DORIS PELTON BURGDORF Oral History Interview #3, 7-31-07
Administrative Information

Narrator: Doris Pelton Burgdorf
Interviewer: Maureen Bourn
Date of Interview: July 31, 2007
Place of Interview: Ferry Farm [Town Farm]
Accession number: 2013.46.03
Length: 33 pages

Biographical Note and Abstract

Doris Burgdorf is a life-long resident of South Windsor. She is a member of the South Windsor Historical Society. Doris is the designer of our town seal, the illustrator of *Long Hill; The Mary Jeannette Elmore Story*, and the author of *A Country Mile*, a book about the houses in the historic district on Main Street. Doris is currently working on the committee to restore Union School and she is doing the deed searches and research necessary for a new book about the houses on the rest of Main Street.

In this third interview of five, Doris talks about her mother, Helen Risley Pelton. Helen was born in South Windsor and went to school in town. She attended high school in East Hartford and went on to work in Hartford at an insurance company. When her parents moved to Florida, Helen eloped. The newly weds rented a house on Main Street and eventually moved into the Pelton Farm. Helen managed the household with a milk business on the side. She became interested in local history and helped to keep the Wood Library open and operating.

Helen's friend Hildred Raymond decided to purchase the Town Farm [Ferry Lane], and invited Helen and Doris to join her. Doris recalls the tenants who lived in the farm and how the three "owners" managed to repair and furnish the home.

Usage Restrictions

Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

Copyright

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the archives staff.

Transcript of Oral History Interview
This transcript was made from an audio recording that can be found in the archives at the Wood Memorial Library. Transcripts were edited for clarity and were approved, sometimes with additional edits, by the narrator. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the draft transcripts and recordings.

Suggested Citation
DORIS PELTON BURGDORF, recorded interview by MAUREEN BOURN, JULY 31, 2007, 33 c pages, Wood Memorial Library Oral History Program

Doris Pelton Burgdorf
Oral History Interview #3
Interviewed by Maureen Bourn
July 31, 2007

Maureen Bourn: All right Doris, today we're interviewing, and we're down at the Ferry Farm looking out at the river. This is a very pleasant spot to do this. What I'd like you to talk about today is your mother, Helen Risley-Pelton and her family the Risleys and was she a local resident, how she met your father, that kind of thing.

Doris Pelton Burgdorf: Well I just remembered today that she was born in a house out on Griffin Road. It's across from the present golf course. I don't know the name of the couple who live in it now. So how will I explain it? When we were young, we called it the Griffin house because Janie Griffin lived in it with her parents, and he [her father] was involved with the Griffin Fuller Tobacco Company. And that was the house they lived in, but it's the old Jerija Bissell house. And it's on Griffin Road.

MB: I know which house you mean, I took a picture of that.

DPB: It's white with shutters and has glass windows on an added on porch. That's where she was born; probably her parents were renting there because they were very young parents. They eloped. I always wondered where they put the ladder because I don't think her mother—I believe her mother was a child in the East Windsor Hill Post Office, and that's only one story high, but they eloped.

MB: Okay.

DPB: Okay now what next after getting born?

MB: So the Risley family then was a local family?

DPB: Yes, they lived in the red saltbox on Rye Street right by Rye Street Park. And her father used to tell about having the horrible chore of having to walk all the diapers down to the brook and wash them out. I mean that was his chore as a child.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

MB: Now, how many children were there—all the diapers?

DPB: There might have been 10 or 11 kids. I can't remember at this minute because that's two generations ago. That's my mother's grandparents, my great grandparents. There were a lot of kids for sure. There must have been a lot of diapers. Imagine they had to slosh them out in the brook. You know this was before washing machines.

MB: Well they're telling us we need to go back to that now instead of producing all the plastic things that we're throwing in the dump.

DPB: So the mother handed out chores and that's what Benjamin Franklin Risley's chore was, to take those diapers down to the brook. He was in a hurry to elope and get out of there.

DPB: Let's see. Their next rent was in Habif's house at East Windsor Hill which is across from Ellsworth School. That's the—what did we name that house? Dr. Sidney Rockwell owned that house and after his and his wife's death—they were the parents of James Rockwell who wasn't too capable of taking care of himself, although he was a genius in other ways because he made that little violin that's at Wood Library. And his little woodworking shop was there in the yard. It got converted into a house and has since been torn down and the gambrel roof house of Allison Pandozzi Jennings sits on that sight now. But the big house, Jimmy Rockwell—his parents left a trust, so that he would be cared for in the home, and—so my parent's parents got the rent as long as they would take care of Jimmy. So my mother grew up during her school years in that house with this Jimmy Rockwell in the house with them.

He had some kind of disability whereby he stuttered. It was difficult for him to be gainfully employed anywhere, so he did his own thing in his woodworking shop. He had a good education, but you can't be a very good lawyer if you talk with a lisp—oh if you stutter, he stuttered terribly. So he did woodworking and made violins.

MB: Okay now, did he make—?

DPB: And furniture, and furniture.

MB: Oh, and furniture too.

DPB: Yep but nobody in town seems to have saved a piece of his furniture. We may be able to identify a few pieces and Charlene Southergill has some.

MB: Oh really? Oh.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

DPB: Yes, because they're related. Anyway that's beside the point. That's where my mother was in late grammar school and early high school because she got active in Campfire Girls, and they had all their meetings there, and—so we have a lot of photographs of all the girls in their Indian outfits sitting on the lawn at all their meetings. That was—that was the club activity in those days that today we replaced with 4-H and Girl Scouts. [phone break] Why do I bother to answer?

MB: Okay now, after the phone break, Doris you left off—you were talking about the Campfire Girls and as a replacement for Girl Scouts.

DPB: Today it's Girl Scouts and 4-H. I don't know what the boys did. Maybe they had Boy Scouts; I don't know.

MB: Now, you've talked about your mom—so she went to local high school.

DPB: No we didn't have a—our high school kids went to East Hartford, East Hartford High School.

MB: Okay.

DPB: And she didn't graduate because she had a nervous breakdown in her last year of high school, so she did not finish school. Then she went to work in Hartford at an insurance company. And that would be 1925 maybe, that vicinity. Her pay was $9 a week at that time in history.

MB: Okay, you make more than that in an hour now.

DPB: And she saved her first three weeks pay because she wanted to buy a big Webster's Dictionary.

MB: Now, she was just interested in words or—

DPB: Well it may be also a characteristic of a different generation. She did not rush to the store to buy clothes. She needed a dictionary.

MB: Three weeks pay for it, wow.

DPB: Well $3 out of her $9 had to go for carfare to get to Hartford and back for work.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

MB: Oh yeah.

DPB: But before going to work, her father was then running the East Windsor Hill Post Office and store, and—so she worked in there at the store counter, and I believe that's where she met my father.

MB: Yeah, that's probably—all the local people pass through there at some point.

DPB: Yeah, if you talk about a hangout, maybe it was there. Because my father only lived a mile and a half down the street, but he evidentially went up the street every night to the store to see who's hanging around or whatever, and there was that cute single girl working in there. You see? That's how it happens.

MB: Yeah—well that worked out well.

DPB: Then she had her own horse. My father had a horse, and so some of the dating was going riding on the horses. But then my mother's parents cashed in and moved to Florida to go farming in Florida, and they sold her horse on her because she had to go live with some old aunts in Manchester, because she was not going to Florida. And that was very upsetting to her that her parents would sell her horse, but they did. Anyway—

MB: Now, was there a reason she decided not to go with them?

DPB: She had a job in Hartford. She was grown up. She was—and yeah, she knew my father and next thing you know they eloped.

MB: Okay.

DPB: I think it was a planned elopement. I mean they simply went off to Millerton, New York to get married because that's where you could go to get—without going to a church or town hall or some other way to get married. You went up to New York State to some town where they would marry you right away. And they went down the Connecticut River on a boat and around and up the Hudson on one of those steamboat rides to get to—I believe it's Millerton but I may be wrong. It starts with Miller anyway. So that was the honeymoon part of it, going on the boat to get there to get married.

I'm not sure if they went to Niagara Falls also—I don't remember. Anyway, now, they're married. What else did she do next? They had their first rent down the street in

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

Harold Newberry's house [Main Street?]. That's across the street from Pat Dillon. And then on the death of my father's father they moved up to the farm—the Pelton farm where my father stayed and worked and continued that business.

Before that my father had worked for the American Sumatra Tobacco Company as a timekeeper.

MB: Now, what does a timekeeper do in a tobacco company?

DPB: Ride around the fields on your horse in the summer time and keep track of everyone who is working today and who you have to pay and all that.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: In those days the tobacco companies went to Hartford every morning with a big truck and picked up any people who wanted work, and the people knew these trucks would come, so these people who wanted transient work were standing on steps out by the street corners or whatever, and so the trucks would come along and load up anyone who wanted to work today. So you generally have to pay people by the day. You took them back at night, and you didn't know if the same guys were going to show up the next day. That's how the tobacco got harvested then. That was before we had an association that brought workers in from Puerto Rico, etc. And then we got to the point where we brought girls in from Florida and Pennsylvania, and we kept them in boarding houses to work on tobacco.

Today we're back to maybe some Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, and there are still some farms in East Windsor and Windsor who have some of those boarding houses, but I don't know them personally.

MB: Okay, okay I think I remember Mr. [Emile] Mulnite talking about that too. I don't know; maybe his farm had them. I'm not sure.

DPB: And Peltons had a boarding house. It was out in the woods out Governor's Highway about just before you get to Grant Whitney's great big building. It was in the woods there—a big boarding house. So maybe we kept some help in the summer in the boarding house, I don't know. I didn't get born until 1930, and the Peltons lost all that land around '30 or '32 as a result of hard times from the depression and the death of the grandfather. Everything came to a head and the land had to be sold. So the boarding house and little houses and odd things like that are all gone.

MB: Okay, now, you told me before about—your mom did a lot of the dairy business, the milk

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

business for your father on the farm, she took care of that.

DPB: Well on the farm she got her spending money by selling some milk by the quart in the house. So every day my father would bring in a small milk can of milk—it was the amount she would need for a customer she had. And the milk would be kept in our refrigerator. We had very little food in our refrigerator because it was full of milk they were going to sell to the neighbors. And that's what she did all the time we were growing up. Her little penny money came from the few quarts she sold from the kitchen.

MB: Okay, now, when did she become interested in local history?

DPB: Oh wait, and so she also had to wash all those milking machines and pails and junk from the farm. She had to do all that. She had five kids, live-in grandmother, washing all the milk pales and junk and bottling the milk and separating the cream.

MB: That's a busy life.

DPB: She was working full time at home.

MB: Yeah, it was a busy life being a mom then. When did she become interested in local history and the pictures and the arts?

DPB: Well later on when she had a little more time. Maybe she was always interested because all our lives she saved things. She saved all the antiques and the artifacts where other relatives would not have saved. And she saved paper and documents and things, and when we are all grown up and started going our separate ways, she established a desk in the front room and started pouring over her papers and reading her history books and getting all involved in that. That was her hobby sort of. Her thing she was interested in.

MB: Well that was a good thing for local history that she did that. And she became involved in the Wood Library closing?

DPB: Well, yes, because at that time she and Hildred [Raymond] would do a lot of things together, and it was a concern of all of them because the town moved out of that building, and there it was sitting there, and Hildred did want to see it be a library again, and they were just racking their brain how it could happen, and Nancy Caffyn happened to be in town then and helped them because she was very good at organizing a meeting and conducting and getting at the facts; and she was a leader, she could get it done, which she did. They established the prints, got a lawyer to draw up their prints and corporation.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

MB: Now, that was Jim Throwe?

DPB: Yep. Then they went into the building, and Alice Pandozzi helped organize what they called a money tree tea party. It was an afternoon, evening event of goodies and visiting and walking through the library, and the little trees were standing around, and you hung your donations on them. That's how they collected their first money to open the door.

MB: What a clever idea.

DPB: There wasn't a book in the building at that time.

MB: Oh, that was a very clever idea.

DPB: Well they needed some operating cash. And Edith Vibert offered to be free librarian. Without her it never could have happened, never. She really took care of the building in every respect—ran the dust mop, used the broom, did anything her eyes saw that needed to be done. The decorative things you would do in your own house, how to place things on the mantel, what to show off, what not to. She just was an expert.

MB: Do you know that they have their own china at Wood, and they have silverware monogrammed? Now, how did that happen? They raised money and purchased those or—?

DPB: No, Wood did all that; that came with the building.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: It amazes me the public hasn't stolen it all these years.

MB: I know, I know. There's a lot of people on the street who really love that place, love that building.

DPB: But I worry, last time I was in that kitchen, you couldn't open the drawer the silverware was in because a piece of wood was split and had the drawer hung up, and I thought what are these people doing? How are they getting the spoons out, or aren't they using them? You can't open the drawer? Has someone fixed it?

MB: I don't know to tell you the truth. I know for some events, when we're serving just desserts and coffees and things, we don't use the silver so, I don't know how often it does get used.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

DPB: Maybe people stopped using it because they couldn't open the drawer.

MB: That's true. Well, they should check that out and see about getting it fixed. Now, were your mom and Hildred just friends that met because they lived here, or are they related someway?

DPB: They lived here. Hildred's parents moved to this street when Hildred was in first grade. And Hildred is four years younger than my mother, so my mother knew Hildred's other sister better growing up, but she was aware of Hildred being here because you know everybody on your street. They didn't play together as children. Hildred was not a Campfire Girl. They started doing things together when Hildred was determined to recreate Will Wood's farm. She wanted it to be a working farm; not just a place where old rich people lived. For years and years the whole Sperry's and, who was before them, the Ellsworths, and the Sperrys just rented the land to other farmers because they themselves weren't farmers. And Hildred's father inherited the farm, and he wasn't a farmer. He had to rent the land out. But Hildred wanted to see it be a farm, and Hildred, well, my father was the only farmer on the street, plus he was Hildred's old crush from childhood. So of course she went to him for help to make her farm.

MB: Okay.

DPB: That involved having to be friends with both because he was married. That's how they started.

MB: And then sheep—that's the sheep farm—that's what she raised is sheep up there on the farm?

DPB: Well she had some dairy cows too. And that didn't work out. It didn't work out for a lot of funny reasons, and I guess they don't belong in history, but her father was getting old and getting some goofy ideas, and he had footed all the bills to get this farm started, and he was also getting a little jealous because she was spending so much time with her farm and her farm help, and he wanted her spending her time with him. She and her father had a very close relationship. She idolized him, and maybe he expected the world of her. Whatever; they were very close. He definitely was jealous after the farm got going because he was almost left out. He didn't work on the farm.

MB: Now, what was his name?

DPB: Ellsworth Sperry.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

MB: Okay.

DPB: Yeah, while they were making the farm, creating it he had her in the car with him riding around every day because they went to see barn builders, they went to see contractors, they went to see where cows were, they were involved in every aspect of making the farm. And suddenly it was all made, and then she's with the hired help saying hay in this lot and cows eating here and doing things that didn't involve riding around with dad. And he was left out, so he got mad and decided he'd spent enough money.

MB: Okay, on the farm.

DPB: It was a sad story. It was a very sad thing for Hildred. She just had to grin and bear it because it was her father, but it broke her heart that he turned on her after this big dream had got realized.

MB: And so the farming stopped?

DPB: She had to sell the cows.

MB: Oh gee.

DPB: Yeah, well she had hired Mr. Wetherell to come down and run the farm, and he had to go because she didn't have the money to pay his pay.

MB: Now, I remember there was a Mr. Wetherell involved that when I started the third grade field trip, he used to let me use his wagon and tractor, and he brought it from Somers down.

DPB: That's the son of the Mr. Wetherell that came to run the farm.

MB: Okay, okay but he was still farming up here. It must have been their land or whatever because he had the tractor.

DPB: Oh, he farms himself up in Somers. He had a big place. He became a full-time farmer—that boy. He raised Christmas trees. He's got another brand new house in Somers now. It's a big, great big, giant log cabin house, and he has those big draft horses, and he's got 100 acres of hay he hays and sells, but he's really sort of retired because he made a lot of money in agriculture. He did—handled chemicals that had to go on all the farms for bugs, fertilizer, the whole thing, anything involved with chemicals. You have a special license

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

to handle those chemicals, and evidentially it's good money because that's what he did to build up his space before he got involved in a big farming operation of his own, which was the Christmas trees. Now, it's just leisure stuff, the hay and the horses, which are a hobby.

MB: Now, was Hildred creating the farm up here? Was that before she did the ride you told me about on the horse from your place in Vermont?

DPB: Oh, that's when she was a child. She rode from Vermont when she was only 13.

MB: Oh, all the way back here on a horse?

DPB: A wild horse she had never sat on before. She left Woodstock [Vermont] at a gallop. The horse ran away with her.

MB: She had to be a pretty strong, determined lady to do that.

DPB: I can see why her father—she was maybe the apple of her father's eye because she was game, ready, and she could do things. She flew an airplane she did—you know, she didn't cook and sew, but she ended up as an adult being an excellent cook. Maybe just came by it naturally, I don't know.

MB: Well she sounds like a pretty intelligent person who could do whatever she set her mind to do. You know, if she wanted to cook, she probably could do it and do it well.

DPB: Yeah, maybe you need to interview her son to hear about her.

MB: Okay, and Bob Raymond would be—

DPB: Yeah, I don't know. She was different, lively, a very lively person.

MB: Now, besides being involved in saving Wood, how did they—well you were a part of that too. How did you get interested in the [town] farm—saving the farm down here?

DPB: Well that was another thing that came along later in life when everyone—well when Hildred and my mother were in a position to enjoy a new hobby; that's all. My father had died. Hildred heard that this place was for sale. Hildred and her father had always wanted this place. When her father was young, he came down here all the time and visited the Bakers who lived here. And he wrote about it in his diary, which I'm afraid is lost now, because her children were not careful sorting her stuff. The little diary was in her apron

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

pocket, and I think it probably got thrown out. She carried it with her near the end because she was reading little things in it every day. She loved anything that had to do with her father. And it was his little diary where he wrote that went down to Baker's this morning, and they had a fire in the fireplace; things like that. Anyway, she knew he wanted to own this, so she wanted to own it and she came to my mother and said, "The farm is for sale; we've got to do something about it." And the owner happened to be my father's cousin, and so my mother thought we wanted it too, you know, that's exciting, "yeah we do want it. Let's all do it together," and so my mother wrote the letter to cousin Roddy King in Florida and said, how much do you want? We'd like to buy," and that's how it happened.

MB: Now, that was your mom and—

DPB: And Hildred and me.

MB: And you.

DPB: They included me for some reason I will never understand except moral support, another investor. In other words we split the price three ways. Maybe my mother knew it was foolishness to get involved. She knew it was all right for Hildred to do it because Hildred was wealthy and had money to throw away like this, but we had to be careful with ours. So my mother was happy to take up another partner. And Hildred considered her daughter—I shouldn't—this is all—that's just the way it happened. Carol [Raymond Birden] was married and having babies. She wasn't into being into real estate, but she was my girlfriend, and so we did consider whether she should be an owner too, but it wouldn't have been fair because she would have asked her mother to pay for her part, you see. So taking me, it's a third person because I worked and had my own money. That's kind of how it happened.

MB: Okay. And this place is absolutely amazing with what you have in here. Did all three of you collect the things that you put in here?

DPB: Yes, attics and cellars and this and that. The house was empty when we bought it, empty and boarded up.

MB: Oh, so you did a lot of work down here.

DPB: Yeah. First thing we did was take the boards off the window and make picnic tables out of them and then told everyone they could come and have picnics.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

MB: Well that was nice. Get people interested and know that you're down here.

DPB: That was just for fun. Picnic tables, it's the right size. Let's put some legs under them and away we went.

MB: Okay.

DPB: But the next thing that happened is Hildred's father paid for all the new window sash because it was his gift to us because he was so happy that we had bought it.

MB: Okay.

DPB: That's the beginning.

MB: Yeah.

DPB: Everything else proceeded slowly a little at a time.

MB: So a lot of the things that are in here then came from the street? They came from attics and families on the street? Or—

DPB: Nothing of real value—we never put real value because we're in the flood plane. It's just maybe—what's the word for it, another word like nostalgia? I can't think of words any more.

MB: I wish I could help you.

DPB: Some things were bought in second-hand stores like in Hartford on Fourth Street and Park Street. Hildred was always driving around in her car, and my mother didn't drive—riding in the car, and Hildred's mother was riding in the car, and the whole idea was to take Hildred's mother for a ride, but they were on the road all day going everywhere, and they would see things. They would come home at night, and they would have things in the car. All these chairs they got in a second hand store. They used to be in a restaurant, $11.00 a piece. Aren't they neat?

MB: And then they'd end up down here.

DPB: She bought 32 of these chairs. Then [s/l] Dean Zearfies bought half of them and took them down to his house. Ann Craven bought four and took them down to her house. We've got about eight left here.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

MB: Well they fit in this room nicely; they're comfortable.

DPB: So in other words when there was a bargain, Hildred didn't worry what would become of them all. She took the whole job lot, see. She came home with 32 chairs, but they went overnight. They're sturdy, heavy, $11.00.

MB: Now, when you're down here, it's quiet because this is the only house down here in the meadows. But when you were growing up, were there other houses down here on the river?

DPB: Just that little one over there, and that was a tenement house for Lewis Sperry's farm. Lewis Sperry, meaning Hildred's grandfather, who lived in Lavey's brick house, but he owned this post office corner all the way to the river, and that little house was a tenement house for some help on that farm. That was here. But this was an active place because of the tobacco. And Roddy King eventually owned this; he raised tobacco. Katie Dunn owned it for a while. She raised tobacco, and she had a live-in hired man that she got from the Somers' prison because they would let out prisoners that were trustworthy. You could keep them at your house as long as you're employing them. That's how she got a good hired man for the summer for doing tobacco. She'd go to the Somers' prison and get one.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: So he lived here. There was commotion because—and before my time when Hildred was a child she was always down here playing because the two little girls who lived here were her age. We have a lot of photographs of them playing in the yard. Hildred had a pony and pony cart, and her parents let her go anywhere in it. She would come down the hill, down here playing with these kids. She wanted to live here. She liked it down here.

MB: Well she never lived here did she? I mean she owned it but—

DPB: She was very—in the end she got to own it because she always wanted it. Yeah, she loved it; she absolutely loved it.

MB: Well it's a beautiful house and it's a beautiful spot.

DPB: And she was so respectful to—those girls who lived here, the Baker girls—one was Ruth Baker. Ruth would come here to visit often after we bought it. Relatives would bring her, Hildred would make a point of being here for when she came, and Hildred was always

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

respectful. She always said this is your house. You know, Ruth Risley would say to Hildred, wow you're doing well with the house, and Hildred would say your house. She never wanted to be one up on the little girl whose home it was.

MB: She was a very nice person.

DPB: She was a very thoughtful woman, Mrs. Rainey. Yea, made that woman feel that you come here any time; this was your home. She understood those things that—

MB: And she got to be your friend too, not just your mom's though over time.

DPB: Yes, because I—at that particular time—no I was still working. Well I was Carol's friend by then. I had been Carol's maid of honor. Carol got married, and she got this little house in East Windsor Hill. We did a lot of things together. I think Hildred was also looking out for Carol by making sure Carol's friend was around a lot.

MB: A very thoughtful lady.

DPB: Yeah, and we still really do a lot together. We'll always be connected. That's all there is to it. Oh, and that Hildred was always on the road in her car, and she was always breaking down somewhere. And we got to thinking after a while, she was doing it on purpose to give her a reason to call Carol and say, you've got to come and get us because the car broke down. And so Carol would run down to my house and say, we've got to go get mother. The mother's are stuck in the car. They're broke down in Harvard Street, and off we would go. And this made excitement for the Grandmother's day and for Hildred's day.

MB: Yeah, well and it's a little road trip and a little excitement.

DPB: Oh, we did so many of those trips.

MB: To rescue her? Yeah. Now, in between here, as you're going down to the meadows, like towards Wood, then there were never any other houses along in here?

DPB: Well, there were a bunch of little ones here on this corner with this little one that's still here. There was a boathouse that was where the Scantic Boat Club had their meetings. They had a commodore of their boat club, and they had jackets that looked like fireman's jackets. They were quite an official little boat club—but where you have a yacht club today. But this was East Windsor Hill's boat club. And they had canoes or row boats or whatever.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

MB: And these were local people that—

DPB: Yeah, yeah. And there was a little boarding house, and I almost have a funny feeling this little house might have been the boarding house but turned around and sitting in a different place. I think this little house got moved onto a new cellar about 1912. It's hard to tell from the old photographs. I have one picture with no house and another picture with the house. And I thought both pictures were taken in 1912, so I don't know. Anyway somebody said there were three houses there. That would mean this one, the boat club, another little house or a different one that was a boarding house. I don't know. I wish when the man came with the in-ground, that penetrating radar, he could have ran it over there, and we might have found foundations for whatever was over there.

MB: Oh, okay, but you don't have any memory of any houses down here in the meadow.

DPB: No, as a child the first time I saw this house I was flabbergasted. I couldn't believe this was down here. I used to ride in the meadow on my horse, so I saw it from the back, and to me from that side it just looked like a big ole farm house, and there were horses around and people and tobacco, and I didn't pay much attention to it. That little one somehow never sticks in my mind, but maybe it had shrubbery all around it then too; I don't know. I don't remember, and yet I rode by it on my horse, but later, at about age 21 I got brought up here one night to go fishing in the river, and we're down in front fishing, and I turned around and looked back this way, and I saw the front door and the window configuration, and I said that's the house down here? I couldn't believe it. That's when my mind started thinking about architecture. I just didn't believe; you know what I mean?

MB: It's too bad it can't talk because it's been here so long, what it's seen and—

DPB: The windows and that door—I just said, My God it's that kind of house. But I didn't think any more about it. That was when I was 21. How old was I when we bought it? In 1965—I was 35 when we bought it.

MB: So you've been an owner for a long time.

DPB: Hildred—

MB: Now, did Hildred know you opened up the house for all the third graders, or was she gone?

DPB: Oh yeah, they used to do some of that. My mother was the one who always did it. She'd

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

have the Girl Scouts down, and Jean Klein used to come with the little archeology kids. She always was interested. Jean was always involved with kids with the Albert Morgan Chapter archeology thing.

MB: She did a great program with the sixth graders in town—a Native-American program in conjunction with that for years.

DPB: And then, yes, that's the next thing. Both my mother and Hildred got involved with the Albert Morgan Chapter. And Hildred made arrangements for them to always use the Wood Library. That south front room was to be theirs.

MB: It still has a little thing on it—

DPB: It's got that little sign over the door, but I don't think people understand what all went on.

MB: How that came to be, yeah.

DPB: Plus, the Albert Morgan people kind of moved away because they got involved in a dig somewhere else, and they didn't feel like traveling just to have a meeting. I guess they've forgotten it all by now.

MB: I know Jean is the connection with that group, so I don't know. I know they don't meet at the library, but I don't know if it's still a functioning organization or not.

DPB: And they were a nice bunch of people, and they were the same age as Hildred and my mother, and Edith and Watson Vibert were involved, and besides having their meetings they would have their annual dinner, and they'd cook it in the Wood Library. You know, they were very involved, the Albert Morgan Chapter tea parties.

MB: And they did digs locally here in the meadows?

DPB: Yes. On Wat Vibert's land, on Hildred's land. Well, you see, Hildred's father had been interested in all those artifacts also, and that's why at that point she put together his collection, and Edith and Watson Vibert spent a whole winter in the library sorting and cataloging and labeling all those things to set them up in the upstairs alcove. Yeah, and she locked the cabinet because she didn't want people tampering with it all. I don't know what condition that is in now.

MB: It's actually in wonderful condition.

DPB: I mean who holds the key.

MB: The keys are in the office. You know, they're in the desk in the office, but people don't go in there. They're not normally open to the public unless they come to do research. People do come to do research, and they did a wonderful timeline in there where if you find something in the meadows now, you can go up into that case where they did the timeline, which probably was Edith, and match your piece to see how old it is.

DPB: Edith and Watson did all that with their textbooks and stuff. They figured that all out themselves. They were there everyday all winter working on that stuff and then I went down and did the weathering on all those little identifying tags, and then they had—Jack [Burgdorf] drew the cartoons that are on the sides of labels. It got quite involved. Then as a result of all that Hildred gave me a canopy for my antique canopy bed. That was my gift for having worked on that Indian stuff. She said this is from all the Indians at Wood.

MB: Yeah, well, there are a lot of things there.

DPB: Oh, and she bought a corner cupboard for the Viberts for their house so that they would have a place to display some relics they had. Yeah.

MB: She was a very thoughtful lady. Yeah. Well, then a lot of what's at Wood, then, she had a role in.

DPB: Oh yeah.

MB: And her books and photographs are there too now.

DPB: That's why my mother sent down all that Pelton collection of the birds and the Indian artifacts because she got so involved with Hildred, she was all gung ho into giving everything to Wood Library, and now we wonder if that was too wise after all. Because it's changing people, changing times. The building isn't big enough for everything that's always going to be offered, and is it all going to get lost in the shuffle? I understand most of the Pelton Indian stuff has been boxed up and put away somewhere. Let's hope it's safe.

MB: It is.

DPB: The other half of it all went to it either the Museum of Natural History or the Smithsonian way back in 1936. This was the remainder that stayed in the family, and now, my mother took it upon herself to put it in Wood Library.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

MB: I know in the bird room there is a whole section of the birds that's labeled the Pelton family collection, and it's got little diagrams so that you can identify all the birds, and everything else that has been donated to Wood, if it's not on display where you see it, it's in the archive room downstairs, and it's all labeled. They've even got it all on the computer now. Well, there's a project going on now. We're having it this summer actually—having mobile shelving installed in the archive room to create more room there, and we're creating a new archive room in the storage room that's over under the stairs, behind under the stairs. And they're going to keep things in that room that don't have to be temperature controlled. And a lot of that are boxes of Indian artifacts, Barney's [Daley's] collection that's not on display and things that don't have to be in temperature control. But all the paperwork and everything will be on the mobile shelving in the archive room, and this is going to double the useable space in there.

DPB: And see, the Jennings—part of the Indian stuff that was Jennings—I think in her cage upstairs she said from the Ellsworth Sperry and William Jennings collections. That represents both her parents. The Jennings stuff—Jennings owned that empty lot that is two houses down from Pleasant Valley Road, and then there's an empty lot with Christmas trees in it, and then there's a little house. That lot with the Christmas trees is something Jennings owned and way out there at the end of the lot that you can look out to from Pleasant Valley Road where Barney was digging all this stuff. And I'll bet these Jennings things must have come from that same place that years later Barney went digging in. Now that I've titled-searched and seen who owned what where, things fit together.

MB: Yeah, yeah, well, that could be.

DPB: There's a brook out there and what brook is that?

MB: I have no idea, Doris.

DPB: All these artifacts were found near a brook, which makes sense. They had to sit down by water. They're going around doing their thing.

MB: Now, does Barney know that's where the other things were collected? The Jennings things?

DPB: I don't think he's given it any thought.

MB: Barney's things—he recorded where he found everything, and I guess that's what makes

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

his collection valuable for research is because you can literally take the piece and go back and put it where he found it.

DPB: Yeah, well, that house that Rod Gilmet owns and rents—

MB: The Gentry house.

DPB: No, out on Pleasant Valley Road he owns a house that he rents. It's just a money thing. He thought it was an investment to buy something, fix it, rent it. It's a way to keep your money rather than in a bank. You know, they say real estate is better than in a bank sometimes. Anyway, that's the thing he's got. But it is the old Union School. It's the little old two-story wooden Union School—that stood right in front of Union School.

MB: Oh you're kidding?

DPB: It got moved out there and made into a family house because it had the two front doors, and it was adorable out there. They put a little front veranda on it with some spinals, and it was white, and it had rose bushes growing up—a nice two-family house and Barney lived in it.

MB: Oh, okay.

DPB: That's why his digging was out behind it, and when I discovered Jennings owned from Main Street out to behind it and Jennings had all these Indian artifacts too. It's got to mean something.

MB: Yeah, there must have been some sort of Indian encampment there or something to find so many things in one spot.

DPB: Yeah.

MB: Now, that house is still there?

DPB: Oh yeah, because the next thing that happened to that poor house, it had a fire, and then after the fire a man rebuilt it and painted it all red, and he put a big porch on the side of it. He started remolding it. Then along came Rob Gilmet, and there was another fire, which was pretty bad, and Rob Gilmet really modernized. He changed the whole identity of that little house. Now, it's that ugly looking thing with the gray siding and a raised veranda going around and new smaller size windows. Everything's all just new—new two-family house. Nothing you want to buy but it's neat. The lawn is mowed, there's families in it,

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

his investment is there. And maybe it's a good investment. I'm sure it has brand new linoleum and nice painted walls and modern kitchens and all that. Nobody would ever know it was the old … [Brad] factory [school]that became Union School and then was moved when we built the big school.

MB: Now see, I didn't know that. I just assumed they took the old one down, I didn't realize they moved it out there.

DPB: They moved it …. It was a good, big building.

MB: Yeah. Well I've seen pictures of the classes sitting out on the front step.

DPB: I've got a picture of—in the slides I have a picture of it when it was the white house with the veranda with the spindles on the porch railing and all with all black charred up on the top because the fire was the night before.

MB: Wow, well, I think Hildred would probably be really pleased to see what's going on at Wood and to have the Historical Society [South Windsor Historical Society] next door and to see this place—to see the third graders coming here and learning in this house.

DPB: Yeah, I don't know what she thinks. I know this was her own, personal love affair of wanting this house. She wasn't thinking of giving it to anybody or sharing with anyone at that time. She was—man, as a matter of fact when we started renting the back apartments, she came here one day, and she sat on that door step, and she started crying, and she said, I wish they were all out of here. She did not enjoy sharing it.

MB: Okay. Well maybe she wouldn't be happy.

DPB: I wish they were all out of here.

MB: Well, that's got to be a protection for the place that they are down here, that it's not empty and—yeah. Now, do you have plans that you want to share for this place? And I know you bought the little house next door here.

DPB: I know; it's something we're constantly thinking about. We're not making much headway. I know I've got to get it figured out.

MB: Are you thinking in terms of it being a museum? A place where people would come and visit?

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

DPB: I've given a lot of thought to that, yeah. It's got to be the right people, and you have to have a lot of stipulations. A lot of people have told me that this is not a place for a crowd. You do not want to have an organization running events weekend after weekend for 50 and 100 people and mass public movement on the property. You will kill it. It wasn't ever like that, and you're not giving any message by showing it that way. It's got to be quiet and secluded. Do you hear that? You've got to hear that outdoors.

MB: Yeah.

DPB: You've got to look over and be sure Windsor keeps that woods over there. What if they expanded [I]91?

MB: Hmm, yeah.

DPB: So far they have the same flood plain that we have, and that's why—but at night sometimes you can hear the traffic, and you definitely can hear the train, but between here and the highway there's nothing because of the flood plain. Like between here and Main Street there's nothing because of the flood plain.

MB: Which has protected it and made it special.

DPB: I know. It would be nothing if it were part of civilization. It would just be part of our hubbub.

MB: So it would have to be a group that—

DPB: That brings people in small gatherings.

MB: Okay, and have a controlled open time and not a constant hubbub.

DPB: I'm sure there's a way it could be done because all those organizations I noticed are begging for money constantly. They can't get enough money to function and to operate. My contention is they're functioning too much. Cut out a few activities, and they won't need to ask for more money. The money is all to put on the show. There's too much money involved in putting on the show. Forget it, and just show what you've got.

MB: Yeah, well, I think it sort of becomes a circle of promoting what it is you have and feeling they have to have people who come and see it in order to be interested to preserve it, and then it becomes sort of a vicious circle of promotion and—

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

DPB: I don't know, I don't—I don't know. And they're all transient people those organizations. They come and go—the people. You don't know how long the organization will live. It depends who joins it.

MB: Yeah, that's a lot to think about. It's a big responsibility because it is such a beautiful place.

DPB: And in private hands it could pass to someone who is just perfect and loaded with money and interested in saving it and all that, but that person is also going to die. And who's next. When we bought it, it was almost a rustic. Hildred was frantic. We've got to get a hold of Roddy King right away. That place is for sale. She said Schweiers are going to buy it. Damn house probably wouldn't even be here today if Schweiers had bought it. They're in the potato business. They were just looking for the land and then would have thrown some hired help in the house. It would have been dogged.

MB: I'm glad that didn't happen.

DPB: The north apartment was dogged already. We had the local fire chief living in there, and his kids, to this day say, did you ever see—they say did you see all those holes in the plaster on the stairway? That's where my mother threw her shoes at us and telling us to get upstairs to bed.

MB: Now, what family was that?

DPB: See how people lived? See how American people lived in cheap rents? There's a lot of kinds of people in the world.

MB: Well, you have to start somewhere too and start with the rent until you can afford to own.

DPB: I know, but gee, don't they understand that even a rent is your home. Don't kill it.

MB: Yeah, that's true. Should I ask what family that was?

DPB: Mullins, he was our fire chief.

MB: Oh, okay. That was before me.

DPB: Who else dogged it, oh God.

MB: We started out talking about—

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

DPB: Katie Dunn—she kept her farm equipment inside the house. Yeah, these front rooms had plows and things in them.

MB: Like a barn.

DPB: Yeah, she didn't have a barn. So there was a lot of work.

MB: And she lived alone. Her husband was the janitor at Ellsworth school, but they were divorced, but she would stop by at the school to visit him sometimes at lunch hour, and us kids would see them walking up and down on the sidewalk talking. And we'd say, oh, that's his wife.

MB: Okay, well, it was good they got along if they were divorced.

DPB: Oh God, maybe she came to borrow money from him. Katie lost the place to Roddy King, but she needed money, so he gave her a mortgage, and then he foreclosed. Poor Katie—and then Katie went away to Norwich. She had diabetes so bad she had big ulcers on her legs, and she died.

MB: Oh well, and then you bought it from Mr. King.

DPB: Yeah.

MB: All right, do you—there are some other notes here that I have from the group to ask you about. I know you're not old enough to remember the depression, but do you remember any local stories you were told about the depression? Or we could move on to World War II if you remember some local stories about World War II, or what it was like to live here during that time?

DPB: Well, we were a long time recovering from recession. I do remember—I was born in 1930. I'd say from 1930 'til we got involved in World War II, that's really what brought us out of the depression, but in that time around 1930 and thereafter until 1936, 1938, we had the people; we called them bums—just men who were homeless who stopped at the door and asked for a sandwich, or they would ask could they mow your lawn for 10 cents because they needed the 10 cents to get the bus to Hartford. It was that kind of a time. There were poor people on the road begging for food. And you all had enough trouble meeting your own grocery bill, but you had to be sure there was a little extra because you never knew when someone was going to knock on the door and ask for a sandwich. It was a giving time. Everyone was poor and everyone gave.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

MB: Wow. You talked about your family loosing some their property as a result of that. Did that happen to other people on the street?

DPB: Yep, lots of people.

MB: And I remember you telling me about a building that was down here at the farm. That was the Tramps Hotel. Is that what you said it was called?

DPB: Oh, right here at the end of the driveway, the little brick building.

MB: And was that during that time period?

DPB: I was here when all that was here way back in Town Farm days before—the town bought this place in its--back when the town owned it, before 1927, way back. It was—the Tramps Hotel was there for people who wanted to sleep inside out of the rain, I guess. I mean men of the road knew it was there. A picture of it's in the little red book right on the front.

MB: *The Country Mile?*

DPB: Yeah.

MB: What happened to it?

DPB: The 1936 flood washed it down—knocked it down.

MB: Okay, brick and knocked it down; the water must have been—

DPB: Yep, it fell apart. It probably had no cellar, no foundation. The flood was pretty high in 1936. People went out the second-story windows of this house to jump down into the boat to get out of here. Yeah, so the flood washed the brick building away. It was a one-room building, but it was pretty good sized. It had a stack of mattresses in the corner, and the deal was you went in, took a mattress off the pile and slept. In the morning you would put your mattress back on the pile and left. Oh, and there were sticks of wood outside by the door that you could take in a stick and put it in the stove, or two sticks or whatever.

MB: Now, it was owned by the town?

DPB: Well, the town owned this place. It was the Town Farm. That's the facility they offered

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

the homeless, on a nightly basis. Not bad, no complaints.

MB: Okay, yeah, well, that was a more transient population then because didn't they have—in this building in the apartments back here, weren't they—didn't they have homeless that stayed here on the farm and worked for the town?

DPB: Yeah, but that's if you were poor and needed to be welfare. The Town Farm was a way of—what is the difference? This is a legitimate organization to handle the town's responsibility to town's people—like somebody became poor, did not have a cent to his name. He had to come here because you can't leave him sitting on the road, and his relatives don't want him, and they're not legally responsible for him. But the town is. I think that's the way it goes. Or if someone were sick and could not afford the doctor, they're suddenly on welfare, but welfare people don't stay living with their parents or their sisters or something. They're on State aid or town aid, so the town has to find them a place to live. So the town did it this way. They had a big house where they put them all. And you stayed until the circumstances could be improved or your died, whichever.

MB: Okay, so these were actual people from the town that lived in the house, and the people that lived in the Tramps hotel were just people traveling through.

DPB: Yeah, travelers.

MB: Yeah. And then you had the local sheriff's office back here too on the farm. That was the same period of time as the—Town Farm.

DPB: No, we didn't have a sheriff's office. That's kind of—I don't know how that fiction started. The jail cells were there because it was convenient for the town. They had to pay a manager for the Town Farm, this poor farm establishment. They've got to pay him a yearly salary anyway, so they dumped jail people on him too. Now, his wife was also cooking for all the poor staying here and was also sending two plates full out to the jail if anybody's out there.

MB: So the manager of the Town Farm then took care of whoever was in jail.

DPB: He's got another duty. He takes care of who's in jail.

MB: Okay, so there wasn't actually a sheriff here or a sheriff's office in there?

DPB: No, if somebody did something very bad and were legally arrested, they would go to jail in Hartford. Then there are sheriffs and things—and then different.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

MB: Yeah, different times.

DPB: Yeah, there's so much to explain. It's hard to make it brief for children, and maybe that's how stories get stretched and pieces substituted, and I don't know. It's hard.

MB: Yeah, so what about World War II? Do you have memories of that here in town?

DPB: Yep. We had airplane watches and all the men were informed when their duty was. I remember that my father went with Mr. Nielson, they were assigned together and the air watchtower was out Sullivan Avenue. Way out when you take the big bend—I'm trying to think of whose house was on that corner, and is that house still there or not, I think it's gone. That's a high point in this town. As you're going out Sullivan Avenue and you turn like that to go, on this side there's kind of a high—

MB: Where that big medical building is in the center—there's like a—

DPB: Oh no, that new green and yellow building that I've never driven up to it. There's a Subway, a bank. It's a new building, the last thing before you turn the bend.

MB: Oh, okay. Yea I know where you're talking about.

DPB: You've got to drive up to get in it, and that's why people don't go there, it's not convenient. People like to ….

MB: Yeah, we're turning into lazy people I guess. Now, that's a high point?

DPB: That was a high point, so they had a big wooden tower there, and you sat up in that and did airplane watch at night. You know, looking. They had little charts that showed pictures of all the different shaped airplanes that if they spot one, maybe they could identify it. That went on during the war.

MB: And did you have blackout curtains or things like that?

DPB: Oh some people invested in them. We were lucky at our house because all our pull-down shades were dark green on the other side.

MB: Oh, okay, so they were dark enough.

DPB: So we didn't have to go get anything new. And some people were lucky because they had

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

indoor shutters on their windows. I remember my mother talking about that, how fortunate some people were in a house that had inside shutters. They could pull the shutters across.

MB: Like here. That worked out well.

DPB: We never seemed to have turned our lights off much or anything. I don't remember a air raid sound, so we never were in danger of an air raid, I don't think.

MB: Did you have drills? I remember growing up, they still had air raid drills when I was in school.

DPB: Oh in the school?

MB: Yeah, we had to go down into the basement and put your hands over your head and up against the wall.

DPB: I don't remember doing that at all. No, and I was in Union School from 1936-1944. Isn't that interesting. Fire drills I remember but not to many of them, where you just got up and marched out in order in line.

MB: Then do you remember any local stories about people who were in the war? Families that had people in the war or—

DPB: Oh, I must have. Yes, there were a lot of people and some died. I do remember all that commotion. Oh, and they put stars in the windows for how many sons in the house were in the war, or how many got killed.

MB: I know at Memorial Day parade, I went a couple of times when Barney [Daley] was speaking, and they had a group that they called the Gold Star Moms, and they were people who had lost somebody in the war.

DPB: Yes, it was a gold star for the ones that died. I remember some names, Gordon Dimlo. Oh, I just forgot the second one. Our next-door neighbor was stationed in Japan, was in the Pacific because he ended up I Japan. Well, they all went to Japan for R&R, rest and recuperation, after we had taken over Japan, so they could send the soldiers there for R&R. And he sent us home a Japanese doll because at that time my mother had me collecting dolls, whether I liked it or not, and so we're getting a doll from Japan from Eddie Gibbons because he's over there. And sure enough, he got a good one. They came in a glass case. He said he paid the little Japanese man five Hershey bars to tape up the

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

little glass case, so he could ship it without it getting broken. Five Hershey bars.

MB: And so he's a Gibbons; he served over there. I remember you saying that name of children in families that you played with, yeah, that were in the neighborhood. And did it change life here at all? Did you have shortages, or did you collect things that you were contributing to the war effort or—?

DPB: Oh, I think the word collections—little sister Elsie was saving up tin foil. That went into airplanes I think. We had rationing, but that didn't effect us children because the mother always cooked the meal. You never knew where it came from anyway. It was all her plan. The mothers had the planning and figuring to do. They knew how many [food] stamps they had, and what they could be used for, and you bought your groceries once a week, so you had it figured out what you were getting when. You had to have stamps for sugar, stamps for meat, those commodities. So you only got just so much depending on the number in your family.

MB: And who kept track of—the mom kept track of that but the store—

DPB: Some governmental organization, I don't know. Oh, at the store they had to take your stamp. See, you don't get the food without you giving them the stamp. Now, who gave us the stamps to begin with? I don't know. Did they come in the mail or did you go to the town hall and get them? I'm not sure how we got the stamps issued to us and how often.

MB: I don't know either. They must have had a place you had to go and get them, I would think. How about fuel? The farmers—that wouldn't have effected your dad because they—were they still using horses and oxen as opposed to tractors that required gasoline?

DPB: We had tractors but everybody did buy horses. My farther was able to do a lot of horse business during the war because all the big farms got interested in having horses because they couldn't get the gas for the tractors.

MB: Where we left off—we were talking about the horses, and you were saying your father made business of selling horses during the war?

DPB: Yep, they brought in big Belgian workhorses from Iowa. And all the big tobacco farms bought them. Teams—they'd buy them. Like Shepards bought one or two teams, Thralls in Windsor bought them up in East Windsor. I don't remember all the names of all the tobacco companies—General Cigar, all those companies. And then they—for some reason they kept those horses forever until they died because there was something special about having bought them in the war because they were needed, and it was like the felt

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

they owed it to them like they were veterans and those farms kept those horses. They didn't go off to the slaughterhouse just because when the war was over they got gas again. You know, they kept them.

MB: That's good, and that was good for your hay business I'm sure too. How did you find out about what was going on in the war? Did you have TV?

DPB: We had a teacher in grammar school that insisted we have current events every morning, and that was the first exercise of the day. Every child had to report the current event he had discovered over night. That was—you had to find out by reading the paper or listening to the radio, and I hated it because I wasn't interested in current events. But I guess I passed so—

MB: You must have done what you were told.

DPB: Maybe I asked my mother what happened. What can I tell at current events?

MB: Okay, now, you had a radio at your house that was on that you would listen to for the local news and—?

DPB: Somebody listened, yeah.

MB: And did you have a local newspaper here in South Windsor, or was this *The [Hartford] Courant*?

DPB: No, it seems to always have been *The Courant* or maybe *The [Hartford] Times* or maybe both. Democrats bought *The Times*, Republicans bought *The Courant*. One came at night, one came in the morning. Funny business.

MB: Okay, now, what about local gossip to hear about what local people were doing? Where would you go to find out about that?

DPB: Well, Bossen's store. Come to think of it Bossen's store because everyone had his post office box in Bossen's store, and so you went there at 8:00 in the morning really to get your mail, but you got there at 8:00 just to see everyone else that's going, and you came home with the news. You know what happened yesterday or you know what happened last night. "Guess what they told me down at Bossen's…"

MB: And so you'd hear all the—

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

DPB: And so in my father and mother's day it was like that at the that East Windsor Hill General Post Office, I imagine. That's why they all went up there—to hear the local news. Yeah. There was no other kind of hangout. We didn't have—not that I know of. I don't know of clubs or things that were hangouts.

MB: Do you remember any other stories about the flooding or hurricanes or blizzards or anything your remember of your—?

DPB: Yeah, the 1936 flood we didn't have to go to school for a while because the playground was all flooded at Union School. The 1938 flood was pretty much the same.

MB: Now, 1938 was the flood, that was a hurricane right that caused it?

DPB: Maybe, unless there was two floods that year, I don't remember that. Yeah, the hurricane was in 1938. That was quite an event because it took us by surprise. We had no knowledge of hurricanes before that. As children we don't know what it was all about. My sister and my cousin were out with their umbrella walking out in the woods because it was raining, and they were having a ball. And they came back and they said our umbrellas flew inside out. My mother's all worried; good thing they got back.

MB: Now, did you lose power and—?

DPB: Oh, yes. Yeah, the electricity went off and was probably off for two to three weeks.

MB: Oh wow, that long.

DPB: Oh yeah, everything was down, trees everywhere, all wires were down. Yeah, people had to get—what did they do milking cows? Did we have generators then? Something had to be done, I think; or else they had to milk by hand. I know that day of the hurricane they had to milk by hand because the electricity went off at 3:00 in the afternoon. And the roads washed out. You couldn't get anywhere. It was in September. There must not have been school for a while, for a week. I can't remember too much.

MB: And there was no damage done to the buildings or anything on your property.

DPB: No buildings got smashed at our place, no. But the two big elm trees in front of the house both fell like a sandwich, one on each side of the house just like that. Did not hit the house, just shut it in—closed it in like a package.

MB: Oh, you were lucky.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

DPB: I wondered myself even as a child, if this has to do with air currents that a falling object could miss a structure that's in its path. Does a block sticking up like this make the wind veer so that something coming at it will go over there? If you just think about it—we had trees down in everyone's yard and the houses weren't hit. Except my sister Helen's; the tree went right smack on the roof. But it didn't dent in very far. It didn't break the roof. A humungous elm laid right on the roof so that from the back yard you looked up and thought, what a great big tree that is right next to the roof. It's laying on the roof.

MB: Well, I know when I came to your program that was on hurricanes and floods, you showed some slides of a car that was smashed.

DPB: That was by the Watson house.

MB: And then there was a house that a tree had created a hole in the roof, and there was a story about that about them not being able to afford to repair that part of the house, so they just boarded it up for a while. I can't remember what house that was though.

DPB: I don't either. Oh my God, what house? I don't know, Maureen, I don't know.

MB: I don't remember off hand either. I remember it was in that program though. How about other—do you remember snowstorms when you were growing up that were particularly bad?

DPB: We did have a lot of snow through my youth. I remember as a little child being pulled on a sled down the path to the barn, and I couldn't see over the snow. Sitting down on the sled the snow was way up here, above my head like going in a tunnel. It was high snow.

MB: Yeah, that is a lot of snow. That would make farming difficult.

DPB: Yeah, there was always a lot of snow in the winters. It's been since I've been an adult, maybe even the last 30 years, we've started not even having winter. We don't really get winter any more. And I haven't seen people out ice-skating almost forever. I can't remember when I've seen kids out ice-skating.

MB: To have it frozen thick enough so they could.

DPB: In 1962-ish—around there—our whole back yard used to freeze with ice. We'd put our ice skates on at the back door and skated all over the yard. And all the tobacco fields were wonderful for skating. Everybody skated everywhere with no effort, and the

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

meadow—the whole meadow you could skate to East Hartford in the meadow. You can't do that now. It doesn't happen any more.

MB: Now, where—the water was standing in the meadow, and it would freeze?

DPB: Yeah, the swamps would get all frozen. You might have to step over some barbed wire fences, but you're only stepping over the top wire. The rest are under water. Or those humps in the swamp, you'd step over them.

MB: Gee, that would have been a nice long fun thing to do, skate that far.

DPB: And there was a lovely pond on Strong Road, but nobody bothers to dam any more, so they don't have a pond. Everybody went there to play hockey and ice skate. Mr. Bancroft lived there, and there was an open shed that faced the pond. He enjoyed having people come. You could sit in that shed and put your skates on. He had a long bench there, and you just hop on the ice. Everybody went there. No pond today.

MB: Now, did you have fires to keep warm?

DPB: Some boys always made a fire. I don't think they needed it to keep warm; it was a thing you could do.

MB: Yeah, we did that. I remember having a bonfire where we would slide on the hill and then go up and warm up at the fire and have hot chocolate.

DPB: And behind Peltons were the hills for sliding with a sled because being a cattle farm with cows eating the meadow all the time, our hill was clean. Every other place where it was not a farm, the hills got overgrown with brambles and briars and trees, and you couldn't slide. There was no trail. You'd get killed banging into a tree. So everyone in the neighborhood came to our house sliding around all the time in the snow. We don't get snow enough. We don't get snow enough any more. Except to hear the news broadcasters, you'd think we were having a blizzard every third day. They talk us up a storm.

MB: Yeah, alarm us. Okay is there anything you want to add to what we've been talking about today, or shall we stop? We've been talking a long time.

DPB: No we probably got off track.

MB: Oh, but there was a lot of good information though Doris.

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

[Tape ends]

Wood Memorial Library © 2013

Doris Pelton Burgdorf – Oral History Interview #3
July 31, 2007

1936 Flood 24, 30
1938 Hurricane 30
4-H 3

A
Albert Morgan Chapter 16
American Sumatra Tobacco Company 3

B
Bakers 10, 13
Baker, Ruth 13
Bancroft, Mr. [George] 32
Belgian workhorses 28
Birden, Carol Raymond 11, 14
Bissell, Jerija 1
Boarding houses 15
Bossen's Store 20
Brad Factory School 17

C
Caffyn, Nancy 6
Campfire Girls 3, 8
Collection, Pelton Family 17, 18
Collection, Barney Daley 18
Collection, William Jennings 18
Connecticut River 4
A Country Mile 24
Craven, Ann 12

D
Daley, Barney 27
Depression 5, 23
Dillon, Pat 5
Dimlo, Gordon 27
Dunn, Katie 13, 23

E
East Windsor Hill Boat Club 14
East Windsor Hill General Post Office 1, 4, 29
Ellsworth School 2, 23

F
Flood plain 12, 21
Food stamps 28

G
Gibbons, Eddie 27, 28
Gilmet, Rod 19
General Cigar 28
Gentry house 19
Girl Scouts 3, 15
Gold Star Moms 27
Griffin Road 1
Griffin, Janie 1
Griffin Fuller Tobacco Company 1

H
Habif's 2
Hartford 12
The Hartford Courant 29
The Hartford Times 29
Historical Society 20

I
Indians [Native American] 19

J
Jennings, Alison Pandozzi 2
Jennings 19

K
King, Roddy 11, 13, 22, 23
Klein, Jean 16

L
Lavey's 13

M
Millerton, NY 4
Mullins [fire chief] 22
Mulnite, Emile 6
Museum of Natural History 17

Doris Pelton Burgdorf – Oral History Interview #3
July 31, 2007

N

Native American Program 16
Niagara Falls 4
Nielson, Mr. 26
Newberry, Harold 5

P

Pandozzi, Alice Marie 7
Pelton, Helen Risley 1, 6
Pelton Farm 5
Peltons 5, 32
Pleasant Valley Road 18

R

Rainey, Mrs. 14
Rationing 28
Raymond, Bob 10
Raymond, Hildred 6, 8, 9, 10, ll, 13, 14, 15, 20
Risleys 1
Risley, Benjamin Franklin 2
Risley, Ruth 13
Rockwell, Dr. Sidney 2
Rockwell, James 2
Rye Street 1
Rye Street Park 1

S

Scantic Boat Club 14
Schweier's 22
Sheriff's office 25
Shepards 28
Smithsonian 17
Somers 9
Somers prison 13
Southergill, Charlene 2
Sperry, Ellsworth 18
Sperry, Lewis 13
Sperry's 8
Strong Road 32
Sullivan Avenue 26

T

Tobacco 5
Thrall's 28
Throwe, Jim 7
Town Farm 10-15, 20-22, 24-25
Tramps Hotel 24, 25

U

Union School 19, 20, 27, 30

V

Vibert, Edith 7, 16, 17
Vibert, Watson 16, 17

W

Watson house 31
Webster's Dictionary 3
Wetherell, Mr. 9
Whitney, Grant 5
Windsor 21
Wood Library 2, 6, 7, 10, 16, 17, 18
Wood, William 8
Woodstock, VT 10
World War II 23, 26, 27

Z

Zearfies, Dean 12