas. lived out there and John Eckert lived out there. But most of the 16 people lived along Main Street; one girl lived in the trailer park right on the town line of South Windsor and East Hartford. She would have been coming from the further south. Matter of fact, you couldn't get any further south in town because you'd be in East Hartford.

MACRO: Right.

RAYMOND: Probably over on that side of town, the Jurgelas house [on Sullivan Avenue] pretty much encompassed the extent of the district, because, at some point, just beyond Jurgelas', I guess they would have gone to Wapping School; going out east, you would have reached Wapping at some point. We moved up here in '45. So I lived here from '45 to '60, but I really only lived here effectively from '45 to '51, because after that I was in college and in the Navy. I came back from the Navy and lived here for a little bit before getting married in 1960.

MACRO: Now, you married into a South Windsor family, didn't you?

RAYMOND: Yes, they [the Wetherell family] lived straddling the line between South Windsor and Manchester. Some of the land that they owned was in each town. A lot of that land now is developed into all the retail that surrounds the mall out there. Yes, that end of town has seen more change than this; you drive up and down Main St. and still recognize it. I mean, literally—I went up and down that street so many times that I can actually feel it, so to speak. Even now, when I come up that street, there's two or three places where there are bumps in the road that are familiar. But out east it's not the same—when I was a kid it was virtually all tobacco fields. Now, it's, of course, a lot different.

I guess the first big deal out there was probably the JC Penney warehouse. And, at that time Ella Grasso was governor. They were going to build a road to connect it to the Bissell Bridge, but it took many, many years before they eventually got I291 built over there and tied that in.

Yes, the other thing there was in town, talking about entertainment, was the drive-in theatre on the east side of Route 5. There was another one up in East Windsor, so there were two



drive-in theatres within striking distance. As young kids, we'd go to the drive-in theatres with a bicycle. And then, when we got a driver's license, we'd go there by car.

The other thing we did for which we needed a license—but we did it before we had one—was to become fans of the Friendly Ice Cream Store that was up in Enfield. And it was only about the third or fourth store in that chain, started by the Blake brothers in the 30's. Early on, we used to like to go up there. And again, it was just an excursion. We'd put eight of us in a car and drive up to the Friendly's and get a great big, thick milkshake that they called the "Awful, Awful"—they said it was 'awfully big and awfully good.' And that was just kind of something to do after you've been working in the fields all day and it was hot. You'd pile into a car, and go up there.

Coincidentally, one of those brothers that started that chain—my wife and I have gotten to know him. At 90 plus, he's still alive. He lived for years in Longmeadow. They started that company in East Longmeadow. Kurt Blake is now over 90. He's a very nice guy. He eats fairly often in the Friendly's that is right on the state line, about the first building in Massachusetts going up Route 5 where there's an interchange from 91. Twice we've met him in there. The first time we were in there, we went to leave and our bill had been paid. So the second time we were in there, I beat him to the punch and I paid his bill at Friendly. [My wife] Bev [Beverly Wetherell Raymond] got a call from him a while later saying, "Well, that was a first"—first time anybody had ever bought him a meal at Friendly's Ice Cream.

That association, as far as eating there, goes back literally 60 years for me. I mean it was 60 years ago that we used to go to the Friendly's up there on Enfield St. It's been around a long time now. The company has been bought and sold two or three times. But they still treat him as though he owns the place when he goes into it.

So I guess bicycle trips and later, car trips, with or without a license, were what kept kids in South Windsor entertained. Surprisingly, with all the driving we did, I don't remember anybody having an accident. Later on, people seemed to get in accidents around the Hartford area on graduation nights. Practically, every year somebody would get in a bad accident. Early on, as young teenagers driving around South Windsor, safety was not particularly an issue, surprisingly. And that was in spite of the fact that we were in many cases driving pretty mediocre vehicles and definitely overloaded.

MACRO: You mentioned earlier on Will Wood. We're interested, of course, in Will Wood—his connection with the library. What sort of figure was he in your life?

RAYMOND: Well, he was very elderly by the time I knew him. I don't know, at this point, how old he was when he died, but I knew him really in just the last two or three years of his life. This was because we moved to South Windsor in '44, and up here after he died in '45. I knew him—my grandparents lived across the street from this house [in 1846 Main Street]. I guess my images of Will Wood would be primarily coming out to my grandparents' house from Farmington when we lived there. We'd come over here and see the grandparents and walk across

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the street and see Will Wood, who, to us, was Uncle Billy, not surprisingly. And he was a pretty old man.

In his old age, there was a lady, Mary Nicholson, very nice lady, who kind of looked after him. The house was primarily the way it is now, except out back, where there was a big—we'd call it 'the wood shed'. I remember it as a little kid: wood would be piled in that structure where our so-called breezeway is now. As a little kid I always tried to see if I could get to the top of the pile without making the pile come tumbling down on me and whatever else was around.

We'd look around the farm. He had a variety of livestock around the farm. When you were from the suburbs that was a big deal at that time. Nice person, gentle person, but, as I say, my limited knowledge of him was that of a 12 year old kid and a very elderly man. But he died in '45 and, at that point, we moved up here.

The house had not been—well, what's the right word?—hadn't been modernized, so to speak. It had one bathroom in it, in what is now the hall—kind of a back downstairs hall with a bathtub. As a little kid, I remember being kind of impressed there was this great big—must have been 8 foot long porcelain bathtub that stood on four legs in the middle of a hall. The hall had been converted to the bathroom in the house. Even though it was a nice house, built in 1815, one of the three bricks on Main St., none of them was real high on plumbing.

It has been modernized now. Since [my son] David has lived here, we put a new kitchen in, and in doing that discovered the old well in the corner of the kitchen that he used to draw water from. So the house had kind of an inside well and an outside well with a pump. That was the source of water. In those days it was a little bit different arrangement relative to plumbing. But the property was always a working farm. Will Wood primarily farmed for a living. And, as you said, it was he who gave the library to the town and it was the town library right up until 1971 or 1972, when the new library was built out east. I guess I can't think of much else. We have pictures around the house of Will Wood with his oxen.

MACRO: So he grew crops and livestock?

RAYMOND: Yes.

MACRO: Did he do tobacco at all?

RAYMOND: Yes. But I couldn't speak with any great detail about the crops. I think he grew a little bit of everything at one time or another. And, virtually everybody grew tobacco. His place here is typical of so many up and down Main St.—house on the street, barns behind, fields going to the river, long and rectangular piece of land. It was and still is that way, pretty much all the way down the street, although a handful of houses have been built back from the street.

MACRO: Yes.

RAYMOND: In that respect, the town is interesting because it has retained that same character that it had a long time ago. At that time—when we moved here, there was still a store next door. It's now just the post office, but at that time it was somewhat similar to the Bossen Store in South Windsor. It had groceries as well as the post office. Way back in history I guess it was Parmalee who ran it. When I was a youngster, a family named Thornton ran it: Cyril Thornton and his wife. You'd go up there for the normal bread and eggs and milk type of groceries and get the mail. It was pretty handy being that close. Even though we lived out in the country, both places we lived in South Windsor, we had Bossen's there and the Thornton store up here, 100 yards away—pretty convenient.

MACRO: Yes. You mentioned that your grandparents lived across the road.

RAYMOND: Yes.

MACRO: Which house was that?

RAYMOND: The white house. The Stiles, Arthur and Nanny Lee Stiles, lived directly across [1838] and the next house north of that [1846] was where my grandparents, [Ellsworth Sperry and Edna Jennings Sperry], lived.

MACRO: I see. They lived there for many years?

RAYMOND: Since long before I could remember. The house was finally sold after my grandmother died. My grandfather died in '66 and she died I believe in '76, so it was in the late '70's, which is now getting to be a long time ago, when that house was sold.

That house tended to be kind of—you might almost call it family headquarters, because my mother [Hildred Sperry Raymond] had a sister [Edna Sperry Dow], who lived the other side of the store, where the Lavey's live now—in that brick house. For a number of years, the two brick houses: 1891, where the Dows lived, and 1837, down here, where Will Wood lived, and my grandparents' house across the street formed something almost like a family compound.

Thanksgiving and Christmas were held, more often than not, at the grandparents' house. It wasn't any huge gathering because there were just two of us kids, my sister and me; the Dows, my mother's sister, had just one daughter, Nancy. So there would be the three Dows and the four Raymonds, the two grandparents, Will Wood, and the two aunts that lived down in South Windsor. So the whole mob was whatever that totals. What's that? Twelve people would be the Thanksgiving or Christmas gatherings over there. That went on for a number of years. We have pictures around of the family having those meals. And that was primarily starting from when I was probably one year old. So we have occasional pictures taken in that house starting, call it, 1934. Off and on from the mid 30's to the mid 60's for about a 30 year period quite often there would be a Thanksgiving and/or a Christmas over there.

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As for the Dow family, Larry Dow was my uncle. There's still a company in Hartford called 'Dow and Condon', a real estate company that Larry ran. They moved to West Hartford sometime in the early 50's, I would guess. So the clan locally diminished to an extent at that time. After that, we'd still have Christmas or Thanksgiving occasionally over here as the grandparents got more elderly. But South Windsor, on my mother's side of the family, has really been the focal point for many, many years. The farm here was bought, I believe, in 1832. It's 175 years that it's been in the family. As I said earlier, that's seven generations. Who knows what will happen in the future, maybe it'll be another seven generations.

MACRO: You mention the rectangular properties going down to the river on this side of the street. Originally, that was the case on the east side of the street too, I believe.

RAYMOND: It was, yes; a lot of them were truncated by Route 5.

MACRO: Yes, and that was leading to my question: from the time you remember, was there any resentment of the fact that Route 5, despite its convenience and its taking the traffic off the Street, had cut up those properties?

RAYMOND: Not that I can recall. Now, my presence here started, perhaps, eight years after it was built, so the passage of those eight years plus the fact that at the ripe age of 12 I wasn't wired in that much to that kind of issue—I don't recall any particular comment about that. I guess when it was put in, there was controversy as to where it was going to go. And it was finally determined to primarily parallel the railroad track. And it did do a lot for the benefit of the street.

I do remember my grandparents and mother saying that during the 20's when people were really starting to drive, this was the main road on this side of the river going North and South. If you were going to go from Hartford to Springfield, you'd either go up Palisado Avenue, on the other side of the river, or up this side of the river. And, increasingly, it got to be a lot of traffic. I guess that was what led to Route 5 being built. It just got to be unbearable for the people up and down this area.

To build a four-lane road in that era (1930s) was early in the history of divided highways—kind of ahead of the times. It was put in about the same time as the early parts of the Merritt Parkway, which was considered kind of revolutionary at the time; at first, it only came up as far as West Haven, but it was a big deal. The Merritt and the Penn turnpike, I guess, were two of the earliest roads of that type in the entire country. Hard to believe, now what we're interlaced with Interstates. Anyway, the building of Route 5 made a big difference here. But I don't know what happened to its continuation. It went only to the East Windsor Town line. As a kid I can remember hearing people say, "Well, you know, that thing is going to be extended someday." Well, it's a long time later and it still hasn't been extended. It still dies right there, at [Dari Delite], Shonosky's ice cream store.

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I worked for Julia Shonosky<sup>2</sup> decades ago in the tobacco fields. She was a shed supervisor—a tough, take-no-prisoners but fair yard boss, dealing with a bunch of kids, trying to keep them in line working in the shed mostly. After a while, Julia and her husband opened the ice cream shop. It has been there a long, long time and is now an institution. Julia died two or three years ago now. She got Alzheimer's, unfortunately, in her old age; she was a very nice person. We always had kind of a healthy respect for one another.

I decided to behave reasonably well, only by comparison. Yes, I think probably the whole tobacco thing that so many kids experienced in that era would not be the worst thing that could happen to kids today. We worked pretty hard, but we had fun. A whole bunch of people in town worked for a man named Marshall Bidwell, whose wife Arline, was a teacher at Union School. Arline later was very active at the [Wood Memorial] library, as everybody knows. Marshall grew tobacco and they also raised Doberman Pinscher dogs. Marshall hired a great number of kids in the area. They used to call his tobacco fields "Bidwell's Beach." They'd work hard, but they'd get a lot done. So he was one of the many people up and down the street that hired the kids and was a positive factor in their lives.

MACRO: What part did the church play in your life and the lives of your friends during the years you were here, the 40's and 50's?

RAYMOND: We went to church. On a scale of 1 to 10, probably my family was a 3 or 4 as opposed to somebody that was there all the time. One of my best friends was Mike Burr, with whom I am still in frequent contact. His father, Myron, worked for the Hartford Steam Boiler Insurance Company and went around the state inspecting electric facilities. Well, Myron loved music. He loved what was, in those days, hi-fi. He'd get us into his house and show us his newest amplifier or whatever. To him, the sound would be just great—much improved over the normal, but most of us couldn't tell the difference. He also was the music director at the Congregational church on Main Street. Myron was a very, very nice person. Because of his interesting activity, we probably were dragged into church more often than we would have been otherwise. When I was a kid, many people in town went to the Congregational church, but St. Francis, [the Roman Catholic church] out on Pleasant Valley Road, was also very active. I'd say, those two religious practices were a modest, not large, factor in our lives.

MACRO: Then you were 'dragged into a church' because of Myron's music, not by your parents?

RAYMOND: Yes, my parents were relatively indifferent.

MACRO: Yes. Well, I think that might be a good place to end the interview for the

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<sup>2</sup> Julia (Palozie) Shonosky [Chrzanowski]: cf. Obituary in *Hartford Courant*, 3 March, 2003.

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moment. At any rate, maybe we can return at some point. But, you know, I thank you very, very much.

RAYMOND: Well, not at all—interesting place to be raised as a kid. I guess I'm biased. I consider myself fortunate to have lived in South Windsor. There were a lot of places you could have been raised, but South Windsor was, I'd say, a lot better than many places. I'm glad to see it has retained some of the character—in spite of the growth. Main St. seems not that different from what it was at that time. Well, thank you, Tony, for your work.

MACRO: Thank you, Bob.

[This text was amended by ADM according to revision by RER, November & December, 2008.]

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