

Ed Havens
South Windsor Public Library
August 1, 2011

I=Interviewer

EH=Ed Havens, Interviewee

I: I'm going to try to turn the volume up a bit, just to be sure. I just want to say that I'm talking to Ed Havens at the South Windsor Public Library in the quiet room. So, Ed, can you tell me something about yourself? Where and when you were born?

EH: Oh, that's easy enough. I was born in Hartford in the year 1924. I lived in Hartford and went to the Hartford public schools. I mentioned Henry Barnard. No, the first school was Arsenal School. It's been torn down since, in Hartford.

I: Really?

EH: Yeah.

I: Whereabouts was that?

EH: It was on Main Street in Hartford.

I: On Main Street?

EH: And memories of that school was the first swimming pool, I think, in Hartford—the Hartford district—that I remember. I remember swimming there. I remember being in kindergarten there, in a circle of sort. That's about all I remember. Then I went on to—I went to Henry Barnard School. That's still in existence. I think it's a magnet school now. It's on Main Street in Hartford—Henry Barnard.

I: Yeah.

EH: And in the years I grew up in Hartford, which is a different Hartford today, my mother was widowed.

I: How old were you?

EH: **01:42.2** Probably a year and a half old. She's an immigrant from Ireland. My sister was probably 6 months old, as best that I can recall or from what I've heard. So she was a widow in some pretty difficult times—the Depression years. Particularly when she came over as an immigrant, her sisters assisted her a lot, as they used to do that in those days. Of course, I don't remember those years, but I remember the early '30s. I can imagine how difficult it was for her, though, in the '20s.

I: Did she live alone, or did she live with her sisters?

EH: No, she was alone with the help of her sisters, I would gather. That's okay. I remember the early '30s. When I was a youngster, I was pretty much—I wouldn't call it a street kid, but it wasn't. In those days it was just a place to hang out.

I: That's what we did in those days.

EH: And my mother worked. I was out in the street, I remember, sitting on a curb, talking to each other with the kids and my friends. And what did I do during those years? Early on I went to Channel 3. That's the old *Hartford Times*. They used to call it Times Farm.

I: Times Farm?

EH: Times Farm. That was the *Hartford Times*, the evening newspaper.

I: Yes.

EH: They sponsored this camp in Andover.

I: Oh, they sponsored a camp in Andover.

EH: For underprivileged—

I: Called Times Farm?

EH: Times Farm. But since their demise, Channel 3 picked it up.

I: Oh, and now it's the Channel 3—?

EH: The Channel 3 Camp. I hope you've heard of that.

I: Yes.

EH: **03:38.8** Okay. I was an early camper. That had to be in the '30s. I attended that camp for as long as they would let me get in. In fact, the last year that I can recall, I wasn't really supposed to go, but I talked my way into it. I walked from northern Hartford to the *Hartford Times* and visited with the director at that time. I don't know how I got there or how I—

I: How old were you, ten?

EH: Probably. I talked myself into it and was able to spend two weeks out there. At the same time, when I had nothing else to do, I would go to Camp Courant, which is still in existence—day camp. They're having a tough time right now.

I: Where are they located?

EH: Well, now they're in the—

I: Oh, Camp Courant.

EH: Yeah, Camp Courant. It's still around. They're having some very difficult times, too, as Channel 3 is now. Not difficult times, but difficult—to accomplish—

I: To get funding?

EH: Accomplishing funding. Speaking of Channel 3, I came back after many years later, and I joined the Board of Directors of Channel 3 **04:55.0** (unintelligible) and past president. So I came from camper to president.

I: Oh, you did love it.

EH: So for many, many years separated. I can't recall. And I used to go to Camp Courant daily. That's a day camp.

I: The day camp—and it was held in Hartford?

EH: In Hartford, yeah.

I: Oh.

EH: **05:18.7** It was—as I remember originally— That might not be correct. It used to be on Park Road, and then it moved out to Farmington—Batterson Park.

I: Oh, so no wonder you could walk.

EH: You'd have to know a little history of that place. The rest of the time I'd maybe buy something around town, go to the parks, go to the public pools, killing time.

I: That's what kids did.

EH: Try to go to the movies for 5 cents and 10 cents. Then I moved out to Bloomfield. My mother moved out—married—you don't have to go into that. I moved out to Bloomfield, and I went to Bloomfield High. The acting director of the Whittimore Library, he went to Bloomfield High. What's his name?

I: Oh, really? Small world. The director. John **06:04.9** (s/l Wadim).

EH: Yeah, (s/l Wadim). That's right. He went to Bloomfield High. So we had a quick connection. And I can't give you months. After I went to Bloomfield High, I graduated there.

I: So your mother moved from Hartford after grammar school or just before high school?

EH: Yeah, I went to Bloomfield High from Henry Barnard. It was quite a change.

I: So was she working then?

EH: Oh, yeah. It was a culture shock to move from Hartford to Bloomfield.

I: I bet.

EH: It was (s/l raw?) out here.

I: It was farm country then, right?

EH: Oh, yeah. Bloomfield—oh, yes. It was similar to South Windsor, actually. In fact, during one of my high school years we went out to a basketball game here with a friend of mine in an old car. His name was Herbie. We were driving up Main Street, and I remember asking Herb, “Where are we at? Are we lost?” I was probably 17 years old.

I: You mean in South Windsor?

EH: In South Windsor. So we went to a basketball game at Ellsworth High. The coach at that time was **07:07** (___ Blair). You maybe know that name.

I: Oh, yeah.

EH: **07:08.9** He was the coach at that time at Ellsworth. Anyhow, we got lost that evening. So that’s just one little episode. But I was manager of the soccer team then, so we played soccer out here a number of times.

I: Oh, really?

EH: It was an eternity to get here, I think.

I: Back when you were growing up—and I—we could walk everywhere. If you had to physically drive somewhere, it felt like an eternity.

EH: Well, as I remember—with my mother—when we were growing up in Hartford with no transportation, she had to walk, or I had to walk or take a trolley or a bus to every place we went to. It was a different style. It never seemed to bother anybody.

I: We weren’t in a big hurry then.

EH: No, certainly not—absolutely not.

I: How nice. So you took the trolley?

EH: Yeah, when I went to Camp Courant, we took an open-air trolley. They were still running—open-air trolleys—in the ‘30s—the early ‘30s, yeah.

I: And they came down Main Street, too.

EH: Yeah, I guess they did, but I didn't come down on the trolley. I went from the center of Hartford to the camp on the trolley—to the day camp.

I: That's great.

EH: **08:23.1** It was fun. But that's how we killed our days during— Hartford was safe. I finally ended up getting a bicycle and bicycling over to (s/l) Kini Park, which is a big park in Hartford—probably one of the biggest parks, at that time, in New England. Kini Park—named after a person named (s/l)Kini. In Hartford today, they still have (s/l) Kini Tower. It's on the corner of Main and Allen—(s/l Kini) Tower.

I: Can the public go up into the tower?

EH: Oh, I don't know. It's still there. The same man that gave the park to the city of Hartford. In fact, at that intersection they had a cop, at that time, in the middle of the intersection directing traffic—real old fashion. I remember that as a kid. So then, after that, shortly I went to war.

I: Did you? Were you in the military then?

EH: Yeah, I was— I got out of high school in '43—no, '42.

I: Bad timing.

EH: Well, it was okay.

I: A few more years and you would have missed it.

EH: A good part of my life. I was the only—my friends were being drafted or being drawn into the service one by one, so I lost all my similar friends. So I got tired of that, and I went over to the draft board and I said, "Take me. Take me. I want to go now."

I: Did you get your pick as to which branch?

EH: By that time, I was working at the **10:02** (s/l Mill) Plant in Hartford, running the bottling machine.

I: Would that have been Petersons?

EH: No, it was Sealtest Bryant and Chapman.

I: Oh.

EH: So I went off to the Navy for 3 years.

I: Were you on a ship?

EH: **10:19.1** We were aboard ship. We were aboard— People in the service don't recognize this part of the service. I went to Newport for my training—Newport in Virginia—and went into the Armed Guard. Now, it was a portion of the U.S. Navy that served aboard merchant ships. We were the gunners aboard merchant ships.

I: The Merchant Marine ships?

EH: No, these were the Navy. This is U.S. Navy.

I: This was Navy. So aboard the merchant ships?

EH: The merchant ships. We worked with the Merchant Marines. They ran the ship. We were the protectors. We were gunners aboard the ships. As a matter of fact, I made two trips across the Atlantic on a Liberty ship. You've probably not heard of a Liberty ship.

I: What is that?

EH: Liberty ships. Yeah, they turned them out by the dozens.

I: So it's a model of ship—a style of design?

EH: It was a freighter.

I: Oh, a freighter.

EH: Well, for example, the first time going over we had in the hull, as I recall, aviation gasoline—in the hull. Tanks and tanks of gasoline on deck. This was a Liberty ship.

I: This is to deliver?

EH: We were going to the Mediterranean. We did make the trip. In those days we didn't go over about 8 or 10 knots. So it usually took us about 30-some days to go across the Atlantic.

I: **11:59.7** Did you enjoy that? It was hardly a cruise, but—

EH: Oh, I enjoyed it. I was 18 years old. I was just standing watch and exercising. I was just a kid.

I: So you went to the Mediterranean?

EH: I remember our first port was Oran, Africa—Oran. And that wasn't the final destination. The final destination was the Air Force on the island of Sardinia, where we delivered the gasoline and the tanks—or the tanks maybe someplace else. I can't recall. Maybe we went to Naples. Anyhow, during that trip there was quite a bit of excitement—submarine scares across the Atlantic.

EH: **12:42.9** German bombers in the Mediterranean, at that time. At night time, they'd light up the sky. And a company with a couple of ships accompanied this convoy, got hit, and blew up right close to us.

I: Wow.

EH: And actually, I wasn't injured. So anyhow, that was that and then there were already ships of course, liberties in the days in the European country for an 18-year-old kid. It was kind of exciting.

I: I guess so.

EH: We ended up in Naples. And then, let's see; that time, and then we came back, of course, and the second time around, we loaded our ship. They converted to a transport ship, and we'd loaded on the soldiers from—we were in Baltimore. I hope you're not—put that hand down. You going to put this all down?

I: They will.

EH: That's not a-

I: It just goes in the archives; it's okay. It's exciting!

EH: It's exciting?

I: It's interesting.

EH: We loaded—we converted our freighter to a trip-shoot. Now, these are nothing but tin cans, and most people didn't think they would stay afloat but they were pretty rugged ships and we loaded the ships and we took those ported soldiers across to I believe Naples, Italy. It was a long trip and those poor guys were sick. And we'd say, "You'll be sorry," and be teasing them, and we were veterans at the time.

I: Yeah.

EH: I was 19 at that point.

I: You were 19 and you're a veteran.

EH: And we took those F-troops to Naples, which is probably a 30-day trip.

I: Yes.

EH: That's a long trip for these guys.

I: You didn't entertain them along the way?

EH: **14:29:3** Oh, hell no. I don't entertainment.

I: There was no cruise ship entertainment?

EH: Not aboard the Liberty ship. I mean, these are just (s/l order) straight-ups.

I: Tin cans? Oh, my.

EH: But we got them across the Pacific to Naples on that particular trip and we unloaded them. And some of the things that I do remember, we were there for—it's hard to remember how long we were there at Naples. But you know, I can remember the first time we were in Naples, they were so hungry in Naples at that time, we would be eating in the mess hall and the Italian workers would be outside walking along the decks, and if

we had any extra food, they all brought big one-gallon cans to take the food home. One-gallon cans.

I: Uh-hunh. (affirmative) The Italians did it?

EH: The laborers. And all we would do is pass our food out the porthole. They would put it in these cans and take it home.

I: Oh, wow.

EH: Because we still had plenty to eat. We ate—we were treated, probably, better than most Navy personnel on the ships.

I: Really?

EH: **15:35.7** Because we had our own steward, because if the union required them to have a steward, they had to pass on the same type of services to the Navy personnel. So yeah, our own steward and it was a menu of sorts, so we always had plenty to eat. We'd pass it out to these Italian people. And in fact, they were so hungry, I remember a woman or a man swimming out to the boat. We were in the Straights of Messina, looking for food. And you know how they would thwart them off? They'd turn the fire hoses on them, so they wouldn't get hurt. I was in the Bay of Naples, that was, but that was going through the Straights of Messina, they would do that.

I: Oh, my goodness.

EH: And so eventually, one of the things I remember being there is one night with—of course, we knew nothing. We'd load it, here comes another load of Army people, and the thing that I remember most about it, these were all Japanese Americans. All Japanese Americans and I always remembered it from the Senator from Hawaii was one of them. Japanese soldiers—American Japanese soldiers. We took them to Angio. There was a big battle going up in Angio. We took them to Angio and offloaded them in Angio, and these were Japanese American soldiers.

I: Where had you picked them up from?

EH: **17:09.1** To Naples.

I: Oh, in Naples, in Italy?

EH: Picked them up and took them to Angio.

I: And took them to Angio.

EH: Unloaded them off the ship and they went ashore, and of course, we'd never know what happened to them.

I: Yeah.

EH: And that night was pretty fierce, a lot of combat, a lot of traffic. In fact, someone hit us that evening—hit our ship or we hit them. It was so dark, you know? It was a lot of activity at those wartimes. You'd have probably a hundred ships up there. We had all that kind of personnel and we could turn a lot of people out.

I: Can you believe you lived to talk about that? That's incredible.

EH: No, it was just exciting. Just exciting at the time, you know? I enjoyed it.

I: I know. As long as you're able to survive it all, it's pretty exciting.

EH: Yes. So in that time, still big in the service. I got back and spent some time in Norfolk, Virginia.

I: And still in the Navy?

EH: Yeah. In Little Creek, Virginia, doing some training. And then without notice—of course, they don't give you any notice—they told us to pack and we boarded a troop train. I did, a few buddies. I was with—let me see. There's a story—there's a funny in between that. Oh yeah, in between that, at that time, it was at that moment, we had captured some Germans. German captives in Virginia.

I: Oh, yes. In Virginia? Some German captives?

EH: **18:35.4** Yeah. One of my obligations is I was Boatswain's Mate at the time, Third Class Petty Officer, and one of my responsibilities was watch over these German soldiers which didn't need any watching, it was really—and I neglected—that was only the duty, but I neglected to wake up some of my crewmen, my help. So anyhow, I got—they brought me before court martial. Yeah, believe it or not. And they-

I: Because you forgot to wake up some help?

EH: For nothing. Yeah. Well, that was so chicken, you know?

I: Yeah.

EH: So I was coming up for Second Class Petty Officer, and they said, "Look, we're not going to let you take your exam for Second Class," so I said, "Okay, fine." That was the end of that (s/l pronouncement). They just wanted to show their authority, maybe. But I was only a kid at that time in life, you know?

I: Yeah.

EH: Then we took a troop train to California—San Francisco. Five days on a coal-fired train. Boy, were we dirty when we got there. Five days on a train. We'd stop at various places to get something to eat, get a breath of fresh air and exercise a little bit, and I ended up in Frisco's service, armed guard. These were Navy personnel aboard ships—merchant ships, not Navy ships.

I: Merchant ships.

EH: You're working with the Merchant Marine.

I: Okay. You're working for the Navy, but you're on the Merchant Marine ships?

EH: We were in the Navy.

I: You were in the Navy.

EH: We were naval officers—yeah, we were Navy personnel. We had the naval officer in charge of us.

I: And now you're in the Pacific?

EH: Well, I eventually got there. So I had to spend some time at Treasure Island, getting some more training. That was the (inaudible) site of the World's Fair at one time.

I: Yeah.

EH: **20:28.3** Treasure Island. And I spent a very enjoyable month and a half in San Francisco, and that—I should turn off the mic. I met a nice lady there.

I: That's okay, we want to hear it.

EH: Oh, that's fine. She was a nice lady. But anyhow-

I: Oh, she didn't become your wife?

EH: No, no, no.

I: So I'll turn the mic off for a minute.

EH: No, she was a nice girl. I met her. She was formerly from Hartford and I had a-

I: She was from Hartford?

EH: She was from Hartford, yeah. Her father was doing some work for the Navy. He ended up at San Francisco and I had the address and everything else to make contact. Anyhow, so I spent a couple—two or three months in San Francisco, which was a great trip there.

I: Nice.

EH: And in fact, the evening when I went to see the young lady, I took the trolley up to the door and rang the doorbell.

I: Oh, my gosh!

EH: Her father answered the door. "Who are you?" "Does she live here?" That's where I met her.

I: Oh, that's great.

EH: She was 17.

I: Oh, my gosh.

EH: Yeah, that was a long—I had a lot of fun out there. Anytime you board a ship, and the ship was the Liberty ship, so we proceeded to—where the heck would I go? We went out to—we’d taken a splice to Okinawa and we stayed--we stopped at Guam and we stopped in Ulithi. That’s in the (s/l Marianic) Islands, and then proceeded to Okinawa. They had just finished the war in Okinawa. It was a fierce battle. We lost a lot of men there. A big battle. And then we spent some time in Okinawa, which I tried to explore the town, the city, the country. A lot of us did that. We weren’t supposed to do it, but we did it.

I: You did it.

EH: **22:27.4** You’d be careful, they’re still in the caves, the Japanese, you know?

I: Oh, that’s right.

EH: And so we came back and some time later I transferred to another ship, Coeur d’Alene Victory, that’s what it was. I transferred—I went out one ship, transfer became transferred again, went back down on that ship. We sailed back. In the middle of the Pacific, coming home, the war ended, right in the middle of the Pacific. Coming home, the war ended.

I: Midstream.

EH: The war ended, yeah.

I: Well, that must have been—what was your reaction like on the ship when you heard that?

EH: Well, probably nothing. We didn’t have no big celebration if that’s what you meant.

I: Yeah.

EH: We probably said, “That’s good.” “That’s good. Well, we’re going home.” That’s probably the first thought we thought. “When are we going to get out of here?”

I: Yeah.

EH: Get off the ship.

I: Right.

EH: And we come in and as we came in closer to the land, we unloaded all our armament; dumped all the guns, all the bullets, everything. Dumped them right into the ocean.

I: Into the ocean?

EH: Yes.

I: Oh, my gosh!

EH: **23:33.9** And they did that with all ships. They didn't want all that stuff coming back into the States. We were loaded with all kinds of guns and ammunition.

I: Really?

EH: So we unloaded it outside of Frisco someplace.

I: Gee.

EH: That's just some of the memories I have.

I: How did you get back here? That train again? The five-day train back?

EH: It came--the long story, when I got back, I went back up to see this young lady again.

I: Oh, in San Francisco?

EH: Rang the doorbell. She was going to have—she was going to her prom, see?

I: And her date was right behind you?

EH: **24:10.1** No. Yeah, he wasn't there, and I was very gracious about it. I said, "Okay." She was glad to see me. Her father liked me, and so I said, "Well, I'll see you later." So after the prom, I went right back because I stayed in Frisco for maybe another month or two; I can't recall, at Treasure Island. Anyhow, then I went out to sea. I forgot, that's right. I went out, came back, and went back out to sea again on another ship. I forgot, now.

I: This is after you (inaudible, speaking at same time).

EH: I went out to Pacific and came back and I made another trip out to the Pacific. Two trips. And the second time that I returned, that's when she was going to the prom.

I: Oh, okay.

EH: Anyhow, we'll talk about it. I can't recall and I'd have to think a little bit more about it because I do remember very thoroughly. I ended up on the last trip—we ended up in Portland, Oregon or in Washington. Oregon or Washington; I can't recall now. But then, I called her or wrote her a letter, and I had to say goodbye, really, because she wanted me to come back. She said, "Why don't you come back here before you go home?" I wanted to go home.

I: You did? She was nice, but you wanted to go home.

EH: Yeah, she was nice. She was a nice girl. So I went home. And then my adult life began.

I: Yeah. So you came home to Hartford?

EH: Yeah. Bloomfield.

I: To Bloomfield?

EH: Yeah.

I: To your mom? Your mom was still living there?

EH: Yeah.

I: Did you say you have a brother or sister?

EH: I had a sister.

I: You had a sister.

EH: Yeah. A sister, yeah.

I: Younger?

EH: Younger by a year and a half, two years younger. Yeah.

I: So you came home and your mom was there?

EH: **26:01.0** So I went to work. Yeah.

I: How did you end up doing that?

EH: Well, I went back to the place I was employed as a high school senior, when I graduated. A milk plant.

I: The milk plant?

EH: Yeah. Mr. Madigan.

I: That must have been quite a contrast.

EH: Yeah. Mr. Madigan was my boss and when I left to go into the service, I wish you wouldn't put these things down. He said, "Ed, you're the best--"

I: You can cross them out later.

EH: "You're the best young man I've ever hired." I've never forgot him saying that.

I: No.

EH: Never forgot him saying that.

I: Oh, that's awesome.

EH: Yeah. "You're the best young man." Because I went to another job, and that's when he said that. He was a great man. So then I started and then I peddled milk for a while.

I: In the milk truck?

EH: I was a milkman.

I: Oh, nice!

EH: Oh, I enjoyed that work, too.

I: Yeah.

EH: It was fun.

I: Leaving the milk in the containers by the door?

EH: **26:50.2** By the door, yeah. I was a foreman. I used to jump routes all over Central Connecticut. Hard work.

I: For Sealtest?

EH: Sealtest. And it was hard work.

I: All over Connecticut, not just in Hartford?

EH: Well, central—yeah, Hartford, Bloomfield, East Hartford, Unionville, Farmington. Those areas. I jumped the routes and got to know all the routes.

I: Yeah? And South Windsor?

EH: No, didn't have a route in South Windsor for some reason or another. Anyhow, later on, I was in the milk business and married into a family that was in the heating business—the coal business.

I: Oh, coal.

EH: Coal fuel business.

I: Where were they from?

EH: From East Hartford.

I: East Hartford?

EH: Yep. So-

I: Whereabouts? On Burnside?

EH: North Main Street. North Main.

I: North Main, East Hartford?

EH: **27:39.7** Yeah. So I got married to that family and got into the business with them. I had a couple of brother-in-laws and soon, when I got married, I married (s/l Linda). That's right. And then I got married in East Hartford, lived in East Hartford for 13 years or so; 12 or 13 years. Went through a business cycle with them. I finally had a disagreement and we broke off. And so losing my brother-in-laws, so it was a little difficult but it was difficult on my wife. She was another great lady. And so we left off and then I got in a non-compete business, I had to sign a non-compete agreement not to participate in the business when we broke up. I broke up—we broke up, there were some hard feelings, but when we broke up, I got some money, got my share of the business. And some time later, I'm missing a lot of stuff but two years after the non-compete, I went into the business that I'm in right now.

I: Oh?

EH: Almost to the very day.

I: Right here in South Windsor?

EH: That point in time, we lived—I moved from East Hartford to South Windsor, and I had three children, by the way, in between.

I: So after you finished with that company, you came to South Windsor?

EH: I was just giving you a business life, not my social life.

I: That's where—correct. No, no, that's okay. Business is-

EH: And then I came to South Windsor.

I: Yeah? And that's where you began the business?

EH: **29:12.0** That's where I started this business that I'm in now, plumbing and oil.

I: Right.

EH: And that was 45 years ago.

I: Yeah. And was that on Sullivan Avenue?

EH: That was in my basement.

I: In your basement? Yes?

EH: (inaudible)

I: Where else do you begin a basement business?

EH: And I eventually ended up on the Sullivan Avenue.

I: Right.

EH: And I went in it with my—Lynn's father-in-law. Lynn—Vedovato,

I: Oh. Right, right.

EH: So we went into business and it's been successful.

I: Yeah.

EH: And then we built a new place five years ago on lower Sullivan, on the right side as you go down.

I: Right. Right.

EH: And we were fairly successful.

I: So you started it in the basement of your house here in town?

EH: Yeah. Didn't stay in there very long. A couple of weeks.

I: All you had—but you needed trucks.

EH: Oh, yeah. Then you go out and you see, you're buying trucks, and it's just—I had plenty of business experience. It was just I had to get resettled.

I: Right. Right.

EH: And I knew all my clients, customers, so all I had to do was sit on a car and talk (inaudible) and I almost had immediate business.

I: Yes. Oh, that's perfect.

EH: They all knew me, so that was quite the-

I: And then you grew into-?

EH: It was very successful. It was very successful, this business here. It's been good to me.

I: Yeah. Well, it's certainly a need.

EH: Pardon?

I: It's certainly a need, the oil business.

EH: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we built—we did the plumbing and heating and probably I would say 500,000-700,000 houses in the South Windsor—in this area east of the river; mechanical plumbing and heating of them for all those years.

I: How do you think conducting business has changed much from the time you first started, say, your very first place on Sullivan Avenue to running it today?

EH: The basics are the same.

I: Basics, yeah.

EH: **31:03.1** You've got to think of the job selling, make the profit, keep your customers happy, and always look and always advertising to get new business. So basically, it really hasn't changed that much.

I: No.

EH: Except with technology.

I: Right.

EH: Everything was hand-written. Now it's somewhat different, but business really hasn't changed as far as I'm concerned.

I: Right. So you don't have any more impediments now than you did then?

EH: No. Well, a few more regulations, but not that much. I don't find those things—I just take them in stride and work with them and in most cases, they don't amount to a hill of beans, really nothing.

I: Right.

EH: And some people make a big deal out of everything, you know? But that's me. But anyhow, that's a little bit of my personal life and my business life. I still own business, go to work every day.

I: Well, you did pretty good. There you go.

EH: I'm presently finishing up my—this November, I would be finishing up my thirty-second year on South Windsor Town Council.

I: Wow. Yes. What got you started in politics?

EH: **32:14.4** I started a little bit when I was back in East Hartford. Someone gave me enough to start running, ran it, helped them run a campaign and I'd lost, but that—it was nothing. An introduction.

I: A campaign for local office in East Hartford?

EH: Yeah, at East Hartford. We probably (inaudible, speaking at same time).

I: And you enjoyed that?

EH: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I was probably 27, 28 years old. I got my first—but anyhow, after that, we moved to South Windsor, 50 years ago, from East Hartford. Then I got into politics locally.

I: What was the first thing that interested you?

EH: In politics? Just politics itself.

I: Just politics?

EH: Yeah, absolutely. I loved it. It was kind of natural to me. And so I helped with the Democratic Party doing the work you start with, phone calls and doing this and arranging this. It was just all the basics. And the first couple of times I ran for the South Windsor Council and lost two times, and that's for the council. But I wasn't known very well. I just had moved into town.

I: Yeah.

EH: I didn't know anybody and they didn't know me.

I: Is that what you attributed it to?

EH: The loss?

I: They just didn't know you?

EH: Yeah, part of it, partly on me, because really, it's so tiny, it turned into a popularity contest. See, I may even sway you. But anyhow, to make a long story short, that didn't discourage me. It was an opportunity for an opening and they asked me to fill it, so I said, "Sure, I'll step right in."

I: What was the opening?

EH: It was an appointing to the town council, a democratic—one of the people moved up to Maine. It was an opening, nice, they slid me in.

I: Slid right in.

EH: Hence, from then on, I'd served and finished 32 years in the council, four times as the mayor; a number of times as the deputy mayor. And it wasn't a continuous 32 years. They took us 4-year or 6-year hiatus. My white was well-earned. I'd gotten tired. I got burned out. And so when the occasion rose again, it interested me and they had an opening, so I ran again, so that started the process. So I'm finishing, as I say, the thirty-second year this November. And prior to that, I served on boards and commissions, prior

to the selected position—appointed positions. And I'm going to do it again. This November, I was nominated—chosen again for the Democratic Party to run again, and I'm going to run again.

I: You are?

EH: I'm going to run again.

I: Good for you. I'm going to run.

EH: I like it. I like to run.

I: You love it.

EH: I love the work.

I: Well, that's what you need. People who are passionate.

EH: Yeah. I love the town, I know the town. I know the issues. I know what we need and what we don't need.

I: And with that much experience, it's perfect.

EH: If that's what it takes, I've got the experience.

I: Yeah.

EH: If that's what it takes, I got that.

I: If that's what it takes.

EH: See, that's where I'm at now, and of course, I started this business down here in and still (inaudible), still running a place down here, Imperial.

I: Yeah? I'm sure they come to you.

EH: With my son; my son, and my two nephews.

I: They always come to you with the tough questions?

- EH: Usually something that they can't answer. Take my son, who's very—he asks me a great deal of advice, and some of the others I offer it. I offer advice before it's asked.
- I: What do you think of how--do you have any thoughts on how the town has changed in all these years? When you first came here, there probably were 8,000 and the population was 8,000 and now it's--?
- EH: Yeah. Now it's changed.
- I: Tripled.
- EH: Well, the thing that—when I first moved here, there was just a bunch of old-timers.
- I: Yeah.
- EH: They had lived here and been here for years, and I started, I was part of the immigration, too, to the new birth of South Windsor where it's at now. But you know, it's hard to say. I don't see really a lot of difference, honestly.
- I: Just in the land development, I guess, the direction that it's gone in?
- EH: Yes. Oh, well, yes, I've seen—well, that's almost a given. I mean, what can you say about it? Sure, it's changed. The rural character has changed. The back woods gone, more building, more commercial stuff, more commercial activity; industrial business, but it's a natural because when Hartford got crowded, they moved to East Hartford. When East Hartford got crowded, they moved out to South Windsor. Well, South Windsor's getting crowded, they move to Ellington. It's a natural evolution, you know?
- I: True.
- EH: And the people are all the same. The nature--.
- I: Ethnicity.
- EH: Yeah. The people have changed. A lot of Asians here now. Many, many Asians, and it really hasn't changed much. The school system is still pretty decent.
- I: It's always been good. Yeah.

- EH: **37:24.2** Town governance is pretty well grown. We've grown comfortably and it's manageable, so we can manage it.
- I: You must be pretty proud of your management of this, your cooperative management.
- EH: Well, I don't see it. I've gotten more out of it than I put into it. It's been a real education. It's really been my education and I still enjoy it.
- I: That's great. It's great to have people like you involved in the direction of the town and management.
- EH: Well, yeah. Right now, I'm still involved. I was an organizer of the South Windsor Bank when it opened, the one we sold out 10-15 years ago, maybe?
- I: Oh, right. Yes.
- EH: And I'm in the (s/l events) of road terrain for 43 or 48 years or so. I formed the first and second presidents of the South Windsor Chamber of Commerce. I did that.
- I: Say that again? You formed the South Windsor Chamber of Commerce?
- EH: Chamber of Commerce, right.
- I: Really?
- EH: I was on it. That's prior to my Council activities. I was on the Economic Development Commission, and I thought I saw the townsmen without a Chamber, and I said, "Why shouldn't we have it?" We're trying to develop some businesses. We need a Chamber of Commerce, and that was the independency, that one.
- I: Right.
- EH: So I've done that sort of stuff. Active in my church.
- I: That was probably a more exciting time to be involved in a town that didn't have these things.

EH: Oh, I was a lot more ambitious, I think, too. I volunteered for everything; put my hand up.

I: You volunteered for this. Thank you.

EH: **39:05.6** Yeah, I did. I did.

I: Well, you accepted the invitation.

EH: So I have also served--since the town manager formed a government, I have served with every town manager that's worked in South Windsor. Every single one of them, the first one being a gentleman of the name of Terry Springel(??) and he was our first town manager. Now, Mr. Gallegan—I don't know what he is, tenth or like, I've forgot. I've served all of them.

I: Do you keep track anymore?

EH: I've served with all of them.

I: That's great. It's all still exciting for you.

EH: I love the community. I really do.

I: And you are a local guy. You're new to South Windsor, but you know Hartford and East Hartford and it's, "Oh, I've run there."

EH: Well, I know—I wrote the (inaudible). I was growing up in freshman years. Good to go up to those years. It was very difficult as I remember, from my mother. I've got to give her a lot of credit. Irish women weren't coming from--doing domestic with a widow and a couple of kids?

I: Right.

EH: You don't have to figure out what that was.

I: How tough. Right, boy.

EH: I give her a lot of credit. Never hungry, always had food.

I: Did you have--were there aid societies to help?

EH: Pardon?

I: Were there some aid societies in Hartford to help out people in your situation?

EH: Yes, there was. It's funny you ask. They had womens--they had some form of help in those years, but I can't think of it now. In fact, my mother participated a short time, I think. Probably maybe just got a few dollars a month. I remember getting my tonsils out and then something—just a couple of nurses picked me up in either a Model A or a Model T.

I: Oh, my goodness! Really?

EH: That was—yeah.

I: Two nurses picking you up in a Model T to take you to town to get tonsils out?

EH: Yeah, you'd have to go out to the dispensary, you know? I remember all those things.

I: And the dispensary was in Hartford?

EH: Yeah.

I: Was it at Hartford Hospital?

EH: No, no. At a local place, yeah. I know where it's at yet, but I was just in a kid in those days.

I: Right. Do you remember the river that ran through there? Was it the Pope?

EH: **41:17.1** No. I just remember in Connecticut the Connecticut River and the flooding and the hurricanes.

I: Oh, you do remember.

EH: In 1938, they had the big one, '36 with the big flood or hurricane, I can't remember the years.

I: Yes.

EH: I remember being a kid, being outdoors, just playing with the water streaming down the street.

I: Oh, boy.

EH: Yeah.

I: Well, your house didn't get flooded then?

EH: No, no.

I: Due to the street?

EH: I lived in a third floor apartment, third floor walk-in, straight. "Railroad flat," they used to call them.

I: That's probably where you got your interest in the Navy and being aboard ship.

EH: **41:51.2** I don't think so. Well, it's a funny thing I've chosen. I went down to the Navy and got a physical, and as you leave the physical and you're greeted at the door, was a Marine and an Army guy, and they were selling their service because they had seen my health report, I guess, and I was a good candidate for their branches of service. I remember that the Marine guy said, "Look, do you want to join the Marines yet?"

I: Really?

EH: And the Army guy said, "Why don't you come with me?" or something, I can't recall. It was something I just turned away immediately. So I had a friend that went in before me, and he went into the Coast Guard, so I said, "That's a pretty good one. I want to be close to the coast." So I immediately went over to the Coast Guard table and they said to me, "We're all filled. We're all filled today." Then I said, "Where's the Navy guy?"

I: So that was that.

EH: **42:59.8** So I went over to their table, and, "Sign me up."

I: Oh, my gosh. And the adventure began.

EH: I was going to—I was smart enough to stay off land stuff—Army or Marines. I was smart enough at that age.

I: Yeah. Really, you stayed out of danger and-.

EH: That's why I chose the Navy.

I: Yeah.

EH: Or they chose me. A lot of fun.

I: Well, that's great.

EH: A lifetime of memories.

I: Oh, boy.

EH: So you have enough information on me?

I: Oh, sure.

EH: What else you need?

I: I don't know. What else do we need? I think we covered-.

EH: **43:28.2** Yeah. Maybe they can edit some of that stuff in or out, I don't know.

I: You know, I'm going to give you a copy of this.

EH: Yeah? Okay.

I: And if there is anything you would like to cross out-

EH: Yeah. Because it's personal, I'd rather not have personal stuff.

I: Absolutely. I'm going to stop this now.

Ed Havens
August 1, 2011
Page 31