

Fred Edlund
Oral History Transcript
March 16, 2007
Interviewed by Jan Kennedy
Transcriber: Lyn Erickson

[Begin Tape 1, Side 1]

KENNEDY: This is the South Windsor Oral History Project. It's Friday, March 16, 2007, and I'll be talking with Fred Edlund, the interviewee, and Jan Kennedy is the interviewer. We are doing it at Fred's home at 386 Hilton Drive in South Windsor, Connecticut.

EDLUND: My name is Fred Edlund. I've lived in South Windsor pretty much all my life as far as my official residence goes with a few exceptions. I was born in Hartford and lived for a few years in West Hartford and East Hartford before moving to South Windsor at the age of five or six; I'm not sure; I don't remember that far back.

We moved to Buckland Road, 90 Buckland Road in South Windsor. The property was the homestead of my grandmother, Matilda Olson. She married George Gilbert and this was a Gilbert farm. There was a colonial house on the property and the tobacco shed. They tore down the house and built the brick house to the rear of the home and shortened the tobacco shed, making it into a car garage. The original foundation of the old home became the border of my mother's flower garden which was always kind of her pride and joy over the years

KENNEDY: I remember it, as well.

EDLUND: Buckland Road was one of the original town roads. At that time there weren't any new streets in town. We had rural mail delivery twice a day back then. Our original address was Manchester even though we lived in South Windsor because the post office was in Buckland. It wasn't until quite a few years later that they finally changed over and we got our mail with the address of the town we lived in (South Windsor). Buckland Road was primarily a farmers' road. There wasn't much going on on it but they did have traffic from town through there to Manchester. It was one of the major roads that did go from the center of town over to Buckland and then to North Manchester where there were grocery stores and so forth. South Windsor didn't have much in the way of stores at that time.

There was a small grocery store on Main Street, Bossen's Grocery Store, but for us that was a long way away. The only thing we did to come toward Main Street much was we used to go to the Grange Store on Pleasant Valley Road and get chicken feed for our chickens. Life back then...

KENNEDY: Was it a gravel road at that point?

EDLUND: Um...

KENNEDY: Do you remember?

EDLUND: I really, I don't remember what, when it, I think it was oiled.

KENNEDY: Oiled?

EDLUND: Okay? I know I went to Wapping Elementary School behind the Wapping Community Church, which is long gone, and used to ride my bike to school most of the time when the weather was good and the road was paved. In the early days, although we had a car, we had one car people didn't do a lot of extra driving. You went to church, we used to go to Hartford almost every weekend, especially on a Sunday, and we'd end up at the grandparents' home or, if we didn't go there, they were on Rowe Avenue in Hartford, we would go to my father's sister's or brother's place which were nearby. That was kind of the family life back in those days. My grandparents on my Dad's side came over from Sweden and they belonged to the Swedish Methodist Church which was on Park Avenue in, actually it was, West Hartford because it was right over the line.

KENNEDY: Did you go to church there?

EDLUND: We went there quite often, not regularly, we...

KENNEDY: How did you get there? Because you couldn't take the trolley or...

EDLUND: No, no. We drove from our house to Hartford...

KENNEDY: In a car?

EDLUND: Yes and it was close enough you could even go by a car or walk. The church wasn't that many blocks away from their home.

KENNEDY: Mm-hmm. You were born in 1929?

EDLUND: I was born in 1929.

KENNEDY: Do you know the date?

EDLUND: September 29th.

KENNEDY: Okay. So when you moved to South Windsor at, say, five years old, that was 1934, so you were born right at the Depression.

EDLUND: Yes, we really didn't have an awful lot of things back then; like, as I said, we bought chicken feed 'cause we had chickens. That was probably the only meat that we ever really had. Once in a while they would buy meat in a store but I don't remember having a lot of that. We had a big garden and my mother canned a lot of the vegetables each year, and it wasn't until World War II or the build-up of World War II where the economy went

up and people started working. Both my dad and mother started working in manufacturing companies. My mother worked at Colt's in West Hartford which was part of Pratt & Whitney & Small Tool and my dad worked at Whitney Chain which was on Bartholomew Avenue in Hartford. Whitney Chain's building is still there today but it's now some kind of an apartment house, but Colt's is still around.

KENNEDY: Can you tell us a little bit about your father?

EDLUND: My father was a mason, a bricklayer; he

KENNEDY: What was his name?

EDLUND: It was Fred.

KENNEDY: It was Fred.

EDLUND: Yes, well actually, we're both Fredericks but we both went by Fred, in fact, my dad went by the nickname of Fritz with an awful lot of his friends which was a common nickname for Fred back in those days. My mother at the time when they got married was an operator for the telephone company and I guess she ended up going as far as being a chief operator in the telephone company.

I remember I don't know if it was the hurricane or the flood, she was, in, what was that, '36 or '39, it was the year we had the big flood, and, let's see, was it a hurricane . . . we had a flood and we had a hurricane. I'm not sure what it was, but the hurricane also had a flood and she was stuck in Hartford and I remember going to Hartford and, actually, we drove across the old railroad bridge (chuckle). We drove home on the railroad tracks; the trees had fallen and blocked the roads . . .

KENNEDY: Really!

EDLUND: In order to get to Hartford

KENNEDY: Because the other one washed out?

EDLUND: No, it was under water.

KENNEDY: Oh, it was under water.

EDLUND: Yes, that kind of stuck in my mind (chuckle), I don't know how we did it but I guess the old vehicles had big tires, high off the ground

KENNEDY: Yes, I guess it was a bumpy ride

EDLUND: It was a Buick convertible he had back in those days

KENNEDY: I remember your mother; she lived to 90 or

EDLUND: Ninety-three.

KENNEDY: And your father, I never knew him. He must have passed away earlier?

EDLUND: Yes, he died when he was, oh, I don't know, 56, 57; he was having an operation in Manchester at the time and he had a heart attack and died, and . . .

KENNEDY: How old were you at that time? Do you remember?

EDLUND: Well, it was after I got out of the Service and I got out of the Service in '54 and it was probably . . . I don't remember the exact date but it was probably around '57, '58 or '59. Like I say, during the early years the Depression was really tough. You didn't have a lot of money . . .

I can remember when I joined the Boy Scouts during the War . . . I got into Scouts in 1940 and I remember when we went to summer camp at Camp Pioneer. Gee, we even had to take rationing books with us, coupons; you had to bring so many coupons for sugar so you could go to camp. Of course they rationed coffee and sugar back in those days. The life there was, we were right next to the Grant Farm which was, at that time, a large family-owned potato business and they had a lot of land into potatoes; they had many acres, oh, I don't know, 25, 30 acres west of our house where Evergreen Walk is. That's exactly where they raised potatoes.

KENNEDY: Did you know Phil Grant?

EDLUND: Yes, I did.

KENNEDY: Was he a similar age to you?

EDLUND: No, he was older.

KENNEDY: He was older?

EDLUND: Yes, sir. As a teen-age boy I worked for them in the summer, like when they were . . . they did both, they raised potatoes and they raised tobacco, broad-leaf tobacco, and I used to drive a tractor and pull in the riggings and, you know, I'd end up pulling the tobacco up into the sheds for the guys that were hanging tobacco. It was hard work when you were fairly small.

KENNEDY: Did you first do potatoes then move to tobacco in the different seasons?

EDLUND: No, they kind of went together but I never did any of the potato work at all; that was fairly mechanized. They had machinery that dug the potatoes and they had a man that would ride on the digger and take out all the vines, stones and things like that, pre-sort them, and then during the winter they had a fairly big sorting house, I mean warehouse, right off Buckland Road and they would sort and bag the potatoes there and they graded them and shipped them out. I never got involved with that; I used to go and visit. You know, they knew me; I could go and walk in any time and visit and I was welcome. But it was kind of a different time

back then; there wasn't a lot going on. There were a few other families there with children but you didn't have a lot of people and a lot of friends. I didn't have really anybody my age in the area when I grew up.

KENNEDY: Did you have brothers or sisters?

EDLUND: No.

KENNEDY: You were an only child?

EDLUND: I was the only child. So I kind of got interested . . . back in those days when I got to be 11, I joined Boy Scouts and that was one of the outlets, you know. Besides going to school, there really wasn't a heck of a lot to do. If you didn't belong to the YMCA, the only other thing that was around was the Boy Scouts . . . other than the church. You know churches had a fair enough amount of stuff to go to but that wasn't all the time.

When I got to be 11 in the '40s, I joined Troop 62 and I was in Troop 62 about a year and the Legion Post decided that the troop was getting real big, really big, and the town was also getting bigger and there were more people living in the eastern part of the town, the Wapping area, or as many people, and what they decided to do was to split the troop. The Legion continued to sponsor and they sponsored two troops and I don't know how they arranged it because I wasn't privy to that but we met at the Wapping Community Hall. I was, being from that part of town, I was with a group that split off and we became Troop 64. That was about a year after I had joined Troop 64, and I stayed in Troop 64 until I went away to school. We met at the Community Hall which was, at that time, a real active community hall.

KENNEDY: Where was the Community Hall? The former Methodist Church site?

EDLUND: No, it was what is now the police exercise complex, now called Dorchester Building.

KENNEDY: The police exercise complex? The Methodist Church had burned by then

EDLUND: The Methodist Church had burned

KENNEDY: And the meeting hall was built

EDLUND: The meeting hall was built and that was owned by the combined Wapping Community Church, but

KENNEDY: Troop 64 . . . does that still exist?

EDLUND: No.

KENNEDY: And when you say, "The Troop grew," how big was the Troop back then?

EDLUND: Well, we had probably 30, 25, 30

KENNEDY: And that was after the split?

EDLUND: Well, it was down a little bit and then it grew but I would say it stayed between 25 and 30 back in those days. Scouting didn't do much in the early days. In Troop 64 we hardly did anything but the weekly meetings and the Merit Badge classes and things like that. I don't even remember doing any winter camping back in those days prior to the Korean War.

KENNEDY: Now this was Boy Scouts or Cub Scouts? Were there any Cub Scouts back then?

EDLUND: No.

KENNEDY: Cub packs didn't exist then?

EDLUND: Didn't exist then, did not exist. Like I say, Troop 62 continued on Main Street and I've learned over the years what happened to them, and then, I don't know, what's the word I want, I'm getting confused. I'll skip Boy Scouts for now and stay on town.

Gee, you know, it was back in those days in winter, one of the things that impressed me in memory is when we got a snow storm back then – we had some really big snow storms. We didn't have snow blowers or anything. You had to shovel everything by hand, but the town, when we had a big snow storm that the trucks couldn't plow, they had one tractor. It was a huge old tractor with a "V" plow on it, and until it arrived and went down your street and cleared the town, you were snowbound.

KENNEDY: Is that right?

EDLUND: Yes. So today, you know, it's a lot different. We could be snowbound for days before you had . . . you know, this thing didn't go very fast, you know, it was like a fast walk! And, you figure, to get all around town, it took a while! And certain other places had more priority than we did.

KENNEDY: Now, was the snow two or three feet?

EDLUND: Yeah.

KENNEDY: Four feet? Five feet?

EDLUND: I don't remember but we had storms where we had seven feet. I can remember it seemed like it was over my head back in those days (laughter) so, yes, life was a little different and going to school in Wapping was a lot different than schools are today; but you knew everyone in the school because it was smaller, you know, and so that was kind of the height of our existence through the Depression in those years.

Like I said before, my father was a bricklayer. He worked on a lot of different buildings in Hartford and things like this. He worked for, it seemed like a heck of a long time, at Trinity at the Chapel and he became a part of their Chapel Builders' Association; and he always went back

for a reunion every year and his name is engraved in, what do you want to call it, in the archway of the Chapel; it's one of those buildings there. He worked at, when they did over the Bushnell Memorial and built it the way it is today, not the new addition but the old building, and he worked on a lot of banks and things like that with different construction companies until the war and then, but, you know, even then bricklaying was spotty in the winter.

KENNEDY: How did he . . . you had a car?

EDLUND: Yeah.

KENNEDY: But you only had one car. How did he get to work?

EDLUND: He drove the car.

KENNEDY: Okay, then you had nothing and your mother had nothing. You had your bicycle (laughter). But, your mother, to go shopping or . . .

EDLUND: Yeah, he had to take her or, you know, I really don't remember how she got to work in Hartford. But I think he took her, and it worked out that she worked about the same time as he did.

KENNEDY: Because they always talk about the trolley on Main Street and about going into town. But out in this area, 84 didn't exist.

EDLUND: No, the closest trolley came up Burnside Avenue to North Manchester and we would get on there at what they called Love Lane, which was right down there where Cheney Tech is today. I can remember walking to the trolley.

KENNEDY: So that was a mile, two-mile walk, just to get to the trolley.

EDLUND: Yes, and a couple of miles from home. And, if you were little, (laughter) . . .

KENNEDY: It was a long walk, a long walk.

EDLUND: We didn't do that too often, I'll tell you.

KENNEDY: So you went to Wapping for grammar school.

EDLUND: Yeah, then went to Ellsworth for high school.

KENNEDY: So how'd you get there, I mean that's a long walk, too!

EDLUND: Oh, Ellsworth, we had busses!

KENNEDY: Oh, you had busses.

EDLUND: Yes, by that time we had busses. We had busses finally for Wapping, too.

KENNEDY: Ah . . . so you had busses back in, let's see . . . so in '43 you went to high school. Back in 1943 you probably were in high school.

EDLUND: Yes. It was a good half hour, 45-minute bus ride.

KENNEDY: And how many people do you think there were at Wapping? How many at Ellsworth? What was the size of a class, do you remember?

EDLUND: The school had about 340, 300, something like that at Ellsworth. And I don't remember how many were at Wapping School. I don't think any class had probably, it seemed like every class had their own room so I don't remember having more than one room. It's so far back, I don't remember.

KENNEDY: With 320, that puts 80 in a class; that's a lot, that's a big class if you had 320 in the high school.

EDLUND: Yes, but don't forget we had both South Windsor and East Windsor going to Ellsworth at the time so you were coming from both towns.

KENNEDY: Oh-h-h.

EDLUND: And when we grew up, we knew everyone in East Windsor because we went to school with them for years. So the two towns were closer then than they are today because of Ellsworth.

KENNEDY: So you had the Boy Scouts, you had the "Y," and then with school activities, sports, you had nothing after school?

EDLUND: No, they didn't have anything.

KENNEDY: Because they talk about basketball in the Wapping School on the second floor?

EDLUND: I don't remember ever having it there. They had an auditorium but I never saw anyone playing. We had recess and, of course, you had girls coming in one entrance and boys coming in another entrance. But that was common back in those days.

KENNEDY: So, I know in the old school house you have two entrances but even in the Wapping School boys and girls came in separate entrances?

EDLUND: Oh, yes.

KENNEDY: And at Ellsworth did they come in separate entrances?

EDLUND: No.

KENNEDY: What was the “Y?” What were the activities there?

EDLUND: I don’t know. I never belonged to it. Boy Scouting, when I belonged to it, before I got involved as an adult, other than the troop meetings, the only thing we did was go to summer camp. We were part of the old Charter Oak Council and what you did was you went to Hartford.

[End Tape 1, Side 1; Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

KENNEDY: Talk about that a little bit, if you could, on the tobacco

EDLUND: Okay. All I remember is whatever you were doing, whatever job you had, that was the job it seemed like you always did year after year. I ended up, and I don’t know how, but I ended up driving a tractor and bringing the riggings into the sheds and then poling the tobacco up to the guys. It was very hot and dirty work because you got all this green tobacco juice on you but, oh, before you did that every morning, you went out and you succored the plants and succoring the plants involved walking down the row and on each leaf at the base of the leaf there were a sprout and a stem, like a little leaf coming up. And you had to break that off and each leaf had one so you had to go from the top all the way down on every plant and, you know, each row would have, I don’t know, a thousand plants or something. So every morning you probably succored a couple of thousand plants and you probably only took fifteen to twenty seconds or something to do a plant ‘cause it didn’t take long to go down, you know?

KENNEDY: What was poling?

EDLUND: Poling was tobacco rigs were open-framed wagons which had a wooden rail on either side, supported by wood and steel and they were just a width apart of the lathe that the tobacco was put on. They speared the tobacco at the butt end or the brown end, then when you picked it up, you picked it up in your hand and the spearer would spear the tobacco. What he did was he had a metal point like a sleeve that went over the end of the tobacco that was shaped so it fit around the lathe of tobacco and then it tapered toward the end like a spear so it was sharp, so he just dug that into the tobacco stem and pulled backward quickly and then it would split the stalk open and then he would pull it back and evenly space the tobacco on the lathe. Then, if you were driving the rigging, you would carry that over and somebody would be hanging it on the rigging, putting it up in there usually because we were shorter and (laughing) they needed somebody a little taller to do that. But when you took your tobacco rigging to the shed and drove in, you would have a pole, oh, gee, maybe 10 feet long, I’d say at least 10 feet long with a “V” notch in the end of it. And you were able to put that in the center of the tobacco lathe and, starting from the rear, of course, you would get it so it would balance equally on either side of the lathe and now you would push that up into the rafters to the man or whoever, usually it was a man, who was on the lowest rafter and he would in turn pass it up to whoever was doing it or he would pass them left or right to wherever the tobacco was being hung.

KENNEDY: So you never worked up in the top?

EDLUND: No, I never worked up on top. There was a difference in sheds that was quite different. The sheds we had off Buckland Road were pretty much the conventional type sheds that you see with a pointed roof and it had sides where the doors (every other twelve-inch vertical board is a door on hinges) that you could open up to get the air to flow in to get rid of the moisture in the tobacco. And then they would have a couple louvers at the end of the sheds at the top that they would open that would swing and tilt.

Doug Grant was the son of the original guy that ran the farm and after his father passed away he leased or rented property from what they call a Burnham farm which is an area that is all where the businesses are east of Route 5 and north of Pleasant Valley Road. That tract of land had a couple different sheds in it that really caught my attention because the tobacco sheds were not hot to work in. And the reason they were not hot is that at the very top of them it was like a continuous cupola that went from one end to the other; and with a continuous roof over and sides that dropped down and opened up, and what happened was you had an air flow from inside and out the top and all the heat escaped. Gee, it seemed like those tobacco sheds were like half as hot or almost not hot at all compared to the other ones I had worked in and that made an impression on me. It's something it seems like a way of cooling buildings that very few people used but it was really very effective.

KENNEDY: Of course we use them in our houses now. When they put a new roof on, they put that little cupola right along the top of the ridge.

EDLUND: (Chuckling) Yes, yes, they do.

KENNEDY: But that's only in the last ten years.

EDLUND: But originally that was . . . it caught my attention.

KENNEDY: In today's, they put propane in to heat them. What did they do back then?

EDLUND: Charcoal. They had pans, brown pans, you know, almost like the round things the kids slide in and they would hold charcoal fires.

KENNEDY: And they had to tend them all night long?

EDLUND: Oh, yes.

KENNEDY: For a couple weeks or so?

EDLUND: I forget how many – it was 'til the tobacco dried out. They knew by feel and things like this, the color and everything when the tobacco was ready.

KENNEDY: Were all the doors on tobacco barns hinged? I actually thought they were actually sprung, you know, tied at the top and just kind of pulled out.

EDLUND: Both ways.

KENNEDY: Both ways?

EDLUND: Both ways. It depends on who built the sheds.

KENNEDY: How much money . . . you worked this just summer?

EDLUND: Yes.

KENNEDY: And approximately how much money, you know, was this just spending money?

EDLUND: Yes.

KENNEDY: Just spending money.

EDLUND: Yes.

KENNEDY: You were working for low wages?

EDLUND: (laughter) I don't remember how much it was, but it wasn't much.

KENNEDY: Did you have to pay for summer camp when you went to the Boy Scouts?

EDLUND: Yes, we did. It was like I think it was around \$25 a week.

KENNEDY: Wow! Did you have to pay that or did your parents?

EDLUND: My parents paid that.

KENNEDY: So your summer money, what did you use it for?

EDLUND: I don't really remember. I'm sure it sometimes went to buying clothes or whatever.

KENNEDY: Tell me about Boy Scouts; you've been in Boy Scouts for how many years?

EDLUND: (laughter) Oh, I don't know . . . close to 60.

KENNEDY: Sixty years . . . that's an incredible thing. I was involved in it with my kids but then I got out but you've stayed in it all these years.

EDLUND: Well, yeah, I stayed in while I was a youth and then, after I got out of the Service, we lived in '54 at my mother-in-law's place next door here, Hollis and Elsie Moulton's, and at that time my brother-in-law, Robert Steiger, was building a house right next door, the red ranch that's on Belden Road, and he was living down on Ellington Road in back of the grandmother's place in an apartment that had been fixed over from years ago where

the Pleasant Valley Club used to be. He, when I was in the Korean War, had grown up and lived in Broad Brook and he was an Eagle Scout up there. He was very active in Boy Scouting and when he got married and came down here they approached him to be a Scout Master because the fellow that had been Scout Master in that period had been sick, I believe, so they were without a Scout Master for quite a period of time. So Bob took over the troop and the troop was small; I guess, in that time, probably about 20-25 boys, not huge but still a fair amount.

KENNEDY: Did Bob Steiger pass on or is he still alive?

EDLUND: No, no, he's still alive!

KENNEDY: He's still alive?

EDLUND: Oh, yes, he's down in Florida right now. So he was the Scout Master for many years. He asked me after I got back from the Service and he knew I'd been in Scouting and I was living there. He'd been building a house next to where we were living, we talked about Scouts a little bit because he was so involved in it and I wasn't doing anything in the evenings 'cause I was working and he said, "Could you give me a hand?" Well, that's kind of how it started. I gave them a hand and the next year I joined the Legion Post and I became the Chairman of the Troop Committee.

KENNEDY: This is Troop 62 now?

EDLUND: Yes. And I was Chairman of the Committee until '75, I think it was. At that time the Scout Master decided he didn't want to be the Scout Master anymore. We had some differences with him and the Legion Post. Primarily the problem was that he was a school teacher (high school) and he wanted to really make the Troop larger. We were around 70 (scouts) at that time.

KENNEDY: Whew!

EDLUND: And I think he really, in fact he said he wanted to have it like Manchester's Troop 25 and have a hundred in it (laughter). So, anyway, the Legion Post just felt it was straining the facilities there.

KENNEDY: You were meeting where now?

EDLUND: At the Legion Hall on Main Street and you had a big basketball . . . it was actually, the church proper was now a basketball court, okay? And we had one room in back and that was it, and you know, if you had to have classes or anything, you had to just pick a corner or somewhere and try to . . . or go into a coat room out front and it just got to be physically ridiculous. Back in those days we didn't do much camping other than going to Pioneer . . . let's see, when I went to . . . in the early days I went to Pioneer a couple of times, too, in the winter.

KENNEDY: Pioneer was where?

EDLUND: Pioneer was a Council camp in West Hill Lake in Winsted.

KENNEDY: In Winsted?

EDLUND: Yes. That was the Council camp at that time.

KENNEDY: Does that exist today?

EDLUND: No, they

KENNEDY: There's another one out there.

EDLUND: Yes . . . Workcoeman is there which is part of our Council now, the Connecticut Rivers Council; and just up around the lake is Sequassen which was the New Haven Council camp. Sequassen bought some of the Long River Council's property and buildings and then they, I don't know what the time frame was, they sold the water front but they kept across the street and they kept a right of way. So you could go out there and go camping in the wood area and they had a few . . . I think about three buildings that you could rent and go. And we did that also initially for quite a few years. They also had a dining hall there from the camp and I don't know if that was what caused them to close that or what but that burned down after they sold the original property. So by the time they got done, they had a few cabins there and eventually they sold the rest of that land.

They needed the money more than the land, but in the meantime they built this huge complex at Lake of Isles and they had three camps down there. They had two on one side of the Lake which had kitchens and dining halls and everything and on the other side of the Lake they built like an outpost where they had just a building where you could draw supplies and that was for troops that did all their cooking and troops that did things like that. We always went and did our own camp site in their building area with traditional dining hall which is kind of the way camps are today because you get a little Scout spirit and everybody gets together.

KENNEDY: Now you were saying in the beginning you didn't do any winter camping. You went to summer camp for a week? A month?

EDLUND: Well, I can remember that I, very few people went to summer camp from town here. I can remember that I went and the reason I think I went was my cousin from Hartford went and I went the same time as he did and the first year I think I went one week and, I don't know, I know one year I went at least three weeks to summer camp by the time I'd gone two or three years.

KENNEDY: So what did you do in Scouting? You didn't do any winter camping so you had a meeting once a week?

EDLUND: Yes, back in the early days.

KENNEDY: What did you do in the meetings?

EDLUND: Just like we do today. Back in those days the requirements were different so we had to learn signaling, semaphore, Morse Code, okay, and tracking was a big thing like if you were going to be a Scout and if you were going to track somebody and remain hidden, you could do it, identifying stars and trees and the outdoors was part of it. A lot of hiking, map reading, compass work, all the basic Scouting skills were done at that time.

KENNEDY: Were you working for a Merit Badge or were you just learning skills?

EDLUND: Well, no, the advancement system was similar to what it is today, Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class. You had skills and, just like today, each one of them starts off with some basic first aid; and say, for a Second Class Scout and then First Class Scout you do a more advanced program of first aid; and then as you went on and went for the Merit Badge, it would have effectively been the Red Cross package. And most of the things were done back then as they are today. You started off and you learned a little bit of the basic Scouting skills such as cooking and then as you did the next one you learned a little more and you showed your proficiency at it and then the Merit Badge would be a highlight of it where you did a lot more; you baked and you did roasts and whatever you were going to do.

KENNEDY: Star Life and Eagle still existed back then?

EDLUND: Oh yes!

KENNEDY: What did you attain? Were you able to get to Eagle?

EDLUND: No, I got as far as Life and just ran out of time. We did not have, like we have today, a dedicated group of adults that were working with the Scouts on Merit Badges year round. You worked on your Merit Badges totally on your own. The only Merit Badge you got where you didn't do that was if you got a Merit Badge at summer camp. But the rest of the year was totally on your own so it was a lot slower process back in those days and a lot fewer boys got to be Eagle.

KENNEDY: When do you think winter camping came in or weekly camping?

EDLUND: After the Korean War they went from what they called Provisional Troops where the Scout would go as an individual and go to camp, and the camp would have a camp site with like a Scout Master or Senior Patrol Leader running that group of diversified Scouts from everywhere. Because when I went to camp that's what we were, we were Provisional. In the time I went to camp as a boy there was no troop camping at all: it was all Provisional. They didn't even talk about it as Provisional; that's just the way it was. Every camp site area was set up that way.

After the Korean War, then the troops started going to camp by units and so you had more troops going. It actually cost less when you went that way than it did Provisional because this way they had a hired camp staff to fill the slots of the organization. So for the troops that started going, as long as they had the leadership there, it was less expensive for them to go that way, so it worked out well and that just kind of snowballed to the point that that's the norm today, the Provisional is the exception.

KENNEDY: Right, okay, so you took over the leadership of 62, then, when this gentleman, Mr. Cameron, decided to buck the Legion?

EDLUND: Yes. They, at that time, said we're not going to allow you to take any more kids, that's your number, you stay within that, and he got, well, huffy about it and he quit just like that, and then we were left without a Scout Master (laughter) and so I volunteered.

KENNEDY: Your son was

EDLUND: No, there wasn't even

KENNEDY: There wasn't a son at this point?

EDLUND: No (laughter).

KENNEDY: Now you and Sally, you were High School friends as well?

EDLUND: Oh, yes, yes.

KENNEDY: And then when did you get married? I shouldn't ask that probably (laughter).

EDLUND: '53.

KENNEDY: 53? Okay, you came back from the Korean War in '54, okay. So you took over the Troop when?

EDLUND: In, I'm putting on my glasses here

KENNEDY: A problem as we get older.

EDLUND: Yes, I realize. Yes, I took over in March of '65. I had become the Chairman back in September of '55; that was not too long after I got out of the Service. We went from then until we had the fire at the Legion Post; we stayed at the Legion Post at the Main Street Community House. We ended up with a large crowd. We went camping quite a bit. Bob Steiger had been an avid camper and we went back-packing quite a bit, at least three or four times a year, like going once a month, you know what I am saying. Back in those days we didn't have frames; what we had were pack baskets, Indian type, woven. We put pads on the shoulder straps and we drilled holes in the top rims of the thing so you could take a line and put in there and strap the sleeping bag on the top and they were pretty heavy.

KENNEDY: I can imagine. They were pretty uncomfortable on your back, I'm sure.

EDLUND: Yes, if you hiked five miles in a day with that, you knew you'd done a lot, but we did a lot of hiking, we did a lot of hiking on the Appalachian Trail, sections of it, both in Connecticut, Massachusetts and

[End Tape 1, Side 2; Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

EDLUND: Like I was saying, at this time we started doing things a little differently. We traveled more in camp, back-packing and things like this and, of course, it was tent camping and we had tents that were all-season tents. They weren't the frame-type tents you have now but they had a lot of guide lines on them. They had zippers on them that zippered at the bottom to keep the cold air out so they were kind of a year-round tent.

KENNEDY: They weren't the old, heavy canvas that you'd put your finger on and they'd leak?

EDLUND: No, no, we had some of them in the early days; yes, we did buy some of them initially. I remember we got a lot of them from someplace in New Jersey but then we shifted over to the newer type and, you know, I don't remember when we made the switch from one type to the other.

KENNEDY: I remember the summer camps had the old heavy canvas coming up from the platform.

EDLUND: Yes, right, which they still have today (laughter). But I don't remember quite when we switched over. I'll tell you, I think initially we were going lightweight and I think we went with plastic and we used to make like a tent out of them. We did have, prior to that, some of those military pup tents and, for the life of me, I can't remember when we made the swap-over but I know for back-packing we tried to go lightweight and the plastic actually worked quite well. We would take and use duct tape and put a circle of rope, attach it to the bottom of the plastic and then you could put tent pegs in that end, have the duct tape holding the rope, and then you could even withstand a small snowstorm and not be too bad. I liked the plastic and it worked out quite well. You could either make a pup-tent version or kind of like an a-frame where you'd run a line from the ground to a tree and then put the tent on a triangle, and we experimented with this, and that was when the weather was nice and you were just trying to keep the rain off or something like that. But we also had the other tents and I can't remember when we made the switch but we did try to go as lightweight as we could.

Everything was cooking over wood fires and bringing your own mess kit with things like this and we devised ways of making things lighter as we went. And we also had, like if you wanted to put a tent down, we'd buy these small little rakes that kids use, cut the handles off so then we only had a rake that was this long. We could strap that on

KENNEDY: Your pack?

EDLUND: Yeah, the same way with the lightweight saws.

KENNEDY: And shovels?

EDLUND: Yeah, so we dug trench-fire-rings; back in those days, you could do that in a lot of places, even in state parks you could do this! Today you can't.

KENNEDY: No open fires in many of them.

EDLUND: Yeah, but the only place you can have them is in a fireplace that they provide or if you bring one of these portable

KENNEDY: Stoves?

EDLUND: Yeah. So we had an opportunity to do a lot of camping and fire-building and things like that that you can't do today. About the only place you can build a fire today is in a Scout camp, and do that type of trench-fire-ring and/or fires that are not in a predetermined fireplace. The way it is today, it seems like when we tried to continue the program of doing more of the back-packing. We finally came to the conclusion that the little kids (it took a while for it to sink in) but it started off you had to be 11, but now they're coming in at 10-1/2, you know, and nobody really came in at 11. They were 11-1/2, well that year's difference made all the difference in the world in the size of the Scout coming in.

Today's registration, which is bringing in the boys at an earlier age, those younger kids are not really capable of back-packing weights and things like that, especially if they're carrying portable stoves and everything with them that you have today. So we have elected in our troop to skipping around and leave that type of back-pack camping to boys when they get to be in high school. And now we have a serious class of teaching them all about camping: how to camp, safety, weather, storms, lightening, what you have for where you're going, terrain and carrying food and things, and they've been doing six-day-, seven-day-trips on the Appalachian Trail or up North.

Last year they did close to 50 miles up in Maine over a stretch of days and in order to do that they had to do four or five camping trips. The younger boys could never do something like that so we've concentrated our program so that the older boys – and these are the guys that really want to do this now – you know. They're physically able, they're sports-acclimated in high school and by waiting 'til we got to their age it seemed that they work out better, plus the cost of that kind of gear today – back-packs, you're talking \$100 for a back-pack now and then the sleeping bags and you're not talking the run-of-the-mill sleeping bags; you're looking for the light-weight stuff and by the time you get done, you're talking some serious money.

KENNEDY: Although the problem there is that they start in high school at 14 years old and that's when you tend to lose a lot of your Scouts as well.

EDLUND: But this program is keeping them. We are losing very, very few.

KENNEDY: Now Scouting actually goes down now where you've got the Cub Scouts and now you've got Tiger Cubs, is that occurring? So that starts even at, what, six, seven?

EDLUND: Somewhere in that area.

KENNEDY: Has that been beneficial for Scouting, do you think?

EDLUND: I don't know about the Tiger Cubs program because I'm not that close to the Cub program but I know that the Webelos program is most beneficial because most of our boys coming into Scouting today are coming out of the Cub program. We are not getting walk-ins. They're primarily coming from the Webelos program.

KENNEDY: Webelos being the last year of the Cub program?

EDLUND: No, Webelos is now a two-year program. But they're interested in Scouting by that point and not only they are interested in Scouting at that point, but the parents are. We quite often get parents that come on board. We have, oh probably 25 adults registered in our troop, at least that many (laughter), maybe more.

KENNEDY: 25 adults to how many Scouts?

EDLUND: 33.

KENNEDY: Almost, close to 1 to 1!

EDLUND: Yes.

KENNEDY: Mostly male?

EDLUND: Mostly but we have several females. We've had them right along; they've gone through the basic Scout leadership training so that they're fully trained. They go to summer camp. Most of the ladies belong to the Order of the Arrow and other campers and we even have one who is a Vigil Honor member.

KENNEDY: What does that mean?

EDLUND: That's the highest in the Order of the Arrow.

KENNEDY: The Order of the Arrow, again, is

EDLUND: A national honor camping society.

KENNEDY: Part of Scouting and just an honor society that you can join and Vigil Honor is just a part of Order of the Arrow.

EDLUND: It's the only part of the Order of the Arrow that you can't achieve on your own; you're recognized for it.

KENNEDY: Well, even Order of the Arrow, weren't you recommended by the Troop and then you had to be initiated?

EDLUND: Yes, yes.

KENNEDY: You talk about summer camp. I've heard a rumor that you have been at Camp Hinds, I believe, in Maine for more than any other person?

EDLUND: (laughter) No, no, no. There are a lot of guys from Maine that have been up there for a long time. I don't know exactly – I think I'm in around my 20th year.

KENNEDY: How far is Camp Hinds from South Windsor?

EDLUND: Mileage-wise I can't tell you exactly.

KENNEDY: How many hours?

EDLUND: It's about 45 minutes north of Portland.

KENNEDY: So that's five hours?

EDLUND: M-m-m, no --- four hours.

KENNEDY: Now, all the Scouts in the troop can go there even if they're only eleven? It's only on the back-packing that you restrict it to the high school?

EDLUND: Yes. Everybody can go to summer camp. In fact, we try to get the boys going to summer camp the first year they come out of Webelos even though they haven't been in the troop for a long time, because that's the best opportunity for us to get them to know everybody. If you're with everybody for a whole week, you get to know the other Scouts, the leader; and the retention we've had because of that program is great. It really makes a difference and it gets the boys into the advancement mode; they're thinking about it, they're doing it, and it becomes a routine then by the way.

And it does one other thing; when you go to summer camp, when you're in troop, you see the guys around you. And when you go to summer camp, you're with hundreds of Scouts. You go to retreat and all these Scouts are in uniform, you go to your meals and you suddenly become part of the larger organization and they realize the younger kids realize it is a big organization and there's a lot more to it. And there's no way you can tell a boy about this. He needs to do it himself.

KENNEDY: Experience it.

EDLUND: Right. And, you know, plus it gets the boys starting to live together, to work together, you know? It's patrol, camp tasks that they have to do besides whatever classes they're going to and so people have to work together: they have to get up, they have to clean their tents in the morning, they have to roll the sides of their tents up and air them out, they have to take care of their personal gear and make sure it's neat and orderly and things like this. They may not have to do it at home but they have to do it there; you know; you have to make your bed (chuckles), so it's a good place to get them into Scouting.

KENNEDY: Why did you pick Camp Hinds, instead of Workcoeman or Lake of Isles?

EDLUND: Well, Lake of Isles is no longer there. The Mashantucket-Pequot Indians bought it from the Council back many years ago. I was on the Council Camping Committee at the time and there was a major pollution problem at Lake of Isles.

Years ago Colt Industries gave the Camp the waste oil so they could cut down the dust on their roads. It turns out the waste oil contained PCBs (chuckle) so we were putting PCBs on the roads. The Coast Guard was giving us used barrels to make our docks with, and these had paint that kills barnacles and sea life that attaches to the ship and, obviously, you put that in the lake (chuckle) and you start polluting some water plus they had dumped some other stuff on the property. The Coast Guard did come back and they spent like a whole summer taking stuff out of there. Then, I'm not sure who drilled them, but it was with the government. They drilled a series of wells around that area and determined that we had contaminants that were going from the lake and from this area and going toward the property owned by the neighbors down to the northwest and in order to do this it was going to cost them some dollars to clean it up.

And the Council didn't have that kind of money and about that time the Indians wanted to buy it and they finally worked out a deal with them where they bought it and they may have assumed the responsibility for the clean-up, too. Of course they had the funds to do it and we didn't. They took that money and put it into upgrading the buildings at Workcoemen and Mattatuck which became two of the major camps: Mattatuck being out in Plymouth, and Workcoeman being in Winsted on West Hill.

KENNEDY: Then you deserted and went to Camp Hinds. (laughs)

EDLUND: Well, not really! We went to Lake of Isles, let's see, went to Lake of Isles, then, the time frame, I can't tell you, it goes back so far. We went to Lake of Isles for a while and then we went to Workcoeman for a while, then we went to Scout camp in Rhode Island, Yawgoog. Then we went to, from Yawgoog, we went . . . Yawgoog got to be very big down there and when we left there, we didn't really care for the program that we were getting. We checked out going to Maine and we went up there; we went up there for about six or seven years and the program was very good.

The camp staff at Hinds is kind of unique because, whereas Connecticut had like a staff from Europe and anywhere and I don't know how many different areas, most of the staff from Hines were Maine Scouts and they seemed to have started at Camp Hinds. Then they kept moving up in different positions and some of them would be there eight and ten years and then pretty soon they'd be on the staff and they'd be adults. They had an esprit de corps of people that went back for years and they just kept the camp going and they had a much better continuity of programs. They offered everything that we had in our Council camp plus many additional features.

The biggest thing was the waterfront. Our Council's waterfronts were not very big, even West Hill Workcoeman. They only allowed the Scouts to use a small portion of that lake. At Camp Hinds, Camp Hinds is on Panther Pond. Panther Pond, being a pond in Maine, is a fairly good-sized pond. It's about three miles long and a mile-and-a-half wide.

KENNEDY: You might call that a lake!

EDLUND: (laughing) But they call that a pond – it drains into Sebago — so it is a pond. But it's deep, it's clear and the shorefront is beautiful and a lot of the waterfront

they have . . . No, they don't let the people go out in the whole lake but the area that they let the Scouts use is about 10 times bigger than any of ours so you can go sailing with a sailboat; you know, you can go out and canoe, and you can canoe around the lake and things like this. You can do a trek away from, you can canoe locally in the camp area by just taking out a canoe or you can take the group and take a camp staff and go around the lake or go up the Tenney River to the next lake, you know, go three or four miles in canoes so it's something you couldn't do in any of our camps and the facilities up there are, have been, much better.

KENNEDY: Are June Norcross Webster or Nahaco still around?

EDLUND: Nahaco is still there, but they sold it to the town of Eastford and as far as I know, we don't use that. June Norcross Webster is still in existence; it is a Cub camp, that's in Ashford. There's a primary Cub camp in Bozrah. They did build a new dining hall down there and expanded their facility down there and that's a fairly nice Cub facility for Cubs but the only Scout camps we have now are Workcoeman and Mattatuck in Plymouth.

KENNEDY: You talk about leadership and how there weren't many leaders beginning, I have almost a one-to-one ratio. Is this good, bad, have you seen changes there?

EDLUND: Well, I think it's good! If you think about it, if you're a Scout and your father is active in the troop, you go on a camping trip and you go somewhere and you now have something to talk about to each other and at home. It's... I've known that it seems to create better interest at home because the people are talking together about Scouts. A boy on his own who doesn't have anybody to talk to about the program

KENNEDY: They're not sharing an experience.

EDLUND: Yeah, they're not sharing experiences and things like this. It's not quite the same so that's an important feature plus the adults get so they understand the program, what the boy is supposed to be doing, and you don't really have to have a paternal push but you have more urge to participate and participation means that the boys are going to stay in longer. And when the adults find that they make friends in the troop when they go along, they have a good time, okay? And it works out to a win-win situation. We need the adults for drivers in order to get there; we need the adults to be instructors.

KENNEDY: Merit Badge teachers?

EDLUND: Yes. We have all kinds of people that have Scouts, you know? Doctors, EMTs, flight nurses, engineers, you know, science teachers, all kinds of people.

KENNEDY: Right, right.

EDLUND: And when you have this kind of resources, you know, if you're good at teaching environmental science or nature, you can't hardly get any better than that!

KENNEDY: No, no, that's perfect! The other side of it, though, is that Boy Scouting is kind of looked . . . I think it's like in sports; is there too much parental push or

pressure and do they not then kind of look up to a Scout Master and kind of get away from their parents? Is there a negative to it?

EDLUND: Not that I see! No, because it's not done at that level of pushing.

KENNEDY: It's not like sports?

EDLUND: No, no, in other

KENNEDY: Why isn't it like sports?

EDLUND: Well, the parent really doesn't have, other than the time he may be assisting, teaching a program, okay? The rest of the time it's the troop leadership, the boy leadership that is doing everything. The adults are not hanging over the boys. We take maybe 15 adults to go to summer camp.

KENNEDY: Wow . . . just for one week!

EDLUND: For one week. We need drivers, see? We've had as many as 55 boys; the troop got a little big one year; we've gone as many as 55 Scouts to summer camp.

KENNEDY: Wow!

EDLUND: Right now we're averaging in the 30s, 25 to 30, something like that.

KENNEDY: What's it cost to go to summer camp today compared to your \$25?

EDLUND: (sigh) \$275.

KENNEDY: Total cost or

EDLUND: Yeah, well

KENNEDY: Do they have to pay for driving and all

EDLUND: No, no, that's all included; the gas is figured in there and meals along the way and everything and so compared to other camps' programs we're in the ball park. What we do is with the drivers that we have we have one fellow that's been with the troop, well, he's a 50-year veteran. (chuckle).

KENNEDY: What's his name?

EDLUND: Gerry Levasseur.

KENNEDY: Oh, Gerry's with you?

EDLUND: Yes (chuckle).

KENNEDY: Oh-h, okay, okay, good for him!

KENNEDY: He worked with 880 but then he went with Mordavsky into the Explorers.

EDLUND: Yes.

KENNEDY: Is he away from that now?

EDLUND: Yes, we don't have any.

KENNEDY: You don't in 62?

EDLUND: No.

KENNEDY: But there are still Explorers around, aren't there?

EDLUND: Yeah, but

KENNEDY: Mordavsky, does he still have an Explorer post?

EDLUND: No, no. He is the doctor (Donald Mordavsky) I was talking about.

KENNEDY: Oh, doctor was here, too? Oh, you've got everybody!

EDLUND: (laughter) So, fortunately having Gerry along, we end up usually doing some kind of a project at the camp, repairing something, building something, and every year for, gee, I don't know how many years now, I've lost count, we've been . . . we started off building new latrines, we built them handicap ramps, four latrines, some of them turned out to be a major project doing a handicap ramp because you

KENNEDY: A long ramp, huh, really long.

EDLUND: Yeah!

KENNEDY: And sturdy!

EDLUND: Well, plus we had to drill the holes! So we had to . . . we went down and rented post-hole diggers and

KENNEDY: They don't dig too well in the rocky terrain, I'm sure!

EDLUND: No, it's hard on the guys, I'll tell ya, but we've worked on them. We . . . in fact last year they did another handicap ramp at the, by the rangers' place there, the Explorers building, they built a handicap ramp last year. The year before that they put new

handrails and a bridge going across the Tenney River, so we've been . . . They had a building that was used for the staff lounge that they added one whole addition to it the first year. They had put in the pilings and then we framed it, got the floor in and insides pretty well started and then the second year we did the windows and we did the outside siding and then we came back and they took down the original part and they added on a kitchen back there and we finished the inside of the kitchen and built a ramp on there and it just seems like every year we find something to do.

KENNEDY: You keep going back, h-m-m?

EDLUND: Yes, and so we get about six or eight of these other guys that are drivers that work with Gerry on these projects, so then we only need two or three of the assistant Scout Masters to watch the program, so everybody is busy.

KENNEDY: M-m-m h-m-m.

EDLUND: But you've got all these guys working together

KENNEDY: Now Doc Mordavsky lives in South Windsor; Gerry he's in Glastonbury or Marlborough?

EDLUND: Marlborough.

KENNEDY: So he comes quite a distance for them.

EDLUND: Yes, he does.

KENNEDY: Now you played an active role as Scout Master for many years . . . '54 to

EDLUND: Yes, I retired last year after 40 years.

KENNEDY: Forty years as Scout Master! But you're still involved...

EDLUND: Yeah, I'm still working as the Treasurer (chuckling) and help out where I can, whatever program it is I try to do a little buying for them, and most of the Scout gear is still here in the garage or the Scout trailer is in the backyard and . . .

KENNEDY: Now, where do you meet?

EDLUND: We meet at the First Congregational Church on Main Street.

KENNEDY: Okay.

EDLUND: And we have met there since the fire in '76. When the Legion Post burned in '76, that was kind of the end of the Legion folks' sponsorship. They lost a lot of members when they lost a home.

KENNEDY: Okay.

EDLUND: They just, they just never fully recovered to this day from that. We have a lot of members still active in the Legion but you don't get as many as you used to because we're meeting in Wapping, you know, and

KENNEDY: M-m-m, so your sponsor is the church?

EDLUND: No.

KENNEDY: No?

EDLUND: No, we sponsor ourselves.

KENNEDY: Well, you have to have a sponsoring . . . don't you have a sponsoring organization?

EDLUND: Well, you have the Main Street Scouters Association.

KENNEDY: Oh, okay.

EDLUND: And we have some people on there that started us; they were the original committee at the time, okay?

KENNEDY: M-m-m h-m-m.

EDLUND: And most of them are still there (chuckle).

KENNEDY: What do you think Scouting has done for you?

EDLUND: Well, Scouting gives you a purpose in life; it gave me . . . When I was working, I felt that it did wonders to give you a complete change of mind-thought. When you had a lot on your mind and then you had to completely divorce yourself from that and totally think about something else and I found that was very relaxing on the mind to do that and it just got to be something that was nice to do and some good to do. Plus, like I say, we had so many adults that it's like a

KENNEDY: _____

EDLUND: (chuckle) Yes, it really is.

KENNEDY: Yes, I tried joined to work with Gerry and Doc and

EDLUND: You can imagine, you know, but we had a lot of new faces and the new guys are great, you know, so

KENNEDY: Your son was involved?

EDLUND: Yeah, my son was involved when the troop was small; it got down to one point after the fire where we got down to about 15 boys but he's an Eagle Scout

KENNEDY: He was born in '63 . . . you were married in '53?

EDLUND: Yeah but he's the next to the youngest; I have to get

KENNEDY: How many children do you have?

EDLUND: Four, three girls and the boy.

KENNEDY: Were the girls ever involved in Girl Scouts?

EDLUND: For a short period of time.

KENNEDY: (laughter)

EDLUND: My wife was involved for a few years but not like I was.

KENNEDY: Why were you so involved? What do you think, besides feelings such as difference when you came home from work, and so forth, what motivated you to stay in well beyond when your son left

EDLUND: You know, in the early days, of course after I came back from being in the Service I got into the American Legion and the Legion was the sponsor and I was very active in the Legion. In fact, I ended up being the Post Commander for a couple of years, so we were supporting the program at that time so I had a double interest, you know, with the, and, you know, back in, reflecting back, one of the things I just thought of, in the early days of Scouting, during the war and then after the war

KENNEDY: Are you talking the Korean?

EDLUND: No

KENNEDY: World War I?

EDLUND: Two.

KENNEDY: Two?

EDLUND: Two, yeah, one of the things the Scouts did was we were the recycling facility of the town!

KENNEDY: Is that right?

EDLUND: Well, yeah! Because we, our troop did paper drives through the war and then after the war and we shared the money from the paper drive with the troop and the Girl Scouts. The Girl Scouts troop was on Main Street. So the paper money for all those years went to that until we stopped doing paper drives and I forget when that was but it was many, many years later, probably 15 years later that we stopped doing paper drives. During the war we also did scrap metal but, you know, you can't imagine this today (chuckling). We had Scouts, you know, riding in the back of farm trucks, you know.

KENNEDY: Safety!

EDLUND: (chuckling) Yeah, I'm just thinking, you know, on top of piles and piles of paper and we never had an accident or anything but when you think of what we were doing then by today's concept of safety, it would have blown their minds (chuckling). But that was a big part of the Scouting program, once a year to go out and do scrap and paper and people all over the town; when we did a thing, you know, it was town-wide.

KENNEDY: The, I've lost my thought, oh, the contact, you know, a Scout Master cannot be with a Boy Scout alone today, there must be two Scouts or two leaders or something? Can you talk about that and the changes that you've seen over the 50 years that you've been involved?

EDLUND: (chuckle) Like when my brother-in-law was Scouting . . . Scout Master, he was all alone back in the '50s. It wasn't until I got in there and a few other fathers got in there, we started to have two-person leadership, kind of those days. I can't ever remember going anywhere totally by myself but, because we wouldn't have had enough transportation, it seems like we at least had two people.

KENNEDY: When you had your First Class or your Eagle, you had a Scout Master conference with the Scout and the Scout Master and it would be one on one.

EDLUND: Right, it's still today.

KENNEDY: I thought that's illegal, though.

EDLUND: No, no, no.

KENNEDY: Well, a Scout Master cannot be with a Scout by himself

EDLUND: Well, yeah, but you can just go in one corner of a room

KENNEDY: Okay, you don't go in a separate room; you do it in the same room but your conference is one on one.

EDLUND: Well, you can go in the kitchen at the church and things like that, you know.

[End Tape 2, Side 1; Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

EDLUND: One of the things that we liked to do in the early days of the troop when I was Scout Master and it seemed like even, I can't remember if it was before or not but I think it was after I became Scout Master, we found out that we could go camping in Groton on an island just off of Noank, Ram Island, and we used to go down there at least once or twice a year. We had a few outboard motors and we would rent rowboats . . .

KENNEDY: (chuckle)

EDLUND: And we would put the gear in a rowboat and go over to Ram Island. Well, it really wasn't that far . . . we're talking about from here to . . .

KENNEDY: Ellington Road.

EDLUND: No, let's see now... say the church, the new church, okay?

KENNEDY: Okay, m-m-m h-m-m-m.

EDLUND: Now, what would you say that is?

KENNEDY: A half-mile, three-quarters?

EDLUND: No, a half-mile. You had to go from, we used to go from the gas dock in Noank and then go across and go to, go over there. We were camping on the beach of Ram Island, and it was a wonderful place. They had a, it had been a hotel at one time. It was actually called Mystic Island at one time in the early part of the 19th century. I guess they used to have steamboats stop there with people like New Yorkers going up toward Boston or whatever. But the original place was gone, but they had this building there that was like a store and a place where the caretaker lived and the fee was reasonable.

We were able to camp right along the water and they had a rocky area on one side, a point of land, and some grass there, and we set up camp there and we would take a boat and go fishing; we could go clamming, crabbing from there. They had a nice beach, the kids climbed all over the rocks and everything. It was a great place to go! We, gee, I think we must have gone there for ten years.

I can remember one famous weekend (chuckle), I had, I don't know what boat, I had my own boat by that time, a small run-about, and we had that and we didn't have to rent a rowboat but sometimes we did just have another boat, you know, so that the kids . . . That was before they had to have licenses and they'd go out and take the boat and go out and offshore and go fishing, you know; yeah, you could see them but they could be a half-mile away, you know. But we always went . . . It was the calm part of the year, it seemed like (clears throat) but used to go down and if we came down in the evening we had, I forget if it was going back or coming down but I think it was going down, we used to bring our gear down to the gas dock and launch my boat and then come around and I took all the seats out of the boat and just had a box to sit on so we could put a lot of stuff in it.

KENNEDY: M-m-m h-m-m.

EDLUND: And made a bunch of trips over and I forgot which way it was but (cough) it ended up (cough) Art Dunham was the minister and he, I think he got lost that night going back . . .

KENNEDY: (laughing)

EDLUND: And I got stuck out in the fog and had to drop the anchor and spend the night.

KENNEDY: (laughing) With the Scouts or without the Scouts?

EDLUND: No, I was on my way back with an empty load and I know his wife called the State Police (laughter). But that was a cold, miserable night. But that was the only time I ever had any kind of a problem there, doing that whole thing for years and years.

KENNEDY: Good planning or luck?

EDLUND: (Cough) No, a little bit of luck. Sometimes we had a wind would come up and it would get a little choppy and I thought it was a little hairy but we never seemed to have a problem. (cough). I've got to take a cough drop. Why don't you shut off for a moment.

KENNEDY: You have a family picture . . . you have your daughter, your grand-daughter with the beautiful long, dark hair, and then you have two daughters, let's see, you have three daughters and they're all married?

EDLUND: Yes.

KENNEDY: And there's four grandchildren amongst them?

EDLUND: Uh-h, let's see, four, uh. yup; actually, five.

KENNEDY: Well, I only have one so I don't have much trouble. You have a lot more problems! I'll ask you when they were born . . . that would be a real problem!

EDLUND: Yeah, that really would! I've gotta look it up! (laughter). All right, let's . . . that part of Scouting was a lot of fun when we were able to go down the shore and do that. We had a lot of years of doing that kind of camping and the boys really liked doing that. One of the things that was different then was back in the days when the legal drinking age was 18.

KENNEDY: H-m-m!

EDLUND: And I found out after one camping trip that I had a pyramid of beer cans at one campsite from my older Senior Scouts that camped with us on the beach, but they wanted to camp on another point of land down there.

KENNEDY: I wonder why!

EDLUND: Yeah, I wonder why! Well, when the legal age was 18 to buy beer, it didn't take long for the guys that were younger, that were 16, to get them some. It was a different time but yet those were the days when, actually, we thought nothing of having a small glass of wine with an adult meal

KENNEDY: On a Scouting trip?

EDLUND: On a Scouting trip. There was never anybody drinking any huge amount of it; in fact, that was all we ever did, was limit it to a glass of wine. If you had a spaghetti supper, you had a glass of wine. And you don't do that (chuckling)

KENNEDY: You don't do that today!

EDLUND: Another thing that you don't do . . . I was very happy that we were able to do away with for years . . . there was a form of hazing where you got new boys in and then the older boys hazed them. The boys called yellow bellies and things like this and then, of course, when they get their time to be older Scouts, they wanted to do it to the younger kids and it was really hard to stop then. But we did finally put our foot down and really did bring that to a halt and stop all this initiation-type activity.

KENNEDY: I'm sure with more leaders that was easier to stop.

EDLUND: Yup.

KENNEDY: One leader and 25 boys, it

EDLUND: Or two leaders, it's hard to do. Yeah, but those were a couple major changes that

KENNEDY: What other types of hazing were there?

EDLUND: That was about it!

KENNEDY: In Order of the Arrow is there still the initiation where you have to go out and camp by yourself in a sleeping bag on the ground.

EDLUND: Yes.

KENNEDY: Without a tent?

EDLUND: Yes, oh yeah.

KENNEDY: Has Boy Scouts succeeded in the inner city?

EDLUND: (sighs)

KENNEDY: Or you may not know anything about it where we're in the suburbs.

EDLUND: There are some inner-city troops that are, that do succeed. I don't see that they have the numbers that you have in the suburban towns.

KENNEDY: M-m-m, h-m-m. Do you have any feel for why they don't succeed or . . .

EDLUND: Peer pressure. And, I think it all also goes back to parent ignorance.

KENNEDY: Parents not being associated with Scouting?

EDLUND: Yeah, yeah. Because I'm still firmly convinced that when parents are interested in what their boys are doing, you've got a better chance of succeeding with a boy and keeping him in the Scouting program.

KENNEDY: I think you're absolutely right. What do you think Scouting gives to boys today?

EDLUND: Well, if they stay in it 'til they become an Eagle Scout and the Eagle Scout program requirement of doing an Eagle project plus everything else, there's a lot they need to do but they also kind of grow up learning that they need to start planning, doing things on their own, and looking at the whole outside realm of people around them in a different way. It's come to a cultural shock to some of these kids all that's required of them 'cause they have to plan, think and do these things, and they can do it . . . on their own! It's . . . the program is designed . . . it's not a dad doing it for them or a mother, it's their program.

KENNEDY: Well, it's more of a dad doing it today than it was when you were young, though, right?

EDLUND: Well, you get . . . there's a difference of parental support and having someone do something for you.

KENNEDY: Okay.

EDLUND: You know, like in Cubbing and things like this there's a lot of . . .

KENNEDY: What about leadership within troops and the kids?

EDLUND: Well, most of the leaders today take leadership training. They become what I call pretty much dedicated Scouters.

KENNEDY: These are the parents, now . . . but what about the kids? By the time you become an Eagle, are you a Senior Patrol Leader in the troop?

EDLUND: You may and you may not; you, you've, but you've already been surely a Patrol Leader., okay? There's only one Senior Patrol Leader and you may have been an Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, but if you have like six or seven boys come through in a given year, there just isn't that many slots to fit people at the top post.

KENNEDY: But do you think those leadership roles, Patrol Leader Assistants, are important to the kids?

EDLUND: I think Patrol Leader is probably the most important because he has to think for everybody else. You know, I mean, and pay attention to what everybody else . . . but Senior Patrol Leader, he's more or less the person that's . . . It got to the point where he's giving out the workload and he's given responsibility overall or his Assistant is, but the Patrol Leader is the guy where if the Patrol is cooking he's got to make sure what they're cooking is, that they're safe about what they're doing; if you're using gas, you're not burning everything, your people are not getting burned with the gas and they're handling things the right way, they're cutting their food without cutting their fingers and he has to control the area around them so there's no horseplay when the people are doing this kind of thing. He's got to do the supervising besides the cooking to make sure everything is prepared but he also has to supervise the clean-up of the gear, he has to know what he has to draw out of the troop supply to begin with and make sure it's in the same condition when it goes back, so there's a lot of responsibility on the . . . He has to draw the food from, what we do is have them draw food from a central commissary. We find it's cheaper to buy that way in bulk than individually. When you buy in bulk, you can, it cuts down the cost, and . . .

KENNEDY: And that's your specialty . . .

EDLUND: No-o, uh . . .

KENNEDY: You're, you're the buyer, right; you do the shopping?

EDLUND: Yeah, but the other guys are doing the buying too.

KENNEDY: Are they?

EDLUND: Oh, yeah.

KENNEDY: That was your specialty in the past?

EDLUND: Yeah, it was, yeah. I kind of . . .

KENNEDY: What's the make-up of a patrol today?

EDLUND: You have on an average a Patrol Leader and six or seven boys.

KENNEDY: Same age?

EDLUND: Ah—h-h, we have tried both ways, we have tried putting all boys the same age together and we've had patrols that go with older Scouts and we assimilate in the younger boys. So it's about 50-50 about which one works better.

KENNEDY: What are the advantages and disadvantages?

EDLUND: If you have all the younger boys working together, you don't have the older leadership assisting these boys and you don't have all of them trying to do the same thing. In other words, somebody needs cooking skills, okay? Well, one or two in that patrol need skills. If you have older boys in the Patrol and they all need it, it's harder to do all those things together 'cause it takes longer to get around to everybody, so there's advantages to being together and there's the disadvantages.

KENNEDY: So which way are you now?

EDLUND: Right now we're by age.

KENNEDY: Patrol by age.

EDLUND: Yeah, pretty much

KENNEDY: Do you want to talk a little bit about your work? Your career? Or do you want to talk about your Soldier, Sailor, Marine?

EDLUND: Well, the Soldier, Sailor, Marine Fund was started by World War I veterans, I believe they were. Gee, it goes back so many years, I don't

KENNEDY: Before your time.

EDLUND: (chuckle) They elected not to draw staples, the veterans did and they took that, they voted to take that money and pool it into a Fund to benefit all the veterans. Originally they added the penny-a-pack from cigarettes to the Fund; then they got to the point where they didn't add any more money to it.

The Fund is surviving with a group of people investing it and keeping it going. They tried to not get into the principal of the Fund and so that you don't lose the initial value of it. They've been very successful in doing that and still provide services to the veterans. They do this because the Fund was set up that the American Legion Service Officer in each post around the towns was, and usually you only had one Legion post in a town, would be the representative for the Soldiers, Sailors and Marine Fund and take the applications for people.

That's the way it's still working today. The State of Connecticut oversees the program and it follows all of the rules and regulations of the State of Connecticut and it follows, pretty much, in most cases, the guidelines of welfare for eligibility, background checks, you know, and

things like this. You had to be...originally you had to be a veteran from the State of Connecticut. Now you can be any veteran so you don't have to be from the State of Connecticut.

KENNEDY: Every state has the same

EDLUND: No, we are one of the few states, and, I don't know, we may be, we may be the only state that has this unique program.

KENNEDY: That's pretty good.

EDLUND: Yes. Because it is done by volunteers who are the representatives; the actual staff of this organization is a handful of people, I mean, literally, a handful of people. I go to the office fairly often because it's right on Wethersfield Avenue and, you know, you're talking a half dozen people.

KENNEDY: Yuh, ___ crosstown which is good because one of the problems today is

EDLUND: Right! So, you know, we're not talking a big staff; you know, a half dozen people is not a huge

KENNEDY: So you're a volunteer?

EDLUND: Yes, I'm the rep from South Windsor, I'm a Service Officer in the Legion Post and

KENNEDY: What do these, so any veteran

EDLUND: Any veteran with an honorable discharge that has served so many days during wartime, it has to be during one of the times of conflict, is eligible for funds.

KENNEDY: You don't have to have been in the conflict, just had to serve

EDLUND: Yes. In other words, you could be stateside or you could be, you know, you could be, have a war in the Pacific and you could be in Europe or, if you're on a ship at sea, you don't where it's been

KENNEDY: Right.

EDLUND: If you're on a submarine, nobody knows where you've been. Because they're not going to tell you! Okay? (laughter)

KENNEDY: Right. So how many years have you been doing this...approximately?

EDLUND: I think I've been doing it since 1978.

KENNEDY: So 29 years, wow! Did you use this Fund at all initially when you

EDLUND: No.

KENNEDY: No? And what does the Fund do for the returning veterans?

EDLUND: Okay, if the veteran has a medical problem and he goes to the hospital for anything other than pre-planned. In other words, if you were going to go in and pre-plan something like a knee removal or something like this, you don't do anything; but most of the hospital stays are not pre-planned. People go because they have a problem. They get sick, they have a heart attack, you know, whatever. And when we take an application from the veteran, okay, then the Fund is able to negotiate with that hospital and the hospital will then settle with the Fund at the State rate. So whatever the fund that the State is paying for that kind of service, it's all written in the Code so things like this, and they, I never heard where a hospital wouldn't accept the State rate.

KENNEDY: I'm assuming that's a lot lower than any other rate!

EDLUND: I won't get into that but it's an advantage for the veteran, it's an advantage for the fund so we can treat more people, but we also, if a veteran needs things, we're just in the process of having one veteran's wife getting a hearing aid.

KENNEDY: So the wives, the spouses are covered as well?

EDLUND: Yes.

KENNEDY: Not the children.

EDLUND: If you had a child and there was a problem: yes, he could be; yes, it depends. If you're out of money and you're down and you need assistance, they will do this for the whole family on a temporary basis, not a long-running basis. So it's usually like 12, 13 weeks, a temporary "get over the hump" of a problem, okay? That's primarily . . . it's not long-term assistance.

KENNEDY: It would seem to me you'd be overwhelmed with that. I mean, what about all the people down at the Veterans' Hospital in Rocky Hill? Wouldn't they be requesting help or money? What . . . and then you hear today about veterans coming back and having to wait 600 days to get any help . . .

EDLUND: Well, you see, the difference, most of the things that veterans do down there are usually long-term assistance; in other words, you have some kind of chronic ailment. Yes, you can go in and, if you have a chronic problem, you can go to the Veterans' and probably get in the Veterans' Hospital and things like this. I don't know the mechanics of how that works exactly. I do know that you can go and, say you're on medication, you can go to the VA and get your medication from them; okay, now you're paying a lot less than you are from the drug store, so that's a big advantage to the veteran to go there for that. And he can go and get glasses, things like this. He can go get a physical, get a flu shot, get help, you know, without

being sick. You can go and get hearing aids from there. I guess that's, I don't know, I've never had anybody go there for dental work so I don't know about that. We get people who have dental problems, veterans and their wives, and we've been able to get UConn to do it, and then we pay UConn.

KENNEDY: What is your position, what do you do for these veterans?

EDLUND: All I do is process the paperwork.

KENNEDY: I heard it's more than just process. You know the ins and outs, I gather.

EDLUND: Well, yeah, and I advise people sometimes where they might get additional assistance and so forth, and what they can do and what they can't do, and where they can go for help, and how to do it, you know?

KENNEDY: How many veterans or how much time do you spend on that in a month?

EDLUND: Oh, it probably is . . . it varies. I could go sometimes a month and not have any and then I could have three or four cases in a month and I might have to spend \$4 or \$5 on each case, at least, or maybe more.

KENNEDY: Now the Korean conflict was not a war.

EDLUND: No, but it's all considered

KENNEDY: It's considered a war?

EDLUND: Yeah, all of those

KENNEDY: Anything firing a gun, I guess, is

EDLUND: Well, anything that's recognized by the federal government as a conflict and they're all recognized by the government.

KENNEDY: Are you getting a big influx now with the recent

EDLUND: No.

KENNEDY: Why is that?

EDLUND: So far, I guess, that people have found ways of getting, at least

KENNEDY: Do they not know about you?

EDLUND: Oh, everybody knows (chuckle)

KENNEDY: Oh, they do know, okay. Then it's a well-known fact, okay.

EDLUND: I mean, let's face it, there isn't a social worker in this State that doesn't know about the Fund because if you had somebody coming to the State for aid, then the first thing they ask is if they're a veteran and if they need assistance, they're coming to Waterbury Vets.

KENNEDY: Okay. The Agent Orange thing . . . did you get any repercussion on that?

EDLUND: No, that's strictly with the VA.

KENNEDY: And why?

EDLUND: Well, that's long-term, that's not

KENNEDY: Okay.

EDLUND: In other words, we're not talking about things that are long-term and things like the long treatments; we're talking about something that happens to you, you know, you go in the hospital, you've got pneumonia, you have something happened to you.

KENNEDY: So, drug addiction, I mean a lot of the soldiers end up diagnosed, unemployment, homelessness...

EDLUND: Unemployment, if they run out of benefits, then they could fall into our short-term, okay?

KENNEDY: Okay.

EDLUND: But the sad fact is unless they can get a job, it makes it very difficult.

KENNEDY: And the psychological problems of coming home again, that, is not your field.

EDLUND: No, no, we're talking mostly people that have short-term problems, somebody can't pay their fuel bills, their electric light and utilities, and so forth, you know, and they need some help for a month or two? We try to get them over a hump but if they're deeply going down the sewer pipe, it's pretty hard. If somebody is being evicted from their house, you know, and they're being foreclosed, it's pretty hard for us to stop something like that.

KENNEDY: M-m-m h-m-m.

EDLUND: You know it's out of our realm. Ours is for short-term needs, you know, but they'll assist with money, clothing, food, you know? We give them a letter authorizing them to buy so much food at a grocery store and maybe go to Geissler's or someplace like that?

KENNEDY: M-m-m, h-m-m, so it started back in World War I and funding for it stopped in .

...

EDLUND: I have no idea.

KENNEDY: Somewhere before World War II?

EDLUND: No, it was after World War II.

KENNEDY: After World War II, okay, and you've been living off the interest and the proceeds from that since then?

EDLUND: Yeah.

KENNEDY: Now, are you communicating that Connecticut is a state that has it but most of the other states don't have it?

EDLUND: Most of the other states don't have it, yes. This is the unique

KENNEDY: Very unique!

EDLUND: Well, the veterans pool their bonuses to create the Fund.

KENNEDY: M-m-m, h-m-m, and it's only Connecticut that decided to do that?

EDLUND: Yeah.

KENNEDY: And you only deal with the people living in South Windsor or associated? You don't have to belong to your post to do that?

EDLUND: No, no!

KENNEDY: But you're dealing only with the people from South Windsor that have a need.

EDLUND: Normally. Once in a while I get called on if the other rep is away. I've helped out doing Windsor, East Windsor . . .

KENNEDY: Okay. Well, that's wonderful and, again, your longevity is incredible. You're involved with this Legion Post and I guess that's only for veterans.

EDLUND: That's the same in any area, you know, if you're a veteran

KENNEDY: And it's a fraternal organization helping people.

EDLUND: Right.

KENNEDY: Have you seen a change in that as time goes on?

EDLUND: Yeah, (chuckle) not so many of the new guys are joining and the older guys are dying off.

KENNEDY: I think down in East Hartford or I pass one and I actually think it might be a “for sale” sign there; are we losing our posts?

EDLUND: Yeah, we are.

KENNEDY: Is this natural? Do you have any reason why?

EDLUND: Well, I just don’t think that the new veterans get together the same way the older ones did. Back in the ‘50s and things like this it was the only game in town, you know what I’m saying? It was

KENNEDY: M-m-m, h-m-m, well, you had the Lions Club and then you had the other clubs . . .

EDLUND: But there wasn’t a lot of other things to compete with.

KENNEDY: All right, okay.

EDLUND: Okay? And so...but now...

KENNEDY: And the compete is Boy Scouts and sports and movies and

EDLUND: Everything.

KENNEDY: Everything.

EDLUND: Yeah, I just think that, I don’t know, maybe guys just don’t want to be involved; they just want to forget about it, I just don’t know all the answers about it.

KENNEDY: Now most of the World War II veterans really wanted to forget about it; at least they didn’t talk much about it; maybe they talked within the post.

EDLUND: Yeah.

KENNEDY: But they came home heroes; the Korean War they came home heroes as well. The wars since, unfortunately, we haven’t brought them home as heroes.

EDLUND: No.

KENNEDY: Does that have an influence on

EDLUND: I think it probably does. Well, first of all, we didn’t have an ending to any of these other wars where the people came back en masse so if you don’t have that mass influx you don’t have that mass grouping of appreciation; you have one here, one here, one

there and the guy goes back in civilian life. You don't see these . . . yet you see these pictures of a planeload coming in, okay, somebody welcomes home ____, but, you know, it's not like a shipload or, you know, a thousand __

KENNEDY: Right. You're not unusual. I mean, the Lions Clubs, the Elks, they're all decreasing and losing their membership. I, do you see a change in the American life as a result of this? A change in focus or...

EDLUND: I see that people, well, they don't seem to want to join a group of _____. Actually, we've done better to have adults get together as Scouters than we have as Legionnaires.

KENNEDY: Do you wonder why, though?

EDLUND: Well, they had a common purpose.

KENNEDY: Okay, children.

EDLUND: Children.

ENNEDY: It seems like we focus everything now on children. And the parents are involved in all of their children's activities so that they don't have time in some ways to do that.

EDLUND: Right.

KENNEDY: Interesting. I think we're almost done here. I don't really think we ought to go on for the other areas but I'd love to come back and continue this if you were willing. I can't do it now because Jean Klein didn't give me another tape but, besides that

EDLUND: Well, I don't know what, I don't know if I can

KENNEDY: But I think we've reached our

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]