

Joseph Watson Vibert, Jr. Oral History Interview #2, October 2, 2003
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note and Abstract

Joseph Watson Vibert, Jr. was born August 1, 1927, the son of Edith Miller Vibert and J. Watson Vibert. He was a lifelong resident of South Windsor, CT. During his career he worked as a dairy farmer, in the military as a tank operator, and later at Pratt & Whitney and Gerber Scientific. He was married to Angela Rinaldi Vibert and was the father of a son and two daughters. Vibert died on March 10, 2008.

In this interview, Joe Vibert discusses memories of his childhood, including the preparation of Main Street for a trolley, the paving of Main Street and other area roads, the creation of Route 5, the impact of various floods, and the changing farming community in the meadow abutting and in town. Towards the end of the interview, Joe and Jean look over a number of family photos.

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Transcript of Oral History Interview

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Joseph Vibert
Oral History Interview
October 2, 2003
Interviewed by Jean Klein

KLEIN: It's the 2nd of October and I'm sitting here with Joe Vibert, and this is going to be our second meeting. Today we're going to be talking about his memories of his childhood. First of all, I want to ask him if there's anything else he can think of that he wants to add about the meadows that we talked about last time. I guess we got some specifics about how it looked when you were a boy and how it's different today. I don't know if we—this is the last thing I had here—the hopes you have for the area in the future. You want it to stay the same or go back the way it was or—?

VIBERT: It's going to do what it's going to do. I mean, it's beyond any human control really.

KLEIN: Right. Except for what Frank [Haviland] wants to do with the—by opening up the pond a little more.

VIBERT: You know—I may go—highway may go up through there some day and may change everything. It almost did us—

KLEIN: I know. I moved here in the '70s, and it was just beginning to—I guess it was just—that idea had just been floated... late '60s, early '70s. Unbelievable. And if the temper of the times hadn't changed—if they had proposed it earlier, it would have gone through the way people were thinking.

VIBERT: We got Route 5 [which] almost went up through Main Street here, and if it hadn't been for the '36 flood, it probably would have.

KLEIN: Really? That's the only thing that saved it?

VIBERT: Yeah, because they wanted their highway on high land.

KLEIN: Higher land.

VIBERT: You know—you didn't want to build a highway that was going to be—not be able to use certain times. Well, anyway for the meadows I thought—you know—that strip of trees at the end of Newberry Road, where there's a—where it has been dug out all the

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way to the river. That was called Jim's Drain for James Newberry, I think. But it was always referred to as Jim's Drain, and I named the others Beaver Pond Drain and Tudor's Drain.

KLEIN: Beaver Pond Drain is the one that goes—

VIBERT: Parallel—

KLEIN: —parallel to the river.

VIBERT: —to the river.

KLEIN: And it runs into Tudor Drain which does the same thing until it goes out into the—

VIBERT: Tudor's Drain is perpendicular to the river.

KLEIN: Oh, okay. It's down here further.

VIBERT: Yes. It's the—it's the south side of Bobby Starr's place. That was the Tudor place.

KLEIN: Okay.

VIBERT: And it runs perpendicular to the river; straight down through. And Jim's Drain didn't work, because when they got to their desired depth on one end or the other, they'd already dug the whole thing. They hit quicksand and there was no way of—I suppose today they'd tile it or something, but they didn't have the means to do it then.

KLEIN: And all this work was done by hand—hand digging.

VIBERT: Yeah.

KLEIN: Put in a lot of work to find out it wasn't going to work at the end there.

VIBERT: And, of course, further up Stoughton's Brook was dug too.

KLEIN: That's the one that goes just before East Windsor Hill?

VIBERT: No. It's Kasheta's—by Kasheta's.

KLEIN: Oh, Okay. That's a pretty little brook. That's really nice. Where does that rise?

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VIBERT: Oh, out in the woods to the east.

KLEIN: Yeah. But it's so narrow and so—

VIBERT: Well, I mean, it's got several tributaries the further east you go.

KLEIN: Yeah.

VIBERT: More brooks flow into it.

KLEIN: It's such a controlled little—and, of course, the way they mowed the meadow, it really looks quite park-like.

VIBERT: And of course they have horses. If anything is pastured, it won't grow up. That's why it looks so nice.

KLEIN: Yeah. It looks like a park. I think we really sort of covered everything about that.

VIBERT: Main Street—when I was young—I miss the work horses. Many of the farms where the farmer lived and where his farms were, he had other tobacco lots that he had to—had to work, which weren't—didn't adjoin the whole property, so every morning there'd be several teams of horses either going up the street or down the street. And by the sound of the hoof, you knew which horse—which farmer it was.

KLEIN: Really?

VIBERT: Yes. And Shepards had a beautiful team of horses. I don't know what kind they were, but they outshined all the other horses, and they used to come up the street to work the Chandler lot.

KLEIN: Oh. Which was the Chandler lot?

VIBERT: Which was in back of Cavanaugh's house—Pat Cavanaugh and Anne Cavanaugh. I don't—it's across from the post office. I'm not sure of the name of the people who are there now.

KLEIN: You said the other day that really tobacco wasn't growing in the flood plain, but it was growing up here on Main Street.

VIBERT: Oh, yes. This table—every inch was used for tobacco.

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KLEIN: So when you were a boy, most of the people in South Windsor still were mainly farmers.

VIBERT: Yes, but some worked in Hartford. They either—for the most part they took the bus. They didn't drive to Hartford like they would now.

KLEIN: Yeah. Now, when did the buses start coming. When did the trolley stop running?

VIBERT: The trolley stopped running in '34 or '35, I believe.

KLEIN: And we had bus service?

VIBERT: I can remember going to Hartford on the trolley with my mother, but I don't remember too much details other than down the street here we pulled off the track. There was a track on each side and as a kid I didn't understand that, but then a trolley came from the south, see. They had—they could telephone one another, so that's why it was off to one side to let that trolley through. Otherwise they would have collided.

KLEIN: Well, that was a neat way of doing it. [inaudible].

VIBERT: The trolley ran by electricity, so at night you could see the sparks from the—there was a wheel that went on a cable somehow.

KLEIN: Amazing; nice and clean and quiet.

VIBERT: In the summertime they had open trolleys. They were different than what they used in the wintertime.

KLEIN: I just was in Switzerland this summer and they have all electric trolleys—quiet, no smells, no exhaust, beautiful electric trains. Because it's a small country and they can—that's the way they developed it and it's really—really kind of neat and clean; makes it nice. So immediately in the '30s the buses started running?

VIBERT: Oh, yes. There wasn't any interim without transportation, because the buses were loaded. People used the buses. It's different than it is today.

KLEIN: Now, when did they pave Main Street?

VIBERT: Oh, Main Street's been paved since—first it came up to Pleasant Valley Road, I believe, but it's been paved—I would say since 1915, but I could be off a little.

KLEIN: Right.

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VIBERT: But they put down macadam—or what they call—some called it macadam. There was no—there's not great foundation under the road. Every year they would come through and cut out square patches where the frost had broken it up and put more down, and they had a beautiful 3-wheeler steam roller that actually ran by steam. And when I was 5 or 6 or 7 years old, that was the height of my ambition to run—to be a steamroller man. And they'd start in the spring, I suppose, in Hartford or East Hartford, and they'd get up here by early summer, and I don't—by my memories, they must have gone all the way to Springfield.

KLEIN: Right. Now the state did that? Or each town did their own?

VIBERT: No, the state did that. We were a state road in those days.

KLEIN: Main Street was a state road.

VIBERT: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

KLEIN: So it would have been the state's decision to put Route 5—

VIBERT: Oh, yes. The state paid for Route 5.

KLEIN: You people would have nothing to do with the decision to be made.

VIBERT: They had a big meeting at the town hall and all of Main Street turned out and there was standing room only. Some had to be outside, and everybody protested Main Street coming through here, but the state people that conducted the meeting said it won't bother you any and it'll be fine, and so it went over like a lead balloon. But then we had the '36 flood, and they decided to build a road further east.

KLEIN: A blessing in disguise.

VIBERT: See, Main Street is 6 rods wide. That's the way it was laid out in colonial days, so they had the room.

KLEIN: Yeah, it's a nice ...

VIBERT: Of course, it wouldn't have been a curvy road.

KLEIN: Doesn't seem curvy, but Long Hill doesn't look curvy, but boy, you try to get out of my drive way and you can't see around—there's a corner there. You don't even know.

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VIBERT: The only 2 people that really wanted it in this area was Louie Main, who lived where my daughter lives now, Christine Gilmet, because he sold—he grew and sold gladiolas to all the cars coming through. And then Peter Bossen thought it would interfere with his grocery store business if it went out there. But I don't—everybody else was quite relieved to think that it went out there.

KLEIN: Well, it's always your own private little plus that everybody's thinking about like Auerbach's there with G Fox. Why we have one of the worst freeway intersections in the country, because they all run through the middle of Hartford.

VIBERT: What could have happened to this area though—see, our farm went from my house at 808 Main Street through to the railroad tracks. And then after my great-grandfather died, it got divided between the 3 brothers, and Charlie Vibert owned the top of the hill and then some of the tobacco land. I mean, the hill on Route 5—not the meadow hill, and some of the tobacco land underneath the hill, and then my grandfather and Uncle Walt got the rest of it to Main Street. But because the railroad station was out there and the railroad line was in there, when Pratt & Whitney Aircraft first started, they approached him and would have liked to have started their first factory up there on the hill, but he didn't want to sell, so that ended it. Of course, there was no zoning or anything in those days.

KLEIN: Good for him.

VIBERT: So that if he had been willing to sell, this would have been the center of Pratt & Whitney Aircraft.

KLEIN: Wouldn't that be wonderful?

VIBERT: People think the town was ruined now, I mean, just go down past Pratt & Whitney and Hamilton now and think of what would have happened.

KLEIN: We could have been East Hartford—

VIBERT: Yes.

KLEIN: —from the get-go. Unbelievable. So we owe that to C. W. Vibert.

VIBERT: Yes, he said, "No, I don't want to sell." And that was it.

KLEIN: At least they didn't pursue it until they finally got it no matter what. That's what they seem to do today.

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VIBERT: They had other options, but the railroad station was there, so that was the principle reason that they wanted the top of the hill.

KLEIN: Oh. They can always build another station, which I guess they must have into their own property somewhere.

VIBERT: Well, I don't think they had that much money to—

KLEIN: To begin with?

VIBERT: —I mean this has got to be in the teens or the '20s.

KLEIN: Right, when they were just taking off.

VIBERT: I mean, they didn't have any government contracts or anything then.

KLEIN: Right. They didn't really get started in a big way until after World War II? Or was it World War I?

VIBERT: World War II.

KLEIN: World War II?

VIBERT: Yeah. World War II—they made planes for World War II, so—

KLEIN: So they were just a machine company—

VIBERT: That's when half of Vermont and New Hampshire and Maine moved down here to work in the factory during the second world war.

KLEIN: So East Hartford was kind of a small—

VIBERT: East Hartford was a small—Burnside Avenue was supposed to have been a showplace—you know—as far as residence is concerned.

KLEIN: Right. When you go—I guess you follow Burnside—no, it's not Burnside you follow. You follow Tolland Turnpike and suddenly it gets into these sort of country summer houses. I guess everybody would move from Hartford into sort of East Hartford Manchester in the summertime. Of course they were—they're winterized now, but they look like houses that you see—

VIBERT: Well, that kind of was the style then too.

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KLEIN: Right.

VIBERT: Like the house right over here that was Fred Porter's. That was a Sears and Roebuck house and I imagine some of those were. It never was built for—it could have gone—it could have been built as a shore cottage, but it was built as a permanent residence when he got married.

KLEIN: Right. But when I came, I'd forgotten—in the early '70s, the population was just beginning to grow, so this was really a farming community.

VIBERT: Yes. And some people did work in Hartford, especially the farmers' daughters. You know—they worked in the insurance companies.

KLEIN: Right. Well, farmers' daughters up in Massachusetts went to work in the mills.

VIBERT: Yes. But the insurance companies paid fairly well, and it was a short ride into the center of Hartford where they were.

KLEIN: Right. I remember in talking to Susie Briggs, she went and stayed in the YMCA during the week and then came back out.

VIBERT: But here you could go on the bus. Of course, Burnside Avenue had a bus, a bus to Manchester.

KLEIN: That sort of used to be a—I guess there was a station there and that was sort of a main exchange point at least for people that lived up in the Long Hill area, who went down to Burnside either to go to catch their buses or to go—I think there was a post office they used down there.

VIBERT: I—where you live—we're getting off Main Street, but where you live near the town line and where the Hayeses lived, you're over the town line in East Hartford. Why did they come all the way in here to go to church when they could have gone to the Burnside Methodist Church? I can't—I've never—unless the Burnside Methodist church hadn't been founded yet.

KLEIN: I'm not sure. Maybe they weren't Methodist either.

VIBERT: Oh, I don't think it would have made that much difference to them. It wouldn't have to the Hayeses. It might have to the Omars, but I can't understand why they trekked all the way in here.

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KLEIN: I have no idea.

VIBERT: Unless the road—there's a bad place in the road down through there or what?

KLEIN: I don't know. It went down to a swamp or a bog, but where that railroad is now, it was low land, but maybe they—of course, they had hills to climb both ways actually. I don't know. Maybe they were just good Congregationalists.

VIBERT: Well, to get back to Main Street, I showed you the picture of the elm trees. The whole street was lined with big trees. There were some maple, or maybe it was half and half. I don't remember any other. And I can—we had—the Memorial Day parades were held one year here and the second year in Wapping and then the third year back here. And there was so much foliage in the trees that sometimes the flags caught the staff with the eagle on the top, it would get caught in the trees. In the trees it was really shaded.

KLEIN: Well, that's what you wanted. Of course it was summer days.

VIBERT: Beautiful trees.

KLEIN: Oh, I know. Well, we have some old pictures down in the archives that show the gorgeous—and also something I didn't realize that the trolley tracks went up on the right hand side or upon the east hand side or the—my first impression was they went right down the middle but they ...

VIBERT: Oh, no, they went on the side.

KLEIN: That must have crowded some people's front yards a little bit.

VIBERT: Well, yes, but they were all glad to get the trolley, because the best of everything was in Hartford, and you could take the trolley into Hartford. That was much easier; and come home and it didn't cost that much and the best of groceries and everything else was right in the center of Hartford, so it—and they even changed the time of the service in the Congregational Church so that everybody coming from East Windsor Hill could get—the trolley would go down and they could get off the trolley before they started the Sunday morning service.

KLEIN: That was a nice—

VIBERT: Yeah. We talked about Stoughton's Brook. We'd had an awful lot of rain before the 1938 hurricane, and the trolley car tracks had all been taken up, but the trolley car bridge over Stoughton's Brook was still there. And because of the rain, it caved in. So it

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made a dam out of the bridge that was built for the road, because it couldn't—it just blocked the water from going underneath it, so that whole valley filled up with water.

KLEIN: That's where Kasheta's is.

VIBERT: Yeah.

KLEIN: Yeah. Okay.

VIBERT: And the people—the kids that went to Union School came by Connecticut Company bus. They were issued tickets every week, and the bus driver went up and he could see it was ponding bad, and he went to East Windsor Hill and, of course, turned around and came down, and he got out of the bus and he didn't like the looks of it. And in fact the road had begun to crack a little, so he said, "I'm not going to go over that." He had a bus load full of kids. So he turned around and let the kids out on the way home, and he went out Sullivan Avenue, which wasn't more than a cow path then, and then to Hartford by Ellington Road, but he—about an hour later after he turned around, the bridge over the road gave way from the pressure of the water, and the whole thing gushed out, so if he'd gone over it with a heavy school bus, it might have been a catastrophe. He would have lost all those kids, plus himself.

KLEIN: Smart guy. Yeah.

VIBERT: And it took a year or so before the bridge was rebuilt.

KLEIN: Now that's a nice concrete bridge now. What was it in [inaudible].

VIBERT: I don't remember the details. Eddy Kasheta would probably know because he's older than I am, and he lived there. I imagine the trolley car bridge was just a red stone arch bridge, but it gave in.

KLEIN: And separate from the road bridge.

VIBERT: Yes. Two separate bridges.

KLEIN: That's a pretty—that's a—considered a pretty area there. When did they—now I've found out East Windsor Hill is a hill because it was literally a mound. It was—on every side except the east side. But now, when did they build that road so it's more or less level across. In the old days they had to go down to the brook and up.

VIBERT: The state did it, and they brought in all kinds of cheap fill, but it's hell, because when they laid the sewer pipe up through, Dudley Clapp didn't think it was going to hold

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because of all the—all the—they called it cheap stuff in there, but it didn't hold. Of course, it had plenty of years to settle, but I—the town definitely didn't fill it in. The state filled it in. To begin with in colonial days I think the town was responsible for the road, but once the state took over, they did it. And they leveled a lot of other places. You can see right up here in front of Dillon's house and then the first house this side of the Congregational Church where there's a high bank? Well, the road was up as high as that to begin with, and the state took that out to fill in dips up and down the street.

KLEIN: So they leveled it.

VIBERT: Probably did it with horses and—or—yeah, horses and dump carts.

KLEIN: We forget so quickly. They just [inaudible].

VIBERT: Victor King told me he could remember when you went down the steep hill and back up a steep hill at East Windsor Hill. Then of course you went right down the other side because the Scantic Bridge was much slower than it is now.

KLEIN: Right. And of course the meadow road was always steep.

VIBERT: Well, yes, but the meadow road—Ferry Road—was not always in that position. So I'm told, it went along—I don't know whether it went down through Taylor Howe or it went down in Will Woods' place somewhere, but originally it wasn't that steep hill now—that it is now. It went down a more gradual plane and it went down in a road kind of parallel to the hill.

KLEIN: It didn't go north. I think I read one time that it went north over a bridge over the Scantic River. Did you ever hear that? And came out—

VIBERT: Well, on the river bank there was a bridge over the Scantic River.

KLEIN: Yeah. And then it was a—

VIBERT: I don't know—I know there was—I'm sure there was one on the south side—a way to get to the—

KLEIN: And where would it have come up, I wonder?

VIBERT: Well, like I say either Will Woods' or Taylor Howe's. Of course, it would be nothing but like a driveway today.

KLEIN: Right, right.

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VIBERT: But I think Increase Clapp, when he got the—when he bought the first brick house up there, the one on the corner, I mean. I think he's the one that's responsible for having it go straight down the way it does now.

KLEIN: He wanted to be on the—

VIBERT: I don't know what he wanted, but anyway that's what happened.

???: Excuse me. Jean, there's a gentleman here that wants to show you some pictures.

KLEIN: Can he wait?

???: Mr. Lowes. Well, he's been here a bit.

VIBERT: We can wait.

KLEIN: Just a minute. I'll be right out.

???: He just wants to show you a couple of pictures.

____ LOWES: —Clarence, Albert and—

KLEIN: —Frank?

LOWES: Clarence used to live right there on Ellington Road. And Albert lived up there. This was ... my grandfather and grandmother. They were Burtons.

KLEIN: So that's Frank Burton's father?

LOWES: Sherwood Burton—yes, Frank's father.

KLEIN: And his mother?

LOWES: And his mother. Yeah.

VIBERT: Okay, she's the daughter of these two, then?

LOWES: What's that?

VIBERT: She is the daughter of these two.

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LOWES: Yeah.

VIBERT: [inaudible].

KLEIN: Oh, and ... So what was her name? Oh, she was one of the—are these the ones that eloped?

LOWES: I think so. I'm not sure. I don't know too much about it—you know—but I just find the pictures ...

KLEIN: Oh, great. This is wonderful.

LOWES: This was Burnham Street. That's when I had grown shade tobacco back then in front of my house. The difference now is ... are so thick you can't walk over there.

KLEIN: Now, your house was on the extension of—on Burnham Street?

LOWES: Yeah, Burnam Street.

KLEIN: Down where—

LOWES: Do you know where Lewises lived there at one time—Burt Lewis and the Thomases. Lot of Polish people through there.

KLEIN: Right.

LOWES: I went to Buckland School.

KLEIN: Larry—let's see; what's his name?

LOWES: That house was changed too. They built it up and when I went there I didn't hardly recognize it.

KLEIN: That's in the area where J.C. Penney is now.

LOWES: Yeah. That's beyond it, yeah.

KLEIN: Yeah.

LOWES: You can't get to it the way you used to now. There's a little old side street you might could go up behind it.

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KLEIN: Yes, yes. Right. What do I want to say? Larry—what's my neighbor's name?

VIBERT: I don't know. You mean in the [inaudible].

KLEIN: [inaudible].

VIBERT: You mean in the Elmore house?

KLEIN: Yeah. Yep.

LOWES: ... I don't know much about it. I just had the pictures of my—

KLEIN: These are wonderful pictures.

LOWES: My mother had it so—do you want me to make you a copy or anything ...

KLEIN: Yeah. Yes, I'd like to do that. Actually I'd like to make a better copy than just a Xerox. If I could keep these and have a photographer make a good copy.

LOWES: Sure.

KLEIN: And then we'll put them in the archives downstairs.

LOWES: This man was about 6 foot 6—biggest man—well, of course, I was a little tiny kid by then, but he was so big.

KLEIN: Really?

LOWES: Always wore black.

KLEIN: Now, what was his first name again?

LOWES: John.

KLEIN: John.

LOWES: John Lee Hayes.

KLEIN: John Lee Hayes.

LOWE: He was in the gold rush of '49.

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KLEIN: Oh?

LOWE: He went out there when they discovered gold—

KLEIN: Yes.

LOWE: —he's a colorful fellow. He said when he left he borrowed somebody's horse that wasn't his, and just made it before they caught him. He just got out of there—you know.

KLEIN: Uh-Hunh (Affirmative). Was he absconding with somebody else's gold?

LOWE: No, but he—I remember he had some—he had some nuggets. I remember when I was a kid, and he had ... he had a bunch of arrowheads—the white bird points. And he took them to a jeweler and he made my aunt a necklace ... edged in gold.

KLEIN: Something he had picked up in California?

LOWE: Yeah, that he'd picked up in California.

KLEIN: Kind of nice. Where is that today?

LOWE: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

KLEIN: Where is it?

LOWE: ... I think probably my aunt—my Aunt Lyna Elmore maybe got it ... so many years ago—you know. Who knows what happened to it, but it would be beautiful to have something like that, wouldn't it?

KLEIN: Oh, it sure would. It certainly would. Now, did he pick up those bird points in the area here?

LOWE: Yeah.

KLEIN: On his farm.

LOWE: I don't know how he got such a matched bunch. It was about 6 or 8 of them. They were perfect.

VIBERT: You remember this man?

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LOWES: Yeah. I was only about 5 years old, I think.

VIBERT: All right. Okay. All right. I'm trying to figure out how old you are.

LOWES: 76.

VIBERT: Oh, you're just my age.

LOWES: Oh, yeah?

VIBERT: Yeah.

LOWES: I remember her too when I was a kid. [inaudible]. She said, "My, your children are so timid." She always had these lozenges—you know—the round things like this ... package. We'd come out and she'd go, "Rah!" and scare the blazes out of us. We'd start to cry and she'd give us some. "These children are so timid."

KLEIN: She had a sense of humor.

LOWES: Oh, yeah. She was quite an old girl. But I never knew her name was Elmore before.

KLEIN: Right.

[Side A ends]

KLEIN: Well, we'll just have to—it's a good thing we're transcribing this stuff.

VIBERT: Now, are we back on Main Street?

KLEIN: Well, anyplace in South Windsor, but yeah, back on Main Street. Or you can tell me a little bit more about Eli Hayes here. I forgot whether it was you or somebody else who said that he wasn't a wealthy fellow.

VIBERT: When he died he was.

KLEIN: He was?

VIBERT: Yes. He had over \$30,000 in 1893, which was a considerable sum of money then in buying power.

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KLEIN: Now what did he do?

VIBERT: Well, he never spent any money all his life. Everything he made—he must have come home with something from California, but he worked in the Hazardville powder mills, and he got good pay for it, because it was dangerous, and there were several explosions up there, but he survived them. And he lent money—he lent his money out, so there was interest made on the principal, and it just kept compounding and compounding.

KLEIN: Good for him. I guess a lot of people—

VIBERT: He was born in—I mean, the family was poor, but I mean he just saved, and of course he never married. And he didn't marry until he was old enough to die. He was over 80 when he got married.

KLEIN: You're kidding. Did she marry him for his money? Who was it?

VIBERT: The will was already made. It was a cousin that he married, but she wasn't going to—she was a devout Baptist, and she wasn't going to live in sin and take care of him in his old age.

KLEIN: Because the neighbors would talk.

VIBERT: And so they were married. It's in the town report as to what year, and he only lived two or three years—she lived in the house that Dr. Cuen had—you know—at the—

KLEIN: Junction?

VIBERT: —corner of Pleasant Valley and Ellington Road. That was her homestead, so he married her and they fixed the house all up and he died there. And the other two heirs were one Hayes and a Mrs. Barbour who had been her—her mother had been a Hayes. But it was split three ways. And he even put—what do you call it—a codicil on the will when he married her that nothing is to be changed in this will because I'm marrying her. She still only gets a third.

KLEIN: At least she got a third.

VIBERT: Yeah.

KLEIN: Well, that was nice.

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VIBERT: But I think it was a little over \$30,000 I think that he had. At the end he had invested in Aetna stock, so goodness only knows what it would be today.

KLEIN: Kept on going and going. Well, they probably lost it now.

VIBERT: If foresight was hindsight, we'd all be millionaires.

KLEIN: Oh, that's right.

VIBERT: There's a picture of them here I have at home, but there's one in the library. I saw it on the door once, and he's got on these old clothes and that old hat and everything. Well, those were—that's when he lived up to Peases, and Charles Pease had just died, who was a much bigger man, and he's got on his clothes and—I mean, he looks like a scarecrow, because they're too big for him. But he wouldn't spend a nickel on anything.

KLEIN: Well, that's how you accumulate it.

VIBERT: And he was terribly independent. He came down to live with my great-grandmother, Eveline Clark, and grandfather and my—you remember when my parents lived there, but he didn't want to get up in the morning in time for breakfast. He was retired then, and he wanted his meals when he wanted them. Well, that's pretty difficult to do with a coal fire, so great-grandpa kicked him out of the house. He said, "You're not going to live here." He said my wife has enough to do get three meals a day without getting 6 meals a day with you living here.

KLEIN: So where'd he go after that?

VIBERT: Well, I think that's when he got married.

KLEIN: Just to have somebody cook his breakfast.

VIBERT: See, when he lived up to Peases with Lucy Hayes, everybody thought that Charlie Pease would inherit all his money, because he was the only son, but Charlie Pease was a spoiled brat, so much so that Eli left there; couldn't stand it anymore. I think that's when he came down to live with us.

KLEIN: He was Lucy's son?

VIBERT: Charles Pease?

KLEIN: Yeah.

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VIBERT: No. Charles Pease was Amanda's son. Lucy was Amanda's daughter. Lucy was Amanda's mother. And Amanda married Charles Pease and they had one son, Charles Pease. Can't think of his middle initial. It's different than his father's.

KLEIN: So he was the grandson.

VIBERT: And he was—he was a scamp and he finally ended up divorcing his wife, Julia Pease—Julia Alexander Pease—or she divorced him, I don't know which. And he ended up out west, but he went through the family fortune. The Peases—or John—Charles N. Pease and John Alexander went to Mexico and set up looms. They evidently knew how to—for manufacturing cloth and stuff, see.

KLEIN: No kidding.

VIBERT: And they were paid by the Mexican government in gold dust, and they came home with their money in gold dust.

KLEIN: You're kidding.

VIBERT: Yeah. And that's—that's how they got their start, and Charles and John—no, Charles Pease bought the place up there. I think—I think they were awfully poor to begin with.

KLEIN: Boy, that's before the modern age.

VIBERT: Yeah, that's before the 1850 when they came home; something like that.

KLEIN: Those poor Mexicans were probably earning nothing in those days.

VIBERT: Yes.

KLEIN: But the government had them set it up.

VIBERT: Yeah, Mexican government. See—they had to—somebody had to know how to work the looms.

KLEIN: Right. Yeah. I don't know that much about what manufacturing Mexico does today, but I wonder if there's a legacy there? Must be. Now you can tell me a little bit more about C. W. too.

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VIBERT: Well, what I had in mind right now was—everybody—before I forget—everybody—most everybody got their coal in to heat their houses in the summertime, because it was harder to transport it in the winter with the snow and stuff.

KLEIN: Right. Everybody had coal chutes.

VIBERT: And—the coal chute was on the truck in my day and he had a way of sprinkling water on it as it went down so that he house wouldn't fill up with coal dust. But Union School had their coal come in the summer; the coal for the library came in the summer. And I was—as a kid growing up—a very good friend of Clarence Fairbanks who was the janitor of this building and the town hall. So I mean, I must have pestered them to death. He lived in Trotman's house. And, of course, I knew Jessie Ellison, because I went to school—Jessie Ellison had worked for us before he became janitor of Union School, and he lived in East Hartford, and he came up—he didn't have a car. He came up on the bus early in the morning and the fires held overnight, but sometimes he had trouble at night time—you see, you loaded coal in the boiler, but you had to burn the gas off before you turned the dampers down. And if you didn't turn the dampers down, you'd melt the stove down when you go to—but if you turned them down too quick, there'd be a gas buildup and an explosion.

KLEIN: It was dangerous in those days. You really had to know what you were doing.

VIBERT: You had to know what you were doing. I can remember this furnace in the library that had the two upper doors and [s/l Deek] would be there with his nose between the cracks [sniffing sound] trying to smell for the gas, and once he was—he'd shut it down too quick and it blew the—but the doors missed him and hit side of his face.

KLEIN: No kidding.

VIBERT: And, of course, the pipe came down—everything else. It makes quite an explosion.

KLEIN: Would it be the same hazard in a private home?

VIBERT: Oh, yes. If you turned it down—you just couldn't go away and leave it. I don't know how Jessie did it. He left the school and went home to East Hartford and evidently never had any trouble.

KLEIN: Well, he knew what he was doing and waited until it was...

VIBERT: I was in the 8th grade, I believe—maybe 7th grade, and Jessie dropped dead shoveling coal in the—there were 2 boilers over there. He just lay on the floor and it

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came lunch and they wouldn't let us out of our rooms. They didn't let us out of our rooms until 1:00, and then they told us Jessie had died, but they waited until—they had to get the doctor, the coroner and so forth before they could remove his body.

KLEIN: Poor guy.

VIBERT: And within three days—see, his wife was the daughter of John Hayes and Sarah Burnham. Within three days Sarah ... Burnham died, so she lost her husband and her mother within three days—both buried up here.

KLEIN: Now explain that again to me. That doesn't have anything to do with the fellow who stoked the furnace.

VIBERT: Yeah, the fellow that stoked the furnace—well, no—not Fairbanks, Ellison.

KLEIN: Oh, Ellison.

VIBERT: One of their daughters married Jessie Ellison and he died—I remember he was the first one to die, and within three days this one—her mother died. This one died.

KLEIN: Got it all over with at once.

VIBERT: Yeah, got it over with at once. One of Jessie Ellison's grandsons is named John—John Lee or—no, it's Lee Hayes, I think, Lee Hayes Ellison, and he's a heart surgeon at Hartford Hospital to this day. You can look it up in the book. He's named for this guy. But I think it's Lee Hayes Ellison.

KLEIN: Now was there a divide in the way people thought about where they lived in town back then. I know there's kind of a divide—at least I was made very much aware of it between Wapping and this area. How about—

VIBERT: Well, people didn't like to pay taxes, that was for sure. So any time anything was going to go out in Wapping, Main Street turned up and voted it down, and any time we wanted anything in here, Wapping all came in and voted it down. Like the library was given—the Wapping [Sadd] Library was given. The town never would pay taxes for a library like they do now, in those days.

KLEIN: I guess all towns were the same—

VIBERT: All towns have their divisions, but—and like I say, one parade was here and the other parade was in Wapping.

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KLEIN: So the Pleasant Valley area which was another really kind of area—

VIBERT: It was an area but they didn't have votes enough to count.

KLEIN: Right. So it was really the votes that—

VIBERT: —the votes that counted, and Wapping had enough to upset Main Street and Main Street had enough to upset Wapping, but Pleasant Valley, Rye Street and all of those—they were—they were the outer—on the outer fringe, they didn't have that much power. They really had to bargain to get anything.

KLEIN: Yeah, well, as you were saying, it's strange they didn't go down to the Burnside Church instead of coming over—I suppose the distance was 6 of one, half a dozen of the other as far as distance goes.

VIBERT: Maybe it is; I don't know.

KLEIN: But they sort of turned south to—because it's one long road, and they were intermarried up there—the Williamses and the Burnhams and the Elmores. And so they had their kind of little own enclave and those little groups. I know I did a thing on the Long Hill Quilt, and they were all names that are within that little area. So—

VIBERT: You see—and Harvey Elmore that lived across from you, he was the one that was instrumental in separating South Windsor from East Windsor, so he must have had the support of Main Street and probably Wapping too; I don't know.

KLEIN: I had forgotten whether it's the church that's instrumental—in the beginning of course, it was church that separated these little communities, because people didn't want to go so far on Sunday.

VIBERT: Well, that was only in here. It was only between Main Street and Wapping though. I mean, the Seventh Day Adventist Chapel on Chapel Road had nothing to do with the Congregational Church.

KLEIN: No, but how about from—in separating East Windsor from South Windsor, was there a church involved there? [inaudible].

VIBERT: No, no, not in 1845, but—in—when we were still the town of East Windsor, they started the Scantic Church, and that was the second church of East Windsor, and we were still the First Church of East Windsor, but now it's the First Church of East Windsor. See, they just changed names, but the church was kind of out of it by 1845 as far as having any great ... power.

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KLEIN: Right. And the people could go where they wanted anyway. ... transportation ...

VIBERT: Yeah ... primarily for transportation reasons they went to the—whatever was closest to them.

KLEIN: Right. That's what I was wondering—if it was transportation—

VIBERT: The—the more affluent Yankees went to the Congregational Church, and more ordinary people would go to the Baptist Church. The Hayeses all went to the Baptist Church here.

KLEIN: We had a Methodist Church here to too, didn't we at one time?

VIBERT: Yeah, in Wapping where the brick community built. That was a Methodist Church, and that burned and that ended that. They didn't clean the stove pipe out as I understand it, and they had a roaring fire, and of course the pitch caught on fire and there was no water probably, so they lost it.

KLEIN: See, they didn't have a janitor [inaudible]. Just looking over these notes here, how about—now there was on Main Street here there was a grocery store here. What's his name?

VIBERT: Bossen's store.

KLEIN: Bossen's store.

VIBERT: Before that it was Parmelee and before that it was Foster's. Foster started the store, I believe.

KLEIN: In the same locale?

VIBERT: In the same location, yeah.

KLEIN: And Parmelee was there?

VIBERT: Oh, yes. And then there was Parmelee at East Windsor Hill, too. I think they were brothers, but maybe they were cousins; I don't know.

KLEIN: But they were two different—

VIBERT: Two different ... family ran this one.

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KLEIN: Typical country store? [inaudible].

VIBERT: Well, you could buy—you could buy yard goods in it, I'm told.

KLEIN: You don't remember it as a boy when it was—?

VIBERT: Bossen's got it as 1900. Yes, I remember the store. That's where I learned not to steal. I went in with my mother. She went to buy some groceries, and I didn't know you had to pay for the stuff. I couldn't have been over 4 years old, and they had a glass candy counter—the one that's in the school house now. And I know Mr. Bossen always went pulled a candy out of there and gave me to the—I had seen that, so I didn't—I thought that was—I went around and got a candy. Next thing I know, Peter Bossen was glaring down on me and his brother ... was glaring down on me. God, I thought I must have done something. I didn't even know I'd stole. I thought the store—I didn't know you had to pay for anything. See, mother didn't pay because we charged. We only paid once a year when—when the tobacco was sold. So—

KLEIN: Imagine keeping all that on the books.

VIBERT: So anyway boy, I learned. You don't pick up anything. Nothing was self-service like it is now. But the store was nice and was all cleaned up by the time—I say cleaned up. Peter Bossen, as I grew up, was a very good friend of mine. Of course, he was my neighbor, but he said when he first went in and opened—bought the store, they—men used to—not the women, but the men met there at night. That was their recreation, and there was a big long bench that they'd sit on—maybe 20 people.

KLEIN: Inside or out?

VIBERT: Inside in the winter and there was 4 or 6 spittoons. They all—all chewed tobacco, and he said he got sick of cleaning out those spittoons every night, so he said, "No more chewing tobacco," and he threw the spittoons out in the woodshed, and they were—now it was his private store. It wasn't a public place. They were so mad that for the next 6 months they all just spit on the floor. But he said it was easier to clean the floor than to—than to clean those spittoons.

KLEIN: I can't imagine anything worse.

VIBERT: Talk about sanitary. So anyway somebody fell, as I understand it, because they slipped on it going out—one of the men, and that ended it. They stopped spitting on the floor. They still chewed tobacco. They opened the door and spit out—at least spit out the door.

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KLEIN: May be some germ killers in that tobacco.

VIBERT: Well, I don't know; something, but—

KLEIN: You have to ... cleaning ... stables you have to swish it out every night. That's sort of what—now they've banned smoking and everybody's up in arms. I can remember where they had spittoons in the barber shop. Now there were mainly people that gathered there at this store from this area, and would they do the same thing, do you think, up in the East Windsor Hill store there?

VIBERT: Well, probably. But—you know—somebody come along and dispute me, but I think every store was that way. I heard tell there was even a store down at 31, but that's before my time. See 31 used to be referred to as the corner, because Main Street went down as far as 31 originally. King Street—went up King Street and down King Street into Ellington Road and then back into Main Street, because they couldn't get across the Podunk River in colonial days. It was such a swale over there. And finally some governor is supposed to have ridden a horse through, and they built the road through. I guess it came up from East Hartford as far as the Podunk, but it was dead end—it was a dead end—it ended.

KLEIN: Because it was so swampy?

VIBERT: Swampy where the Podunk is. And I think King Street is 6 rods wide the same—that was the original layout of Main Street, but from the—from King Street south, Main Street I think is only 4 rods wide because that was a later—later addition.

KLEIN: They weren't so far thinking as the earlier—with their wide—you don't realize that. You go up into Enfield and see these beautiful broad streets up in East Long Meadow to—and somebody really planned for ...

VIBERT: Well, if we had a green here, they would have grown tobacco in it, because that's how precious land was.

KLEIN: Right. Well, it's not much—

VIBERT: We didn't have that much lawn to mow because they—tobacco—well, the garden was right out the back door, but then the tobacco lot started right there.

KLEIN: Right. And they fenced the in the garden to keep the animals out. Everybody raised a lot of their own vegetables.

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VIBERT: Oh, yes, they grew their own vegetables and canned; no freezers.

KLEIN: Right. Women spent all summer long working.

VIBERT: And—you know—water was a—I think when Union School was built over here, I don't think it had running water even.

KLEIN: Really?

VIBERT: Well, there was no electricity. It was built in 1903, '04 or '05. There was no electricity then, and without electricity you couldn't have an electric pump.

KLEIN: True. Well you could have—

VIBERT: See, we had running water because we had a windmill on the west side of Main Street, and it furnished water for the house my parents lived in—or my great-grandparents then—and Bossen's store and my house. They piped it across to my house. And Joneses across the street here had a windmill, but I don't think they had water piped to Union School. I don't think Union School had running water until electricity came through.

KLEIN: Now in those days those windmills—you only could get the electricity when the wind was blowing?

VIBERT: Well, no—

KLEIN: Or did they have a way of storing that?

VIBERT: The power was propelled by the—there was no electricity in it. The power was—the windmill pro—a shaft went up and down and somehow they got their power off of that.

KLEIN: Right. So the wind—

VIBERT: If the wind didn't blow, you didn't get any. But of course there was a big tank—they had to have a big tank of water, especially in the winter because it wouldn't—the greater the amount of water it wouldn't freeze, see. So the—usually they had water enough.

KLEIN: Next time we'll talk all about your family, so I hate to get into that now, but when did your parents move into your grandfather's house on the corner or Vibert Road?

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VIBERT: ... after Uncle—after Uncle Walter died. See, my great-grandparents lived there and then the middle son was Walter, and after they died, he lived there with his wife. And when they died in 1938, that's when we moved in there.

KLEIN: '38 yeah. In the meantime they lived across the street.

VIBERT: In the meantime we lived across the street for a year and a half and we lived—they lived from 1926 to '36 in Dina's house. They rented that, but they went up on the—the Kings went up on the rent in 1930—we were there for the floods, so they went up on the rent after that. And it was Depression times and so we moved in with my grandparents. It was a dual arrangement. We didn't have to pay rent and my grandmother wasn't—wasn't feeling well at the time. Her health had given out, so it was somebody to be in the house to help take care of her. Grandpa was all right, but the—you know—my mother did the cooking. Grandpa didn't cook. Then she recovered pretty much and was able to live alone and Uncle Walter and Aunt Ida died and we moved over there.

KLEIN: Now you mentioned that that house that Edie [Vibert] lives in today, that was the house where they lived previously, and you said something about that was the kind of houses that they were building in Hartford at the time.

VIBERT: Well, yeah. All the cities—if you built a house in the cities at that time and previous to that time, you always had a carriage—carriage shed to hold the carriage and the horse that pulled the carriage.

KLEIN: Then you got ... around the back on that one.

VIBERT: And the—well, it never was built but it was in the—I have the plans. It's in the plans; never was built.

KLEIN: When was it built?

VIBERT: 1901.

KLEIN: Who built it? Who was it built for?

VIBERT: Starks—Horace Starks and his son, Herbert Starks, built the house. The house cost \$3000 complete with a hot air furnace and it had a bathroom, because we had running water.

KLEIN: Pretty good.

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VIBERT: And it was paid for out of either the '98 or '99 crop of tobacco.

KLEIN: One year.

VIBERT: One year ...

KLEIN: And then they could lose their shirt another year.

VIBERT: Well, they just didn't exist, but it didn't cost that much to grow a crop of tobacco then as it does now.

KLEIN: Because everybody—all your kids and neighbors' kids worked on it.

VIBERT: And if you—there was no income tax, so if you had a good—a very good year, you kept it all. And if you didn't know enough to hold some for another—for bad years, that was—

KLEIN: That's why everybody's willing to take a chance, because they could make out very well if everything goes right. [pause] Another thing I had here—how about peddlers ... there was a store. Now did peddlers come through here like they used to come through in the cities?

VIBERT: I never remember a peddler. They used to come through to buy fertilizer bags and things like that. The ice man came through and the meat man came through. And earlier a man came through once a week with yeast.

KLEIN: Oh?

VIBERT: Yeah, there was a yeast man. I think he pushed his wagon, and the others had horses.

KLEIN: Now did he get it from the Rye Street—did they have a brewery up there or—

VIBERT: Yes, but I don't—I don't know the details of that. I think the brewery was all gone by—

KLEIN: Oh really?

VIBERT: I don't know. Are we on the thing or not?

KLEIN: Yeah, we're on.

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VIBERT: Oh. When ... get to Rye Street—Rye Street had a gin mill, yes. And they killed off all the—all the Yankee or people of English descent there. Maybe I said this the last time, but—

KLEIN: No, we haven't been there.

VIBERT: Yeah, they became alcoholics.

KLEIN: You're kidding.

VIBERT: ... and grandpa used to tell about the last one was so disgusted with himself and everybody was gone practically that he took a mussel loader, which is a long gun—you know—and loaded the gun, and I don't know whether it was—it had been converted to a cap gun or whether it was still a flint lock, but he put the barrel in his mouth and he pulled the trigger with his toe. That was the last drunk on Rye Street.

KLEIN: The whole community?

VIBERT: The whole community became alcoholics and didn't even grow their rye right.

KLEIN: They weren't Irish descent; they were English descent.

VIBERT: English—yeah, the last of the Yankees and then the Irish took over.

KLEIN: I've never heard that one. I've heard of some Irish people living up in that area, but they had a—now a rye mill would be a—

[Side B ends]