

David Collins Oral History Interview, March 27, 2007
Administrative Information

Narrator: David Collins

Interviewer: Jan Kennedy

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Biographical Note and Abstract

David Collins was born in 1926 in South Windsor to Asher Allen Collins and Madeline Barnes Collins. He attended South Windsor Schools. In 1943, at the age of 18, Dave joined the Army for a two-year stint, driving a tank in Germany and Czechoslovakia. Returning to Collins Lane after the war, Dave married Dorothy Simler and settled into his grandmother's house. Throughout his life, Dave was active in the Wapping Community Congregational Church. His livelihood was in dairy farming, growing tobacco, and eventually driving freight trucks, hauling milk and other products.

In this interview, Dave Collins talks to Jan Kennedy about being raised in a farming family in the Wapping section of South Windsor. The Collins family maintained a dairy and managed some tobacco farming. Dave talks about his childhood, growing up in the Wapping community with siblings Porter, Sherman, Cynthia and Buddy, and attending local grammar and high schools. He recalls harvesting ice in the early winter months, and storing it between layers of sawdust for use in the summer months to cool milk. Collins' wife Dorothy Simler Collins also speaks in this interview

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Dave Collins
House
Collins Lane

(formerly his
grandparents'
house)



Porter Collins
House

Collins Lane

David Collins
Oral History Transcript
Interviewed by Jan Kennedy
March 27, 2007

Jan Kennedy: Dave, maybe you can tell us a little bit about where you were born, when you were born?

David Collins: I was born right here in Wapping, down to my folks house. In 1926 I was born. Lived here all my life, other than 2 years in the Army down in Houston. Married a local girl here, Dorothy Simler, and came back here to Collins Lane and we spent our life here with 2 daughters. And a big part of our lives has been the Wapping Church.

JK: You were born in your in parents' home?

DC: In my parents' [Asher Allen Collins and Madeline Barnes Collins] home.

JK: Not in a hospital?

DC: Nope.

JK: And your parents' home is—

DC: Right here in Collins Lane.

JK: Collins Lane. So it's what, 150 feet from where—

DC: Where I am now.

JK: From where you are now.

DC: This was my grandmother's house. We got married, she passed away, and—

JK: The house you're living in now?

DC: Right now.

JK: Oh. Okay. Do you remember your grandmother?

DC: Oh, yes. Yes. Definitely.

JK: All right. How far back can you remember in your family?

DC: Oh, that's a hard question. Well, growing up down there on the farm, driving the cows down to the cow pasture, and hoeing tobacco and things like that.

JK: So your parents and grandparents were in the dairy business?

DC: Yes.

JK: And the tobacco business?

DC: Tobacco business, raised 2 acres of tobacco, or 5 acres of tobacco, because I raised 2 acres myself, after I got married and—but primarily the dairy business.

JK: Okay. So you were dairy farmers. Where was the farm or the barn?

DC: The farm was right here in Collins Lane. The barn was right out in back of the house. They raised tobacco across the street here and the hills out—all the way over the hill here and down, cutting hay for the cows.

JK: And what was the farm called?

DC: Just Collins Farm.

JK: Collins Farm. So you've got the Forrester Farm; you've got the Collins Farm.

DC: Right.

JK: Were there many dairy farmers in the area?

DC: Yes. That's all there was.

JK: Is that right? So corn, potatoes and—

DC: Tobacco.

JK: But the potato business was totally separate from the dairy business, different—

DC: Mostly, mostly.

JK: The silo that you have, that I see behind your parent's house.

DC: That was one of two. We had another one in the barn. It's torn down now, but—

JK: And that's where the barn was?

DC: Yeah.

JK: And how many cattle, cows do you think you had?

DC: Oh, 20, 25.

JK: You milked 20 or 25?

DC: We milked probably 18. Sunnyside Farm is what they called it.

JK: Oh, okay Sunnyside. And when did you stop the dairy farming business?

DC: I didn't. Of course I got put into the Army, spent 2 years with Patton over in Germany.

JK: Okay. Maybe we can go into that in a little detail?

DC: Well, I was lucky I came out without a scar. I drove a tank most of the time in Germany. Came out and got discharged, came home and moved into my grandmother's house here. She had passed away. And—

JK: So you went into the war in 1943?

DC: Yes, '43.

JK: Came out in '45.

DC: Yeah.

JK: Were you in Normandy?

DC: No, I was in Germany, Czechoslovakia.

JK: Now, so you weren't in the Battle of the Bulge?

DC: No.

JK: Okay. All right. But Patton started—I don't know where he started. But anyway you weren't in the first Patton march up toward Normandy and into that. You joined in later—

DC: No, no. Later I joined. I was only 18 years old.

JK: 18.

DC: So I joined and then we went from Germany into Czechoslovakia. That's where I ended up, in Pilsner.

JK: All right. You were involved in several battles with the tanks?

DC: Yeah, I drove, but I didn't get into any trouble.

JK: All right. But you were the driver, so you had, what 3 people in a tank?

DC: Driver, assistant driver, gunner, assistant gunner. They're up top in a turret. I'm down below with—the driver had his feet on my shoulders. When he wanted to go to the left, he put my left shoulder and my right. When he wanted to stop, he'd push them both back, and when he wanted to go forward, push in front.

JK: Is that right?

DC: Quite an experience.

JK: Now, the shells for the tank, did they have to be hand loaded?

DC: Had to be loaded, yes.

JK: And that was the assistant gunner?

DC: The assistant gunner. He put them in up top, yes. The cannon went right out over my shoulder as driver.

JK: Okay. Now, but the shells were behind you?

DC: Yes.

JK: And how did he get the shells up to the—

DC: Oh, he had the shells up in the turret.

JK: In the turret?

DC: In the turret with him.

JK: Did you have a machine gun in the tank?

DC: He had a machine gun too, and the assistant driver had a machine gun.

JK: Did you fight other tanks, or were you—

DC: No, we didn't do—we were very lucky, got in on the very tail end of it. We didn't do much fighting at all, didn't have to kill anybody, thank the Lord.

JK: Oh, really?

DC: We fired a few cannons off over into Czechoslovakia and that's about it.

JK: Did you see any of the prison camps?

DC: No, I didn't see any of the prison camps, no.

JK: Okay.

DC: I was very lucky; very, right on the tail end of the war.

JK: Did you meet Patton personally?

DC: No, no. No, no.

JK: No? How big of a battalion were you in?

DC: Oh, must have been about 18 or 20 of us.

JK: Tanks?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Eighteen to 20 tanks?

DC: No, it was probably 6 or 8 tanks.

JK: Oh, it was small. Yeah, but you had an infantry that followed you, I assume.

DC: Yeah, they were along side of us.

JK: Along side of you. What were your impressions of Patton? He had kind of a bad reputation, and yet I thought the troops like him.

DC: We did. He was a friend.

JK: He was kind of brutal, however, I gather.

DC: Yes. Well, he had to be in his job.

JK: Did you ever get in conflict between Patton and who was the British General that—he and Patton were always at odds? I can't remember.

DC: I don't know. I never saw Patton.

JK: Really? That small a group, you didn't see him.

DC: Didn't see him.

JK: I would have thought he would have been with you.

DC: No. We got orders, "Come down to our command." And that was it.

JK: So you were a small tank battalion and he had several of these that he was coordinating?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Did you ever confront the Russians?

DC: Yes, just here and this, nothing very stable. We were in Czechoslovakia, the war was over and we came home.

JK: Were you—in Germany, I assume you weren't welcomed. In Czechoslovakia were you welcomed when you came through?

DC: Yeah. They were glad to see us.

JK: They were glad to see you?

DC: They were glad to see the war was over.

JK: Did you see the destruction in Germany that—

DC: No, I didn't, didn't see that.

JK: You didn't see that? Okay. What did the war years leave you with? You were young.

DC: Not too much, really, just war was hell; men shooting men, how stupid.

JK: On your arrival home, however, you were a hero.

DC: Welcomed home, yeah.

JK: Now you weren't married at that point?

DC: Not right then, but soon afterwards I got married.

JK: When did you meet the young bride?

DC: Oh, I must have been 20, about 20 years old.

JK: So you didn't know each other in school?

DC: Yeah, we did, yeah. We grew up together.

JK: You did grow up together. Now you're a Simler. So you're marrying Simlers, Mildred Simler's—

DC: Sister-in-law.

JK: Sister-in-law, oh that's right she's a Simler. So talk a little bit about your schooling.

DC: Well, grammar school down here in the parking lot of the Wapping church. It was a great big school.

JK: It's called Wapping Grammar School?

DC: Wapping Grammar School. Yeah, and from there I went over to Ellsworth [High School] over on Main Street and got deferred from the Army until I graduated. And so I graduated in June and in July I was down in Houston, Texas in basic camp and that's about it.

JK: Now Wapping went through what grade?

DC: Eighth grade.

JK: Okay and then you went to high school—

DC: Went to high school in Ellsworth.

JK: And Wapping had existed for a long period of time before you went there?

DC: Oh, yeah. It was there for years.

JK: And Ellsworth, when was that built?

DC: Ellsworth, down to Waco, Texas. That's where I was trained; Waco.

JK: That's where you trained? Ellsworth had existed for a while as well before you went there?

DC: Yes. Well, not too long.

JK: Can you describe Wapping School?

DC: It was old. It was in a parking lot of the church down here, and 8th grade, very friendly, Ms. Connery, Mr. McCarton, and it was good.

JK: Did we have kindergarten in those days?

DC: No.

JK: First grade. Now, I remember, you say it was a brick building?

DC: No. It was –

JK: Wooden. I was told recently there was a door for the boys and a door for the girls.

DC: Yeah. The girls were around the south side; they had their room. And the boys were on the north side; and we had our room.

JK: And classrooms were downstairs?

DC: First floor and the 2nd floor. And there in the basement. The basement was ground level.

JK: Okay, ground level, and then, on the 2nd floor, can you describe what that looked like?

DC: It was a hall with doors, rooms on both sides, 1st grade, 2nd grade, well they went all the way up through 8th grade in grammar school.

Dorothy Simler Collins (DSC): They had a small kitchen in there.

DC: Small kitchen, yeah. We had a cafeteria.

JK: Now, was there a gym on the 2nd floor?

DC: No. We used the Community House.

JK: Community House is the old Community House that's the Police recreation area?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Oh, so that was the gym. Somehow I always thought there was a gym on that 2nd floor, and it was low ceilings—

DC: No, we went up in the attic if anything. In the attic they had a place where we would play up there.

JK: Okay, but could you play basketball up there?

DC: It was low ceilings, so no—

JK: Low ceilings?

DC: We couldn't play up there. We went over to the Community House for basketball.

DC: Well, no but later on in years it was built.

JK: But where did you do your athletics then, at Wapping?

DC: We didn't. We'd play outdoors or went up in the attic of the grammar school.

JK: But do you ever remember playing basketball up there?

DC: No, not really. Not really.

JK: You walked to school?

DC: We walked—well; from here we walked to school, yeah.

JK: Bicycled?

DC: Bicycle and then Dad would come down and pick us up, we'd come home for lunch, and take us back again after lunch.

JK: In a car?

DC: Yeah. And then after school we'd either come home on the bus or we'd walk home.

JK: What do you remember about your father?

DC: Worked hard on the dairy farm. We had about 18 or 20 cows, plus 4 or 5 acres of tobacco. And always there for us.

JK: Was he strict?

DC: No, he was a friend?

JK: Was he very involved in the Wapping church as well?

DC: Yes, he was. He was a Deacon.

JK: All right, all right.

DC: I was a Deacon for, I think, about 8 years, president for 2 years.

JK: You remember when that was?

DC: Oh, what, '46, '48? Something like that.

JK: After you came back from the war. You were very young then. You were—

DC: Yes.

JK: —in your 20s.

DC: Yeah. I went in when I was 18, came out of the Army when I was 20, and very active in the church from then on. Then I got married.

JK: And how many grades apart were you in school?

DC: She was a year ahead of me.

JK: A year older.

DSC: Only a month older.

JK: Only a month older? That's good. Do you remember any stories of your father? Was he humorous? Was he a kidder?

DC: Very friendly.

JK: In the sense of a huggy, warm?

DC: No, not really hugging, warm, but just a good buddy. I remember going out and milking the cows with him. Never very strict. In fact, it irritated my mother because he wasn't strict more.

JK: Can you describe your mother?

DC: Schoolteacher. From Colrane, Massachusetts. Always concentrated on education. Brought us up to be proper; there was 5 of us, 4 boys and 1 girl. Cynthia Waldron is my sister. And good, clean living.

JK: Can you describe the children and their ages or relative ages?

DC: Porter was my oldest brother; he's dead now. And then there was me and then Sherman, and then Cynthia, and then my kid brother Buddy [George Walter Collins].

JK: Okay, and Buddy, I understand, lives in Massachusetts?

DC: He lives up in Walpole, Massachusetts. He's a schoolteacher.

JK: Did he ever live in South Windsor?

DC: Oh, yeah. He lived here for many years until he went to college. Then he came home here and got married and he moved up there.

JK: He moved because of the job?

DC: That and the girl he married, I guess.

JK: Okay. Where'd he go to college?

DC: Went to college up in Boston, wasn't it?

JK: So he was from Amherst?

DSC: When he was in the Peace Corps or something, not the Peace Corps but teaching over in Europe, and he met Judy there. She was a teacher too.

JK: Okay.

DSC: And they were married.

JK: So you were the 2nd oldest?

DC: Second oldest.

JK: Second oldest. Did that put additional responsibility on you?

DC: No, not really. I came right out of high school and came out in June and in July I was in Houston, Texas already in the Army. And we all got along fine, no problem at all. Porter never was in the Army.

JK: Is that right? How did he escape?

DC: I don't know. Deferred on the farm.

JK: Okay. So your father was still working it but he needed help.

DC: Yes, yes.

JK: I wonder how common that was.

DC: Very common.

JK: Was it?

DC: The older son always stayed home and helped foster and people like that, and stayed on the farm and, dairy farm.

JK: Oh. And the other children were too young to be in the service?

DC: Right, yeah.

JK: Your mother, when did she teach?

DC: Oh, way back before she got married up in..., Massachusetts, and then she taught down here in Wapping. That's where my father met her.

JK: How did she end up down here?

DC: Her job, I guess, teaching.

JK: Did she ever teach after she started having children?

DC: No, no.

JK: She stayed home?

DC: She stayed home. Well, 5 kids. She had to stay—

JK: She had her hands full. Can you describe her, as a person?

DC: Well, just like my father, a friend. Strict to a point of behave yourself. Very conscious about having clean clothes and a clean house and she was more the boss than he was.

JK: He was the boss of the farm and she was the boss of the house?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Can you describe a day—you know—when you were a child, if you can remember, what it was like, what time you got up?

DC: Yeah. Got up in the morning and drove the cows down to the cow pasture on Pierce Road down here. Came back and got dressed. Went to grammar school down here in Wapping, which is a big grammar school right out in the church parking lot down here. All 8 grades. Dad would come down and pick us up and take us home for lunch, take us back. Went to school, and we'd get out probably 4:00, 5:00, and we'd come home and work on the farm and milking the cows.

JK: Did you milk them in the morning?

DC: Milked them in the morning before school. Well he did the milking machine and stuff like that but I'd go out and help him. And then milk them in the evening and put them in, just north of the house here we had a nice pasture. Put them in there, and go in, and of course my mother being an ex-school teacher, we had to buckle down and do our homework and study and stuff like that, which was probably the best thing in the world for us. But I couldn't imagine—I could just picture her now, "Sit down there and do your homework."

JK: Did you all do the homework at the same table, or—

DC: The kitchen table, yes.

JK: Can you kind of describe your parents' house? You didn't have your own bedroom, I assume? You shared a bedroom?

DC: Shared a bedroom with a brother. Of course, I had 3 brothers and a sister, so I had 1 brother who shared a bedroom down here on Collins Lane. Sister was the only one who had her private room.

JK: So you had a 4-bedroom house?

DC: Yes, a 4-bedroom house. Yeah.

JK: It's an interesting design for a house.

DC: A big one down there, yes.

JK: How did that come about? Do you remember the history?

DC: I don't know. It was there when I was born—

JK: Because it has a—it's a flat roof.

DC: Flat roof.

JK: There's a name for that style. I don't remember what that is, but—did you ever have leaks with a flat roof?

DC: Yes, I think we did once, and every year we went up and put tarpaper on. I put tar on it and stuff like that. I can remember doing that as a kid.

JK: Your father died—about what age were you when he passed on?

DC: Oh, I don't know. He was alive when I was in the Army, wasn't he, Dot?

DSC: Died in—

JK: We can look up those later, if you like, but he was alive when you got married?

DC: Yes.

JK: What did he die of, do you remember?

DC: Probably a heart—he was worn out.

JK: Heart attack?

DC: What's that?

DSC: Car accident.

DC: Oh, that's right, too. He was in a car accident. He and mother both were killed.

DC: Both together?

DC: Yeah. Over on Route 5.

JK: Okay. So when you were first milking the cows, you had electric?

DC: Electric, yeah. But you still stripped them, after you took the machine off, to make sure there was no milk left in them.

JK: So you don't remember anything before electricity? Electricity was here when you were living?

DC: Right, right.

JK: And you all had cars at that point? No wagons?

DC: Cars, or the family car.

JK: Family car.

DC: The one to go to church in.

JK: So you didn't go by wagon?

DC: No.

JK: Can you describe what this area looked like? Sullivan Avenue existed?

DC: Yeah. Well, originally it was Collins Lane here with Sullivan Avenue. And then they bypassed it over there, and left us over on Collins Lane here and this was my grandfather's house here I'm in now. And—

JK: And Sullivan Avenue, was it asphalt?

DC: Yeah.

JK: It wasn't tarred, it was an asphalt road?

DC: It was a tar road, I guess it was tar.

JK: Tar initially?

DC: Yeah.

JK: And Nevers Road existed up the hill?

DC: Yeah. Over the hill here.

JK: Okay. Do you remember when Route 5 was put in?

DC: No, not really.

JK: I'm not sure of the date of that one either. What are the big changes that you have seen in your 80, 81 years now, in South Windsor?

DC: Well, not too much, as far as the roads are concerned. Just always been a friendly little town.

JK: Think it's still little?

DC: It's little, pretty much really. Town office is down here right north of the church.

JK: You think it's still little for you because your family has been able to kind of stay together?

DC: Yes, I think so. I think so. Of course, the developments are all out in the back now. It's really grown.

JK: As a family, did you have any traditions?

DC: Oh, as a family, everything. Christmas together and Thanksgiving and—

JK: Now, are you talking about your family or—

DC: My folks' family.

JK: Your folks' family.

DC: Of course when we got married we were involved in it. But as a kid, everything was worked around the farm, the dairy farm. Driving the cows in the pasture and cutting the hay and the silage and everything else.

JK: Did you have trouble getting the cows across Sullivan Avenue?

DC: No, no. It was—rarely you saw a car.

JK: Is that right?

DC: Rarely you saw a car.

JK: But going back to traditions, you all got together in whose home?

DC: The big house down here.

JK: But your parents died, you must have been in—

DC: They were killed in an automobile accident.

JK: Must have been 1950, somewhere in that area I guess. So, so they weren't the core. Did Porter kind of take over the—

DC: No, they were the core. By the time we got married, and they were killed.

JK: You were married in '44?

DSC: '46.

JK: Just after the war. Do you remember any special events?

DC: Christmas and Thanksgiving always mother had at—always had a big Christmas tree. We raised turkeys and stuff like that.

JK: Oh, you did raise turkeys?

DC: Yeah, on the home down there.

JK: When did you get involved in Christmas trees?

DC: When I came out of the Army, they had some land here and I got some and planted them. And the whole side hill here was Christmas trees and selling Christmas trees for years and years, \$20. Cut your own tree.

JK: Did you and Porter always do that together or did you do it initially—

DC: No, I did it mostly myself.

JK: Okay. That's a nice tradition. It's always interesting, though, when the father and mother pass on.

DC: They were killed in an automobile accident.

DSC: That was 1964.

JK: Oh, so that was later.

DC: I was working for DeCarli's Express in Rockville.

JK: In Rockville?

DC: Rockville.

JK: Not in the... Group?

DC: No, in Rockville; worked out of there, started out by driving milk truck, picking up from the farms. Drove that for 5 or 10 years. And then went on the Express, drove an Express truck through Greenfield, Seven Falls, up through there. And then he sold out to Woodland Motor Freight and then I went from down there—New Haven, Bridgeport, down there, drove that area.

JK: So when you did Express, you had to get them there at a certain hour of the morning, or—

DC: No. You would start in the morning and unload the trucks you picked up the night before. Unload them, and then load up for your run, whatever run you were going on. And then you finished delivering probably 3:00 or 4:00, and then they'd give you 2 or 3 pickups on the way home; pickups for the next morning.

JK: How did they tell you where the pickups were?

DC: You called them on the phone.

JK: You called them?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Okay.

DC: We did have radios in the truck, too, but mostly did it by the phone.

JK: So these were all single-axel trucks you were driving?

DC: Yeah.

JK: So you were going way up to Massachusetts?

DC: Greenfield, ..., Colrain.

JK: Do you remember what the price of gasoline, what a gallon of gas cost?

DC: Probably about 65 cents.

JK: I bet you remember it at a quarter. I almost think I can remember a quarter a gallon on it at some point. And how did you work your lunch?

DC: You had your lunch pail in the truck and you wanted a sandwich, you ate it.

JK: Okay.

DC: You wanted to stop for coffee, you stopped. No boss on your tail all day long. Loved it.

JK: And then when you switched, you went down south and did the Connecticut coast?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Bridgeport—

DC: Bridgeport, Greenwich.

JK: You were always a single driver?

DC: Yes, single driver. I didn't drive trailer, just a single truck I had.

JK: And how many years did you do that?

DC: Oh, 20 years.

JK: Okay, so you did that when you came out of the—well, you worked on the farm for a while?

DC: Worked on the farm for a little while, and then went on milk truck for 8 or 10 years. And from the milk truck he sold that out and then we went on delivering freight.

JK: So the total though, you think was only 20 years?

DC: No, 20 to probably near to 40 years total.

JK: Forty years. When did you retire?

DC: '65.

DSC: '89. 1989.

DC: In 1989 I retired, I was probably 65, closer to 70.

JK: You were 65, 70 years old?

DSC: He was 63.

JK: You were 63? Retired young. So you—

DC: Raised a couple of acres of tobacco.

JK: And when did you stop doing that?

DC: Oh, when I was about 70.

JK: When you were 70? You raised tobacco—where was the tobacco?

DC: Down on my father's farm down here. He always had 5 or 6 acres, and I'd have a couple acres of my own, we worked on it.

JK: Now this was broad-leaf?

DC: Broad-leaf tobacco.

JK: Can you tell us a little about tobacco farming?

DC: Well, you set the plants out in the spring, hoed them, and cultivated them. And then in the fall you cut them and spear them—I did all the spearing for my father and myself, you know, pull them on a lathe. Then hang them in the shed, put it on a rig and then take it to the tobacco shed. Hang it in the shed until it was dry; it would be maybe January or February. You'd take it down and you'd strip it off.

JK: Where was your shed?

DC: Out in back of Dad's house out there?

JK: So you had dairy barns; you had a tobacco shed.

DC: Tobacco shed.

JK: And was it as big as the tobacco sheds we see today?

DC: Yes.

JK: It had the slats that opened on the side?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Did you try to dry it, other than letting nature dry it?

DC: No. Let nature dry it.

JK: So no charcoal, no propane?

DC: We didn't but most—a lot of people did.

JK: That sounds very romantic, but I understand tobacco raising is not very nice work.

DC: Well, it's hard work. Hard work.

JK: Can you describe why?

DC: Well, tobacco is heavy, and hang it in the shed, you've got six or eight socks on a lathe, and it's all gotta go up in the shed and hang on poles. But I loved it.

JK: Bugs? Worms?

DC: No, not too bad. Oh, yeah, our biggest threat was hail. We'd get a good crop of tobacco and then get a hailstorm; it'd strip it right down. We lost it all.

JK: How often do you think that occurred?

DC: Oh, I only had it once really in my growing, but we had a little bit every year, but not enough to destroy it.

JK: Now, did you have to pick off the 3rd growth?

DC: Well, after it got up to a certain point you'd top it and take the top off and then 2 or 3 weeks later you'd have to cut the suckers out of it.

JK: Suckers, okay.

DC: And then you cut the tobacco, let it lay down and dry, and then pick it up, hand it to you—I did all the spearing, put it on the lathe.

JK: How tall are the tobacco plants?

DC: Five feet.

JK: Now, this is different than shade?

DC: Oh, yeah. Shade they pick the leaves off. These you took the whole stalk and everything and hung it in the tobacco shed until they were dry, along maybe December or January. Take them down, and then you strip them off.

JK: And what is this tobacco used for?

DC: Cigars.

JK: How does it differ from shade-grown?

DC: Well, the broad leaf was a bigger leaf and a heavier leaf. And it was used for good cigars making.

JK: Shade-grown in cigars making also, right?

DC: Yeah, yeah.

JK: Is the shade-grown the outer part and the broad leaf the inner part of the cigar?

DC: No, the broad leaf is the outer part. And of course all the junk went into the center of the cigars.

JK: Why did people go to shade-grown versus broad leaf?

DC: I don't know. There was an awful lot of shade-grown around here.

JK: In the dairy farming business, you had electricity, so you kept your milk cool?

DC: Yeah.

JK: A cooler. And then it was picked up every—

DC: Yeah.

JK: --day?

DC: Every day. I drove milk truck for 6 or 6 years. Five o'clock in the morning go around and picked up probably 15 or 20 stops. Ellington, Enfield, back through South Windsor here and down Main Street. Take it into Brian Chapman's. These were 40-quart cans.

JK: You took it in cans? You didn't have a big tank?

DC: Nope, nope. That came after I got through.

JK: Okay. But your truck wasn't cooled, was it?

DC: No. The farmers would have milk coolers, milk tanks, and they'd put ice in there. And they'd go down all winter long, cut ice in the ponds, store it in the icehouse with sawdust over it, which would hold it all summer. And put the ice in the tank with the milk cans, cooled it. And next morning I'd pick them up, take it to Brian Chapman in Hartford in 40-quart cans, and you'd dump it. The cans would come back all hot from being steamed out. And the next day I'd go out and take the cans back to them and I'd pick up the next day's milk.

JK: Now 40 quarts.

DC: Dad had 6 cans, some had 2 cans and 1 can and 10 cans.

JK: How much does a 40-quart container weigh?

DC: Probably about 90 pounds, 80-90 pounds.

JK: So you lifted the milk cans—

DC: Pulled them right out of the tanks.

JK: —and put them up into the truck?

DC: Right in the truck.

JK: You were a physical man, sir.

DC: Well, you got used to it. Of course, a lot of cans were only half-full, but if they were full they'd go 80, 90 pounds.

JK: Now that was just raw milk; it wasn't pasteurized?

DC: Raw milk, taken into Brian Chapman's, where I would—

JK: In Hartford?

DC: Hartford.

JK: Where in Hartford?

DC: Out on—well, one of them was down on West Hill Avenue, and then was out near West Hartford.

JK: Now, did you then drink the milk after it came back, or did you drink milk out of the cow?

DC: We did out of the cow down home, raw milk.

JK: Raw milk. Did you separate the cream at all for the family?

DC: We didn't, no. Cream always came at the top, and mother had it in the refrigerator. She'd take the cream off the top and we'd drink the milk. She'd put up the cream for something else.

JK: So you always had refrigerators in your home? No iceboxes?

DC: Maybe as a kid we had an icebox. Go down to the ponds down here and cut the ice in the wintertime. Of course you had to have the ice to keep it in the milk cooler.

JK: Describe the ice making, where the ponds were and all.

DC: Down here on Pierce Road. We'd go down there with a big long saw and cut ice in cakes and bring them up and put them in the icehouse, cover them with sawdust.

JK: Where'd you get the sawdust?

DC: Saw mills around here.

JK: You didn't have any sawmill or anything.

DC: No, we didn't have a sawmill.

JK: Describe how thick the ice was, the type of saw, how you got started.

DC: Ice was maybe a foot thick, like that. And probably 2 feet by 2 feet by a foot thick. And you put it in the icehouse and you'd cover sawdust on it and keep piling it up and piling it up. And then it would last all summer.

JK: And how did you get the saw started?

DC: With difficulty.

JK: Did you have an auger, or—

DC: No, a hand saw.

JK: But you've got to get a hole there to get a saw in first—

DC: Yeah, yeah.

JK: You've got to break through the ice at some point.

DC: Break the ice—break it through the ice.

JK: Now, these were shallow ponds?

DC: Yeah.

JK: But there was water under the ice?

DC: Yes, yes.

JK: And—

DC: You had to be careful you didn't fall in.

JK: But they were shallow, so even if you fell—

DC: You wouldn't drown, no, but you'd get soaking wet and it's cold. And then you'd bring them up here and put them in the icehouse and put sawdust over them and keep piling them up.

JK: How'd you bring them up? You had a truck?

DC: Yeah, we had a truck. Well, when I was a real kid it was a wagon with a horse.

JK: So you do remember a wagon with a horse?

DC: Yes.

JK: Okay. And it was your horse?

DC: Yeah. Oh, yeah. We always had horses on the farm down there, for cultivating tobacco and stuff like that.

JK: So you didn't have a tractor, you had a horse?

DC: We had a tractor afterwards. Had the horses when I was a real little kid, then we had tractors.

JK: Who cared for the horses?

DC: We did. Of course we had the cows in the barn, 10 or 15, maybe 20 cows.

JK: How many horses?

DC: Two horses.

JK: Do you remember the make or the model?

DC: Don't remember anything about them, just that they were horses and fed them and drove them.

JK: Did you ever ride them?

DC: Yep, we rode.

JK: Now, looking at global warming, a foot of ice—you think a foot of ice could exist today?

DC: I doubt it.

JK: So you've seen a warming trend as well, with respect to the ice?

DC: Right.

JK: Now, wasn't there a great competition for ice?

DC: No, we had our ice down in the ponds down in the cow pasture down there.

JK: That was your property?

DC: Yeah.

JK: So they were your ponds?

DC: We'd go down there with a big long saw, and cut them. I can remember dragging them out and putting them in the wagon with sawdust and bringing them up here and putting them in the icehouse as a kid.

JK: So it's a 1person saw with a wooden handle on the end. Was it tapered as it went down?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Big teeth?

DC: Yeah. But then in the later years, of course, we had electric coolers for the milk.

JK: Could you harvest the ice more than once a year?

DC: No.

JK: It was always once.

DC: Around December.

JK: December?

DC: December, January. Whenever we had time.

JK: It wouldn't freeze over again to allow you to harvest again, that you recall?

DC: Might have, I guess, but not very thick. And cover it with sawdust and would hold it all summer.

JK: How much sawdust did you put on?

DC: Probably four or five inches between each layer.

JK: Really? And where was your icehouse?

DC: Right near the barn, the dairy barn down there.

JK: Underground?

DC: No, it was above ground.

JK: Oh, really?

DC: But the sawdust held it.

JK: That's interesting. For recreation, what did you do?

DC: Recreation? Drove the cows down the pasture and back.

JK: No fun?

DC: Well, we were always busy. Always something. Hoeing tobacco or something all the time, but—of course when we got in school was recreation.

JK: What kind of recreation in school?

DC: We had softball, basketball and the community house. The Church used the community house for—the school used the community house for gym.

JK: What about over at Ellsworth?

DC: Ellsworth we had our big gym over there, and basketball—I was on the basketball team over there, and—

JK: You were on the basketball team?

DC: Yeah, I enjoyed it.

JK: No baseball?

DC: No, no softball or baseball, at least I wasn't anyway. Basketball. Baseball that time of year was hoeing tobacco, stuff like that. We were busy.

JK: Was sports required? A requirement, or was that not—

DC: I don't know if it was required or not but we all did it and we played it. And then of course come spring we all were home working on tobacco farms. Everybody's parents had tobacco around here or something, so we didn't get together too much then. Some softball.

JK: Did you have—

[End of Tape Side A]

JK: --where Armada's is.

DC: Yeah.

JK: Nothing else there?

DC: Nothing else there.

JK: Then, the other stores?

DC: And Snow's down here in Wapping Center—by the library.

JK: So you had the Sadd Library, across from the church.

DC: Yeah, and Snows—

JK: Was on the other corner?

DC: Snows was right down here in Wapping Center—by the library.

JK: But where, relative to the library?

DC: Just east of it, there is a gas station there now. Isn't it a gas station?

DSC: I wasn't listening.

JK: That gas station I think is missing. So you had Sadd Library, and you've got that restaurant now that—

DC: Yeah, that is where Snows was.

JK: Snows was—what kind of store was that?

DC: Just a general grocery store and anything you wanted. Of course those days you didn't want too much, just basic.

JK: Why didn't you want much?

DC: I don't know—we just didn't require much I guess.

JK: You grew most of your own.

DC: Most of our own, yes.

JK: All of your vegetables.

DC: Yes, yes.

JK: Now, did you raise your own beef?

DC: Yes. Well—no, the cows—we milked them until they got too old and we didn't milk them anymore, and then somebody would come in and slaughter them, and then we would have our beef from there.

JK: Chickens?

DC: Chickens, yeah.

JK: So you had your chicken and your eggs—so you slaughtered chickens as well.

DC: Yeah.

JK: Any pigs?

DC: Yeah, we had a couple of pigs.

JK: OK. No goats?

DC: No goats.

JK: No goats. But you had turkeys?

DC: Turkeys, chickens.

DSC: Bud had a pet goat, remember?

DC: Yeah, we did have one pet goat down there.

JK: Rabbits?

DC: I don't recall too—yeah, we had a couple rabbits, I don't know—wild or what but—

JK: So you were really quite self contained with respect to food.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

JK: Flour, you probably—Now do you remember the mills? The ...

DC: Oh, yes.

JK: That existed when you were—

DC: Yep.

JK: All right. Did you go down there and get your flour?

DC: Patrituses store up here—we got it.

JK: OK, they bought it—so you were—

DC: Bought it.

JK: Now did you order things through Patritus—or did you just go get them?

DC: Just go get.

JK: Was it a gathering place for the kids—like—

DC: No, Snow's store was more of a gathering place, down here next to the library.

DSC: The kids would go there at recess time or at lunch time and buy candy—

JK: Candy?

DSC: (inaudible)

DC: Yeah, down to Snow's store they had a candy counter and I remember the kids standing there, looking in there and picking it out and—

JK: Was that a 2-story building?

DC: No, one story.

JK: Have you ever seen pictures of Patritus or Snows? Do we have pictures of those?

DC: No, I don't think so.

DSC: I don't have any.

JK: OK, I'll have to ask that one. Now, why would you go to Manchester then?

DC: Well, usually Saturday night, of course any clothing or anything like that—you would go to a little bigger store.

JK: What kind—Sears and Roebucks—

DC: Yeah.

JK: That wasn't in Manchester though was it?

DC: Yes, there was a Sears and Roebuck, And Montgomery Ward?

JK: Really, Manchester?

DC: Yeah.

JK: You didn't go to Hartford?

DC: Rarely. Rarely did we ever go to Hartford.

JK: So, Patritus didn't cover shoes or clothing, there was food basically.

DC: Food.

JK: Only food.

DC: Yeah.

JK: How about farm stuff? What did you need?

DC: Down to Agway in Buckland.

JK: OK. Agway existed back then huh?

DC: It didn't?

JK: I am not sure.

DC: No, probably not.

JK: I am not sure, that is today. I would have thought Sears and Roebuck might have been a source of equipment.

DC: Oh, yeah—Sears and Roebuck—and local stores around here.

JK: What was Main Street in Manchester like?

DC: Stores on both sides of the road, all the way down through.

JK: Was it the diagonal parking like it is today?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Did they have a movie then—movie theater?

DC: Yes.

JK: When was the first time you remember going to a movie?

DC: Oh, I can't recall.

JK: Before the war?

DC: Yeah, oh yes. It was quite a treat for us to go to the movies. If you worked hard all week long and behave yourself, maybe Saturday night Dad would take you to the movies.

JK: He went with you?

DC: Yep.

JK: Do you remember some of the early movies you saw?

DC: No, no, I can't remember that.

JK: Did you buy any food when you went to the movies?

DC: No, not as a rule, we'd come home and have something.

JK: Something, OK. Describe to me the feeling—we are in Wapping—and then you have Main Street. Was there—did you have friends on Main Street? Did you socialize with them? What was the feeling?

DC: Main Street, South Windsor?

JK: Um-hunh. (Affirmative).

DC: Well, that is where the High School is over there—that was a long ways off for us as kids. Everything was here in Wapping. Wapping Grammar School. That was a big school, right in the parking lot down to the church here.

JK: You never walked from Ellsworth to here did you?

DC: No.

JK: Where were your—did you have friends as we think of it today?

DC: Oh, yeah. We were all friends. It wasn't that big—I mean our classes were 10, 12, 15 kids—like that—and we were all family.

JK: How many graduated with you in high school, do you remember? Was it like 10 or 12?

DC: Probably 10 or 12. Just about made 'er through high school and the army grabbed you. And I spent 2 years with Patton over in Germany.

JK: But did you know the—did you have friends in Main Street?

DC: Yeah—not in grammar school—but in high school years I had friends over there.

JK: Was there any feeling of being different here in Wapping—

DC: Yes, yes—Wapping—

JK: Can you describe that?

DC: Yeah, they were more or less the elite over there.

JK: Why was that?

DC: I don't know why—maybe because of the high school and everything like that over there—and we all grew up in Wapping and Wapping was our whole life.

JK: Well, we were agricultural over here—and dairy farming.

DC: Yeah, and they were insurance in Hartford and stuff like that.

JK: Did you ever go over to Bossen's store, I think is the name—over there on Main Street?

DC: No, as a rule we went up to Patrituses up here—most of our groceries, and Snow's store down here next to the library.

JK: Do you remember ice cream? Did you ever make ice cream?

DC: Yes, we had ice cream when we were kids.

JK: Do you remember making it?

DC: Yeah, churning the thing and putting the ice in there and—

JK: Salt?

DC: Yep.

JK: Was that a treat?

DC: Yeah.

JK: That was a treat in those days? What were the treats in those days—if you can think of food or candy or—

DC: Ice cream was the big treat.

JK: How often would you have it?

DC: Oh, maybe once a week or something like that.

JK: Can you describe—kind of—how your children were brought up, and now how your grandchildren are being brought up—you must see a huge difference.

DC: Yeah, we were brought up churning ice cream by hand and stuff like that and my kids were brought up putting it in the freezer.

JK: Discipline, what do you think?

DC: What?

JK: What about discipline today vs—

DC: We didn't have any discipline problems—as kids if you didn't behave you get a spanking.

JK: How was that administered?

DC: Mother—Father was very easy going—but Mother was a school teacher, and you behaved or you got a spanking.

JK: That was with her hand?

DC: With her hand—she would—

JK: Pants down?

DC: Yeah—make you behave—yeah.

JK: Did you ever get your mouth washed out with soap?

DC: No.

JK: I did.

DC: Yeah?

JK: So, spanking was a disciplinary—

DC: Yeah.

JK: Were there any other—were you sent to your room? Were you denied things?

DC: Oh, yes, sent to your room and—but as a rule we behaved ourselves—there was 5 of us, 4 boys and Cynthia.

JK: You make life seem too idyllic. Now, there were problems back then, right?

DC: Yeah—but as a family we got along no problems really.

JK: Ah, hard to believe.

DC: I know but it—

JK: OK, not in your family but let's say—what were the temptations back then—I guess alcohol was a problem.

DC: It was a no-no when we were kids. We never heard of it.

JK: Were your parents tea totalers?

DC: Yes.

JK: Ah.

DC: She was a school teacher and Dad was a farmer all his life.

JK: So, they didn't drink?

DC: They didn't drink.

JK: Now, in church, did you ever serve wine in church, in communion?

DC: No, grape juice.

JK: No? It was always grape juice? It was always grape juice.

DC: Yeah.

JK: So they were tea totalers?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Now, you always hear about the dances in South Windsor. Do you remember—did you dance? Did you two—

DC: Not too much, once in a while we did.

JK: Was there a dance hall?

DC: Yeah, down to the Wapping center was it?

DSC: Hill's Grove.

DC: Oh, Hill's Grove down here.

JK: Was that on Buckland?

DC: No, right down here on Sullivan Ave.

JK: Between here and the Wapping School?

DC: Yes, over to the right—over in the woods over there—there was a—Saturday night there was always dancing over there. We could here it up here ...

DSC: Wasn't it more a Lithuanian club used it or something?

DC: Yeah.

JK: And can you describe the building?

DC: Well, the sides of it opened up.

JK: Windows? Doors?

DC: No, just wood—

JK: Wood?

DC: —flaps opened up.

JK: Two stories?

DC: No, one story—and a Polish band—or something playing.

JK: Any sort of refreshments?

DC: I don't recall. As kids I can remember hearing the music but we never got down there.

JK: But you remember going dancing there as a couple—no?

DC: No—of course I got right out of high school and—boom—right in the army and—then came home from the army and got married and—

JK: So, if kids got in trouble in those days—what did they do—

DC: Gave them a good spanking, and that was it.

JK: Well, probably it was good for a few people, but I am sure a lot of people rebelled. You must have had disciplinary problems back in those days?

DC: I don't recall too much—no. The family took care of any disciplinary problems.

JK: What was the police system back in those days like?

DC: You had Constables.

JK: One for South Windsor?

DC: One for Main Street over there and one for Wapping area over here.

JK: Did they have an office?

DC: No, not that I recall. We didn't have any problems.

JK: Sounds too idyllic to me.

DC: I know, it was.

JK: I think we make it sound better than it really was but—we don't remember any real problems.

DC: No—well, it was just a little small town—that's all—we were family.

JK: Um-humh (Affirmative.)

DC: Everybody knew everybody and, no problems, no crime.

JK: When you get tired, let me know—but tell me about your garden—I have always—

DC: Garden is right up here—

JK: I know, I look at it every year and marvel at it and—

DC: Everybody had a garden and raised their stuff and—

JK: You have got your little table of tomatoes out there every year.

DC: Yeah, I used to sell them outside the road here and—

JK: What did you raise?

DC: Tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, stuff like that, corn.

JK: I always loved your marigolds.

DC: Yeah.

JK: Have you always had a row of marigolds?

DC: Yeah, right along the wall there.

JK: Was there a reason for that?

DSC: We had petunias for a while.

DC: Petunias too.

JK: Do you use fertilizer?

DC: No, we didn't have it as kids. We used cow manure.

JK: Do you use it now?

DC: Oh, yes.

JK: I have always heard that if you grow marigolds, you will keep some of the insects away. You didn't do it for that reason?

DC: No, we just did it for the flowers.

JK: For the beauty of it? It's always pretty. Did you can and preserve your vegetables?

DC: Oh, sure, she canned all the time.

JK: Tell me about your orchard.

DC: Oh, I have got—what—8 or 10 trees up there--apples, peaches, 1 pear tree--pruned them and—

DSC: No more.

DC: No more.

JK: Why is that?

DC: Ah—go to the store—can buy what ever I want.

JK: Not because you are getting older now?

DC: Right.

JK: Now, I always wondered whether they were yours or hers—but they are yours?

DC: Mine.

JK: They are yours. Do you and Merv [Mervin Waldron] work together at all on that huge lawn that you—

DC: Some.

JK: Some of it. Now Merv's house is the newest I guess.

DC: Yeah, he built a house up there, yeah.

JK: Was there a house up there before?

DC: No, nothing.

DSC: Sand bank.

DC: There was a big sand bank up there. It was way down deep. Dad sold sand and gravel for years and years as a kid, and then when he stopped that—then they bulldozed it all off and Merv built a house up there.

JK: How deep was the sand bank?

DC: Oh, 20 feet at least.

JK: So there was a big hole up there?

DC: All beautiful sand, perfect sand.

JK: That was all dug by hand then too, I assume.

DC: Yep, then they had—well they had a—you backed in with a truck and they had a conveyer to put it up on.

JK: How did the sand get in the conveyer?

DC: I can't recall right now.

JK: Because you didn't have any tractor or payloaders I don't think.

DC: No, no, they shoveled it.

JK: And when did Merv build his house up there, do you remember?

DC: Well, after they got through with that—the sand bank there and had it all bulldozed over and he built his house up there.

JK: Was that before your father died?

DC: Yes.

JK: So that was before 1963?

DC: Yep.

JK: Tell me about the Wapping Community Church—how far back do you remember?

DC: That has been all our lives—Wapping Community Church—as kids, grammar school and—

JK: Now, you were married—it was not Wapping Community Church when you married—was it?

DC: Yes. All our lives it has been Wapping Community Church.

JK: Well—we have gone through several name changes and didn't a couple of those name changes occur after you were married? I will have to look at the history of it again, I have got it in that historical display cabinet but—

DC: I can always remember it as Wapping Community Church.

JK: OK. What about Congregational?

DC: Yeah, Wapping Community Congregational Church, yes.

JK: I will have to look into that again. And when—

DSC: It's Wapping Congregational Church.

JK: So, when you were married—it was its sort of original structure?

DC: Yeah.

JK: You didn't have the educational wing?

DC: No.

JK: And we didn't even have the additional sanctuary—the additional chancellor. Does that—that came in later.

DC: Just the basic church.

JK: It was the basic church, and you had—did you have a center isle? You had two isles going down.

DC: No—two isles.

DSC: Right

JK: How did you work that in your wedding?

DC: I don't know—we met up front and that was it.

DSC: Going into the church from the front doors there—you go down on the right side and come back out on the left side.

JK: On the left side—OK.

DSC: By the pictures I have.

JK: Interesting. So you have seen a huge change in the church.

DC: Much. Of course the whole back end wasn't there when we were kids.

DSC: And the basement was different.

DC: Yeah, there was probably—from about the pulpit—north—was all added on.

JK: That is all added. Has the church improved, changed? How would you describe it?

DC: Well, it is a big church now. When we were kids it was just a little church and probably 20 members and stuff like that.

JK: Is that good or bad?

DC: Good.

JK: Good what?

DC: That it has grown.

JK: That it has grown? Is that right, you don't miss the smallness?

DC: No.

JK: No? Good. Was the church a major part of your social life?

DC: It was all our life—Community House and our Christian Endeavor we called it then.

JK: That was a youth group?

DC: Youth group—well—that is what the youth group was, Christian Endeavor.

JK: Were there 2 of them—or were all the ages grouped as 1?

DC: I don't know what there was.

JK: Can you describe a typical Sunday back in 1946-7?

DC: Yeah, getting up and getting the cows milked in the morning—Mother bringing us in, washing us all up—putting on clean clothes and going down to church Sunday morning to Sunday school.

JK: What hour was that?

DC: Oh, probably 8 O'clock, Sunday school. And then come back from that and we would all go to church together.

DSC: I think church started later—

DC: 10 O'clock.

DSC: —back in those years.

JK: Now, you went to Sunday school—came home—and then went back to church?

DC: Yeah, sometimes I think, didn't we? Or we went from Sunday school right to church.

JK: Right to church. So you did Sunday school and church? You didn't just go to Sunday school while the parents were in church, and come home?

DC: No.

JK: Did you go back in the afternoon?

DC: Christian Endeavor in the afternoon—the evening.

JK: Did your parents have any activities in the afternoon?

DC: No.

JK: So you were not in church all day long like—

DC: No, no, we would come home and have dinner and milk the cows and everything else and then go back in the evening.

JK: Did the main meal in your home occur at lunch?

DC: Supper time—I think the main meal was. Maybe it was dinner time.

JK: So you think it might have been at noon time?

DC: Yeah.

JK: What were the Christian Endeavor activities that you remember?

DC: Well, Sunday evening we would get together—probably 18 or 20 of us—and just have a good time together and a little worship service. Every week somebody was in charge of worship service—and play some games and stuff like that. The minister was there and talked to us.

JK: What is the first minister's name you remember?

DC: McClain.

JK: McClain?

DC: Doug McClain.

JK: He was just the only minister, there were no other—

DC: No.

JK: No other ministers, no Christian education ministers or so forth.

DC: Not as kids, no.

JK: Do you remember the Methodist church?

DC: No.

JK: It was probably burned by then. When the Methodist and the Congregational merged—that was quite something—to bring 2 religious faiths like that together. Can you describe that—do you—

DC: That was really before our time.

JK: But you saw some of the repercussions of it afterwards, I think.

DC: Yeah, but they were all blended in by then and it was always just the Congregational Church.

JK: Congregation Church. Can you describe your family?

DC: Well, there was Father and Mother and 5—

JK: No—Cindy and Nancy and—

DC: Nancy and—

DSC: Wendy? ...

DC: She was the only girl in there.

DSC: No.

JK: Well, you've got Nancy.

DSC: Our family.

JK: Your family.

DC: Oh, my family? Oh, I had just the two daughters.

JK: Can you describe them and where they are or—

DC: Well—good kids—both of them. Both of them went to college down in—

DSC: Wendy went to Western Connecticut—

DC: Western Connecticut College.

DSC: Nancy went to Western Connecticut and then to—

JK: That's all right, you are doing very well.

DSC: Portland, Maine.

JK: Oh, out of stater?

DSC: To Westbrook College

JK: Westbrook College? Portland, Maine?

DSC: Yes.

DC: She is a dental hygienist.

JK: A dental hygienist.

DC: Wendy was a school teacher.

DSC: Now she is an administrator.

JK: How did she end up in Houston?

DSC: She married a fellow that came from Houston?

JK: How did she meet him?

DC: I don't know.

DSC: In an apartment.

JK: Here in South Windsor, or when she was in college?

DSC: No, Danbury.

JK: Danbury? OK. Now, Nancy has two lovely children with—

DC: Yeah. Wendy doesn't have any children.

JK: So Nancy has Justin and—

DC: Katelyn.

JK: Katelyn? Katelyn is in college now?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Justin, he is a senior?

DSC: Going to be.

JK: Oh, I got one more year out of him—good—good—good. Wonderful. I enjoyed—he was up there for the children's service and working the audio system—I got to talk to him. OK. What else can we talk about? Do you have any interesting stories that you remember of South Windsor? Oh, what about weather, hurricanes, snowfalls?

DC: Well, there was a big hurricane what—

DSC: 1938.

DC: '38—the big hurricane. Took down all the tobacco sheds and stuff like that.

JK: And did it take your tobacco shed down?

DC: Dad had one go down—yes—and that is when they built these new ones.

JK: Now, were your tobacco sheds slate roofed?

DC: No.

JK: No—I was surprised—I guess—

DC: A lot of buildings were slate roofed.

JK: Were slate. Where does slate come from, do you know?

DC: They mined it here—

JK: Locally?

DC: Yeah. I don't recall just where they did get it from.

JK: How about floods, do you remember any of the floods?

DC: Yeah, but they weren't too bad.

JK: Main Street would have suffered more—

DC: Main Street got it bad from the Connecticut River.

JK: The hurricane—did we lose power?

DC: Yes. The hurricane was bad; we lost a lot of buildings and stuff.

JK: What did you do for the cows?

DC: Didn't lose the big barn, so they were all right.

JK: Lost the refrigeration system though.

DC: Yep, yep.

DSC: My folks were without electricity for 3 weeks.

JK: Wow. For the '38 hurricane?

DSC: Uh-hunh (Affirmative).

JK: Whoa.

DSC: We lost all our tobacco sheds.

JK: Did you lose yours?

DC: Her folks had tobacco.

(The microphone appears to be moved or jarred)

JK: Why don't we continue with you—No? OK, what other natural disasters—affected South Windsor?

DC: Well, the hurricane was the biggest.

JK: Any huge snowfalls that you remember?

DC: No— nothing more the normal.

JK: Now, let's see—you were born in 19—

DC: Forty—

JK: No—born? Nineteen—twenty—

DC: 1926.

JK: So you were born 3 years before the depression?

DC: Yeah.

JK: You don't probably remember any of that?

DC: No, I don't remember that.

JK: Did it affect your family significantly?

DC: I don't recall.

JK: Don't recall?

DC: Always dairy farm with 18 or 20 cows and—

JK: Now, how much older was Porter?

DC: He was 2 years older than I was.

JK: Then Cindy—

DC: Then it was Sherman.

JK: Sherman—how old—

DC: 2 years younger—and then she was 2 years younger than that.

JK: And then Bobby—Buddy?

DC: Buddy was my kid brother—I don't know—

JK: So, there is quite an age difference. So, you all saw a very different part of life in the sense of—

DC: Yeah, yeah.

JK: Can you describe—there must have been a huge difference before and after the war?

DC: Well, I don't recall too much—I went right out of high school and went in the army—then after the war I came home and I got married—that's about it.

JK: So, what are your regrets?

DC: No regrets at all—really—had a good life.

JK: Good for you.

DC: Good life.

JK: That is because of your wife though.

DC: Yes—oh yes—she is half of my life.

JK: Only half?

DC: Well, $\frac{3}{4}$ of my life.

JK: OK, give her $\frac{3}{4}$.

DC: She takes care of me.

JK: And how many years have you been married?

DC: 60?

JK: 60 years this year?

DSC: Last year. In November.

JK: November—did you have a big celebration?

DSC: No.

JK: No?

DSC: We did at 50—not at 60.

JK: Not at 60—good for you—good for you. What do you credit being able to stay married—I have only been married 35 years—

DC: 35?

JK: I have got a way to go. What do you credit to such a wonderful marriage and such a long marriage?

DC: Well, we get along, we don't have scraps. Of course everybody has arguments.

JK: How do you avoid those?

DC: I give in.

JK: Oh, OK, OK—I just wanted to make sure that was clear. Do you want to say something? No? Has he been an easy man to live with?

DSC: Uh-hunh (Affirmative).

JK: Has she been an easy woman to live with?

DC: Oh, she's the cat's meow.

JK: Is that right? How did you know? How did you meet?

DC: We went to school together. Wapping Grammar School.

JK: Yeah.

DC: And high school.

JK: But you didn't date during high school?

DC: No—some at the end.

DSC: Tell them how hard you worked during high school—what you did in the morning when you got up.

DC: Got up and did the milking of cows—and what?

DSC: When you drove school bus.

DC: Oh, yeah—it's true—of course the Collins bus service and my cousins up here. 16 years old—and this was during the war—they couldn't get drivers—I was driving school bus. I would drive the high school kids to school—and then take the grammar school kids to school—and then go to school myself with the bus—and then drive them home. Then take tobacco help from Buckland—take them back over to Poquonock [Windsor Locks]—so I was going all day long.

JK: What age were you driving a school bus?

DC: 16.

JK: 16--Was there a legal driving age in those days?

DC: Nobody thought too much about it.

JK: So you were driving a—how big a bus was this?

DC: A straight job—just a regular 4 cylinder.

JK: You mean like a school bus today, same size?

DC: Oh, no, no—it was smaller.

JK: Smaller?

DC: Yeah.

JK: OK, now tell me—OK—fill me in—are you doing all right?

DC: Yeah.

JK: Are you hanging in there?

DC: Yeah.

JK: OK—good—thank you. So, this is a Collin's family—but you are not related to the Collins bus family.

DC: Yeah, cousins. We are all cousins here.

JK: So, your father had a brother who started the Collins bus company?

DC: No, he was a cousin too. We are not that close.

JK: You are not that close? OK. So, Priscilla Collins—

DC: Cousin.

JK: --is a cousin and it was her father and mother that started the bus company.

DC: Bus service—yes.

JK: But you were cousins.

DC: Cousins to them.

JK: How far back—so it was your grandparents—who were related then?

DC: Must have been—I don't recall.

JK: OK. But you were working for the Collins, driving these busses?

DC: Yeah.

JK: did you have any accidents?

DC: Never had an accident in my life. Drove the bus all thorough high school—take the kids—go down to the Poquonock and pick up tobacco help and take them down to Buckland—and then take the high school kids to school—and then take the grammar school kids to school—then take the bus over to school and go to high school myself—take the high school kids home—and the grammar kids home—go back down to Buckland—take the tobacco help back over to Poquonock.

JK: OK, now describe where Poquonock is and what the tobacco help was.

DC: Poquonock was just south of Bradley Field.

JK: OK.

DC: And they would all meet down on Main Street and I would pick them up there—take them down to Buckland here.

JK: And who were these people?

DC: Old people—retired people—working tobacco.

JK: So, they weren't the Mexican or the Puerto Rican—these are—

DC: No—these are all mostly Polish—and stuff like that—retired.

JK: And you took them to Buckland?

DC: Buckland.

JK: Why Buckland?

DC: That was where the tobacco warehouse was down there.

JK: Is that where the barn used to be—or is that—that is where they used to live when they came up for the summer—was that on Buckland?

DSC: ...Pleasant Valley Road?

JK: Yeah—I remember some very large buildings there—

DSC: Like barracks.

JK: --barracks—which I think in more modern times the Puerto Ricans—when they came up—they used to live there as I was told maybe.

DSC: For the summer.

JK: For the summer?

DSC: I think there was a man that came to our church always—Mr. Summerfield—

DC: Yeah

DSC: He was taking care of the boys.

JK: How many of these tobacco workers did you pick up?

DC: Oh—18.

JK: 18, 20? All men?

DC: All men.

JK: No women?

DC: maybe an occasional woman, I don't care.

JK: Do you remember any funny stories from the tobacco barns when you were—

DC: No, not really. They were good, hard working people.

JK: Did the boys—now when you were working the tobacco barns—were the girls involved in the summer work?

DC: Yep. Hoeing tobacco and stuff like that.

JK: Did the boys ever tease the girls.

DC: I don't recall—too much. Back then you behaved or they knew about it.

JK: I see—I don't know—I can't believe you were as much of an angle as you are stating—I have got to find out some really good stories about you.

DC: No, I had to behave.

JK: I see—can't ask Porter—

DC: Worked all the time.

JK: Did you look up to Porter as the older brother?

DC: Yes—to a point—yeah.

JK: Was he your mentor in a sense?

DC: No, we got along fine, the whole family got along.

JK: Was he very different than you?

DC: Gee—I don't know.

JK: Rougher, harder, bigger?

DC: No, he was more of educational than I was.

JK: I don't remember him.

DC: He was the smarter one—I was the—

JK: But he was a farmer all his life?

DC: Yes.

JK: Now, he never went to our church.

DC: He did with the kids—but then he went down to Manchester.

JK: What church was that?

DSC: The Church of the Nazarene.

DC: Church of the Nazarene.

JK: What is—I don't know anything about that church—is it a re-born Christian type church or is it just a—

DSC: His wife had been Episcopalian—I think—and I don't think she was too happy at our church.

JK: I heard that our church—we have been going through the historical documents—Nancy Norman and I—and our church had the word Episcopalian in it at one point—back—and it was interesting—I am going to have to dig it up again. So, their children—Porter's children didn't go to our church—Wapping church?

DSC: I guess they did—

DC: Yeah, as kids they did.

JK: As kids they did?

DSC: They started there—

JK: And then they switched over to the other church?

DC: Yeah.

DSC: Uh-hunh (Affirmative).

JK: Did that separate the families a bit—when he switched churches?

DC: No, I don't think so.

JK: No? Now, when Sherm—he lives across the street from you—

DC: Yeah.

JK: And that is an old school house?

DC: Yep.

JK: And where was it located—originally?

DC: It was moved over there—when I was a kid—it was right in front of Dad's house—and then it was moved over there when they put the new highway in over there—that was an old school house.

JK: So, it was moved over there before Sherm and Charlotte were married?

DC: Oh, yes, yes.

JK: OK, so someone was—was it a house before Sherm and Charlotte—

DC: Yes, because Dad rented it—and then Sherm and Charlotte had it all—

DSC: Cynthia and Mervin [Waldron] lived there.

DC: Oh, yeah, Cynthia and Merv lived there first—and put in a garage down in the cellar. And then Mervan built a house up on the hill here.

JK: So, the school house was owned by the town.

DC: I don't know who did own it—I think Dad always owned it—it was always part of the family—they just used it.

JK: Even when it was used as a school house?

DC: Yeah.

JK: So, do you think that the family built it—for the town—as a school house?

DC: I don't recall—this was way back before I was born—all my life it has been a school house.

JK: It is interesting—I always thought the town itself got together—and they built a school house—I didn't think—people—

DC: Maybe they did.

JK: and then maybe your brother bought it—or your father bought it from the town? Was it used as a school house when you—

DC: I don't recall—

JK: You don't recall—never have it—

DC: No.

JK: But it was located in—between Collins Lane and Sullivan Avenue you say—

DC: Yes—of course there was no Sullivan Avenue then.

JK: Right, it was moved across the street. Now—and so—Merv put the garage underneath—were there any other additions put on? Sherman and Charlotte, did they ever put an addition on it?

DC: Yeah, they put bedrooms on the south end of it—I think.

JK: South. Really, I am jealous and amazed—one, you have lived in town so long—but two that your family is so close.

DC: Yeah, we have all gotten along good—worked together.

JK: Well, it could work both ways—we are from New Jersey—and it is 3 hours—6 hours to get to a family member—and you have a unique opportunity here.

DC: Yeah.

JK: How many generations do you go back in this area?

DC: About 3.

JK: Well, you have got your grandson, your daughter, you, your father—that is 4.

DC: Oh.

JK: Your father's father?

DC: Yeah, and a grandfather.

JK: So there is 6. That is 6 generations.

DC: At least. I don't recall before that.

JK: Did you ever do a genealogy? Where did the Collins family come from?

DC: No, that was my brother Porter's line of work. He checked into all that but I didn't get into all of it.

JK: Is there any way we could find out a little bit about that?

DC: Sherman could probably tell you a lot more than I could.

JK: OK, interesting. All right—I think we have covered most of what I had. Now, when you were driving the school buses—that depleted a lot of labor from your father.

DC: Well—

JK: But Porter was still here.

DC: Porter was here and—

JK: Did Sherm get involved in that?

DC: No, he was younger—he never drove school bus.

JK: But, what about the farm?

DC: He probably helped on the farm.

JK: Did Cindy—what was Cindy's role in this family?

DC: She was the little girl and—

JK: She helped mother?

DC: Yep.

DC: And daddy's little sweetheart.

JK: Were you jealous?

DC: No, we all loved her—we all loved her.

JK: Be honest now—

DC: Yeah.

JK: No jealousy?

DC: No, there wasn't any jealousy.

JK: And no jealousy between the boys?

DC: No, we got along fine. No problems at all.

JK: OK—now—so—your father and mother unfortunately died suddenly in a car accident?

DC: Right.

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JK: How was the estate broken up?

DC: Well, Porter was home on the farm and—he just took over—and this was my grandmother's house up here—and I took over. And the house across the street was the old school house and—

DSC: We were already living here when they were—

DC: We were all living here when they died—when they were killed.

JK: So your father—

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